



Conscious Life presents

Overcoming Adversity Through Community

Guest: Minaa B

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[00:00:09] Meagen Gibson

Hello and welcome to this interview. I'm Meagen Gibson, co-host of the Trauma Super Conference. Today I'm speaking with Minaa B, a licensed social worker, writer, and author of *Owning Our Struggles*. She's also the founder of Minaa B Consulting, a mental health consulting practice that helps organizations develop psychological safety and become mental health inclusive. An expert in her field, Minaa also sits on the mental health advisory committee for Wondermind, a mental fitness company co-founded by Selena Gomez. Minaa B, thank you so much for being with us today.

Minaa B

Thank you so much.

Meagen Gibson

So I want to jump right in because I took a lot of notes and I want to cover a lot of ground while I'm with you so that our viewers can benefit as well. And one of the things that we don't talk about enough when it comes to trauma is power, in my mind. And in your book, and I'm paraphrasing here, but you name that everyone experiences adversity, but that we learn to be victims by being victimized, and our healing starts when we realize who our victimhood is meant to serve. Can you tell me what you mean by that?

Minaa B

I think it all goes back to that healing component of trauma. Everyone experiences adversity and I think often, sometimes when you experience a traumatic event, it can feel very personal. Sometimes it might be personal. It might feel like I'm the only person who experienced this thing in the world, or it feels personal where it starts to create this idea that I deserve what happened to me. I'll never be able to heal from the thing that happened to me.

And I think often that mindset can strip people of this power to engage in self efficacy, which is the concept of really engaging in the change process, going from PTSD to post traumatic growth, recognizing that the hurt that I experienced is valid, what it did to me is valid, but I don't have to stay stuck in this pain that I'm experiencing or the adversity that I'm being exposed to, it doesn't have to define my life. It doesn't have to define my future. I can experience both joy and pain.

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And I know sometimes we want to live more of a painless life. And unfortunately, and this is the thing I even say in my book, adversity is always most likely going to be out there. But when we engage in the power of resilience, when we engage in the power of self efficacy and self agency, it helps us to see that we deserve a life of peace and joy and healing. And by having that shift in mindset, we can move from victimhood to feeling more powerful in our ability to grow and evolve and give ourselves the lives we feel we deserve.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Great answer. And I think part of the problem also is that we lack validation sometimes. And so many times the people that we love or we trust deny the experiences or deny the difficulty of other people. And so if you could talk just a little bit about the impact of that and how we navigate that not only in our family systems, but also in our culture, in our work, where people are denying that there's validity to our experiences.

Minaa B

Yeah, I mean, that's such a common thing. And it's more so common because I think often people want to be validated specifically by their abusers. Right? And I think that is the part where I often do that work of really helping people. The person who hurt you, if they're not engaging in accountability work, if they're not engaging in their own healing, the likelihood of them apologizing, the likelihood of them validating, the likelihood of them having the same story as you, because this is where the gaslighting comes in, I never did that, you're not remembering what happened. I did this thing because it was your fault. You did that. Don't you remember? That's why I responded to you that way. That's why I hurt you.

And so I think for me, in the line of the work that I've done in helping people really engage in this transformative inner healing, is to learn how to validate your own story. I feel like that's the first step, because sometimes when people are not equipped, when people are not doing the work, waiting for the people around you to validate your experiences, you might be waiting for a really long time. And the more you wait...

Meagen Gibson

Might be forever, right?

Minaa B

Exactly. It might be forever. And so I think that the first step is really owning, this is what it means to own our struggle, to own, this is what happened to me. This is how it impacted me and maybe you don't remember, maybe you're not going to validate it, but I'm going to stand firm in how I feel because, again, I have the power and the agency to determine and understand what happened to me, what hurt me, and the impact it had on my life. And I'm going to own that. I'm not going to let anyone take that away from me.

And so when we engage in that self validation piece first, we start to feel more firm in understanding people are going to have their opinions. People are going to have their own version

of the story but guess what? I'm standing firm in my truth and in my struggle. And by standing firm in that, I can now move to a place of feeling more empowered to take control of my life and engage in healing without waiting for other people to do that for me.

[00:05:51] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And kind of shifting also into isolation because trauma, for all the reasons that we've already named, can feel so isolating. And you write so beautifully about community and belonging, and you say that the purpose of healing is to integrate it into our communities and build healthy support networks. But for people who didn't come from a family of safety or a community of safety, this can also feel so impossible. So how do people begin that process safely?

Minaa B

Yeah, I think this is so important. The first step is, one, owning what you just said, right? If you don't come from a safe environment, if you don't come from a nurturing environment, this is how intergenerational trauma persists in the family unit. So those skills and those tactics that are used in the family unit, the not healing the traumatic experiences, sweeping things under the rug, all of those maladaptive coping techniques that some people use in their family now gets passed on to the next generation and the next generation. And now here you are trying to do things differently.

So I think the first step to that is, one, going back to what we shared, talked about earlier, that self validation piece, because it's very common when you experience trauma, especially if your family unit caused the trauma, the first people you want validation from is your family. So I think that's the first thing here in recognizing when you want to break cycles, it can be lonely, it can be frustrating. You might become ostracized. You might become the person in the family who is judged, who is ridiculed, because how dare you decide to do something differently?

How dare you decide to speak up? Because we've been keeping secrets since great Grandma was alive. Now you want to go to therapy. Now you want to ask for help. Now you want to talk about it. We don't talk about things. And that's often how it happens in a family unit that is so enmeshed in traumatic experiences and no one did the work of healing. So I want to validate that experience first by recognizing your family is the unit that's supposed to nurture you. Biologically, a child is wired to know that my mother, my parent, is supposed to protect me. A child understands that.

So as you age and grow older, you're going to want to be nurtured specifically by your parents, and then you're going to want to be nurtured by the rest of the people in your family. And so I've talked to people a lot about the power of building a circle of support. And in your circle of support, you have four different domains. The first domain is your circle of intimacy. And often in your circle of intimacy, family is placed there because that is our most intimate connection.

But I always tell people, think about what it means for you to feel secure. What is a secure attachment? What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel nourished? And when you think of those things, now start to think about the people in your life who provide that for you. And you might say, my best friend does that. And there you go. That is your circle of intimacy. Even though you want it to be your mother, you want it to be your father, you want it to be grandma, you want it to be your aunt, the person that you just shared that makes your nervous system feel safe, the person that you can talk to without judgment, the person who is compassionate and empathetic, the person where there's reciprocity in that relationship, that is your circle of intimacy. And so that is the first part of that domain.

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And then we start to expand it more. So then the next part of that domain is your circle of friendship. And I always tell people, I write about it in my book, friendship falls on a spectrum. So everyone you meet does not have to be your best friend. You can meet people who you're like, you know what? This is an acquaintance, and I love engaging with them. We're not super close. We don't go out to brunch every weekend. I might only see them once in a while. We talk on the phone once a month. But we still have a connection that is rooted in trust, empathy, respect, and reciprocity. It just looks different from my other friendships. And that's a beautiful thing.

When you expand more in that circle, now you have that circle of participation. And I always say to people who are feeling lonely, this is your starting point. Think of the groups that you are a part of. Most commonly, the number one group that we exist in is our work relationships, right? Everyone most likely in this world works to some capacity, right? And they work in an environment. And so there already your colleagues are your circle of participation.

When I go to work, I have a group of people that I might connect with on a deep level, or I might connect with where there's a boundary here, we don't chat outside of work, but when I go to work, I'm looking forward to seeing Meagen, you know, I'm going to see Meagen, I can talk to her about what I did over the weekend. I'm going to hear stories from Meagen, and we're going to chat, and we're going to chat, and hey, that might be where it ends, at 05:00, when our shift ends. We don't hang out outside of work, but depending on how much we build with each other and our interest in each other, it might evolve into something deeper.

So there are people when I used to go to a traditional job, I had friendships at work where I looked forward to seeing people. And some of those friendships evolved into one of my best friends right now that I've known for 15 years. I met her at work. She was my trainer. And so the last part of that circle of support is your circle of exchange, and those are your paid and professional networks. So a lot of people who go to therapy, for example, your therapist is in your circle of exchange, right? Your therapist is not your friend.

Meagen Gibson

Even though so many of us are like, gosh, I bet we would be friends outside of this relationship. I'm guilty of that.

Minaa B

I wish my therapist was my friend. But your therapist exists in your circle of exchange. That is a paid professional relationship, but it's still nourishing, despite the fact that you pay your therapist. So I encourage people to think of that circle of support so that they can be thinking about who are the people that fill in those four different domains, so that I can start building community and building close connections while also building acquaintances, participants that I engage with as well as those professional networks that still are investing in my wellbeing.

Meagen Gibson

I love that you named all of those because I think oftentimes, especially people with trauma, they feel like if every relationship that I have with a person that I trust isn't super deep or doesn't

expose all of me, it's a compensation that people that are growing and healing from trauma sometimes make oversharing or trying to be too close in the wrong context, or just clumsily walking along, bumping into walls and door frames and things as we find out that other people don't want to actually go quite that far with us. So learning those relationships and that they're not any less just because they have different boundaries of intimacy or sharing or growth.

[00:13:07] Minaa B

Right, exactly. And just also remembering too, that friendship, I always tell people, you want friendship to be organic and authentic. And so you may not build a close bond the day you meet someone and don't allow that experience to minimize your idea of what that relationship is or take it personally where you feel like, nobody wants me, nobody loves me, because the trauma brain works like that. And so just really easing into safety because when you're not used to safety, you don't know how to build safety.

And I always share this in my book as well, because you want to be self protected, because you want to make sure that just because I met you and you seem really cool, I also need to engage here and recognize, are you safe? And you might not be able to know that on a first interaction. And so sometimes you overshare. You're really looking for that closeness. But you as a trauma survivor, also have to remember you deserve safe relationships. You may have not come from them, but you still deserve it.

And so you also have to say, as much as I want to be in their life, why do they deserve to be in mine? Have that power over yourself to recognize I am a worthy human being as well, and who I invite into my life, they need to earn a place into my own circle of support. So, allowing yourself to remember those things can be really helpful in the process of just building authentic connections.

Meagen Gibson

And I had to check my notes because as you were talking, I was remembering something that you said in your book. I'm quoting you to you a lot, but you also talked about expired friendships, right? Friendships that run their course for the season of life that you're entering or have just left or it might have been your best friend that you had since college and your lives have just gone in different directions in a way that don't support the level of intimacy that you wanted and kind of the grief that comes with that.

Minaa B

Yeah, and I love that you said that word grief because I think grief is something that is so important to process when you are experiencing an expired friendship. There's a lot of pain. There's a loss to that. And I think that's a part that does need to be honored when there's something in your life that is sacred, it feels permanent, it has helped you, in some sort of way, grow and evolve. We often don't want to let things go. We don't want to let people go. But I do think sometimes we might start to realize as I grow and evolve, and as my friend grows and evolves, we're not growing together.

I might realize that our friendship was born out of trauma bonding. And so at the root of that relationship, there wasn't really safety. There wasn't the trust and the respect and the reciprocity I needed to build a nurturing, secure attachment. And now that I'm growing and I think this is the hard part too, when you're doing the work, you start to really realize, oh, my gosh, I have to shed

myself of all of these things, including certain people, because that relationship was born out of chaos.

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That relationship was born during a time where I was still reenacting dysfunctional family patterns, and that's how I was picking partners and friends. And now I'm growing and I'm evolving, and I'm trying to make new choices, and I'm realizing, oh, my gosh, this person isn't healthy for me. And so I think there's just a lot of grief that we have to sit with and just own that this is painful.

I often share in my work, but I also write this in my book, we can't bypass hard feelings, and I'm a big advocate for owning every feeling that we have. And just acknowledging right now I'm in a season of pain because I had to let go of something that was so important to me. I don't have to pretend to be okay. I don't have to pretend that I did this for my healing, so I have to be okay with it. No, you can grieve, you can cry and just allow yourself the space to experience that loss.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And just for anybody who's in it right now, I'm presently in what I'm calling, like, a two year grief cycle where I came to the realization that a lot of my relationships, family included, were based in nostalgia, not present, actual exchange of relationship. And there is, there's just so much grief that comes with that. I will say that it doesn't have to be all encompassing. My work in the last year especially has been navigating and allowing tremendous joy and growth and love in the face of grief and letting go and setting new boundaries and things like that. So, both things.

Minaa B

Absolutely.

Meagen Gibson

I lost track of where we were. Oh, gosh, that's right. So you talk a lot also about adult tantrums. And I've come to see adult tantrums as just massive unconscious nervous system dysregulation. So I'd love it if you can talk about the phenomenon of adult tantrums through the lens of your ABC model and boundaries.

Minaa B

Oh, yes. So the ABC model is derived from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, aka CBT, and it stands for Activating Event, Belief and Consequence. And to tie it to adult tantrums, in my book, I talk about how often adults complain about how children manage their emotions. They cry, they scream, they throw their broccoli in the air. They do all of these things that really are frustrating to deal with sometimes as a parent or even as a caregiver.

But I reframe it in a way, well, what do we do as adults sometimes that mimic those behaviors? So if we're going to complain that a child because they didn't get the thing that they want, they're kicking and they're screaming, when you're an adult, when you start cursing, when you start belittling people, when you start really condemning people and really just like being rude, let's just call it what it is, being rude and being disrespectful, that is almost the equivalent of a child throwing a tantrum.

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And what you said is spot on. Your nervous system becomes so dysregulated that you are not acting, one, you're not engaging your parasympathetic nervous system to be able to manage that dysregulation. Sometimes you engage in very impulsive behaviors, which is why you might get very reactive. So, you're cursing this person out, you're saying the things that you know, five minutes later, you're like, oh, my God, why did I say that? I was very reactive in that moment.

And I think it's important to, one, understand, well, what activated me, right? What did that situation represent? Did that situation bring me back to my childhood so I started to regress, right? I can be 30 something years old, but when I engage in conflict, I revert to my childhood tactics that help me manage discomfort. And for some, when you're a child, the way you manage conflict is by shutting down. And there are some children, when they manage conflict, they yell, they scream, they throw objects around the house. And you may not be throwing objects, but you're cursing and you're yelling and you're raising your voice.

So you're activated by something, and you have to ask yourself, what about this particular situation activated me? So now we're diving into some of those beliefs. What are your beliefs and thoughts around this particular situation? What came up for you mentally? What are some thought patterns that started to get reengaged in this particular situation? So you have an idea of the stimuli, this person did XYZ, but it doesn't just stop there. What came up for you when they did that, though? What were you thinking? What manifested for you?

And then you have to think about the consequences. A consequence can be positive or negative. Often people lean toward what feels like a negative consequence, which is the consequence was I acted out by cursing. I acted out by calling them a particular name. I acted out by becoming physical, becoming physically violent. That's how I acted it out. Where some people might realize, you know what, my consequence to it was I set a boundary. I realized I was so dysregulated in the moment, my beliefs and my thought patterns took over and I realized, you know what? I'm going to practice the power of pause and I'm going to disengage with that person. That is what a positive consequence can look like.

So I walk people through that ABC model because often people will say to me, well, Minaa, how do I know when to set a boundary? And our boundaries are often related to the things that we experience and how our bodies feel. Our bodies often tell us, you know what? This is a really uncomfortable moment for me. I'm starting to feel dysregulated. I need to set a boundary with myself. I am realizing that every time I'm exposed to this person, the way they speak to me, I need to set a boundary with them. Please do not speak to me in this manner.

And if you do, the consequence is I'm just going to have to hang up the phone now. So I'm giving you a forewarning. If you say it again, the conversation just has to end. If you do it again, I'm going to pack up my stuff and I leave your house. If you do it again, you have to pack up your stuff and leave my house. You may not be able to come back because this is a pattern. So I think it's just important for us to be paying attention to the things that activate us. Because the reason why I draw that ABC model to boundaries is because I'm a firm believer that 98% of the time our boundaries are with ourselves.

Because this is the thing, you cannot control people. You cannot control. You can make requests and you can set expectations around what you desire in a relationship, but people don't have to

follow through with it because people can do whatever they want to do. So you have to ask yourself, when I get activated and my thought patterns arise and I realize this is a repeated offense, this is a repeated thing that this person just consistently does and I've expressed my boundary over and over again. I now have to ask myself, what am I going to do? What am I going to say about what I tolerate in this relationship? And how am I going to act that out through my consequences?

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So that is what the ABC model is and how it really connects to us managing our tantrums as well as managing the tantrums of other adults in our lives.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I love it. And I think so many people, especially if they don't have a lot of self awareness yet, can just look at, you know, if you took them through that exercise, they would say, well, the reason I got activated was because the other person is and then insert word here, an idiot. It's always outward blame instead of self accountability for, that person may be an idiot, chances are they're not, but we still have accountability about our actions, behaviors, words and feelings.

It's interesting because as you were talking, I was thinking about an estranged family relationship that I have and how I was arguably the one who was having adult tantrums and disrespecting this other person. They had a responsibility in how we were interacting together, of course, as well but I had to set a boundary about like the person didn't have to say to me, if you keep talking to me like this, you're not allowed back, I was like, I'm never coming back here because I know I can't be my seated, right sized adult self when I am with you in this environment.

But it was me that was like, not, I didn't know who I was, I was like, who the heck is this person? And this version of myself only comes out in this situation with this person. Therefore, I don't want to be here anymore. So it goes both ways. It doesn't always have to be that I am expressing the boundary to somebody else. I can recognize, like, wow, I am the person that I usually describe about other people right now, and I need to do something differently to save everyone else the misery of being around me.

So I think also when we're talking about boundaries and describing boundaries as healing work that we anticipate the setting of the boundary to be difficult work, but if we're not ready for it, it's how we feel about setting the boundary after we set it where the real work begins. And I was so reassured and comforted by your BEST model for setting boundaries. So I'd love it if you could describe that to us now.

Minaa B

Yeah, so the BEST model was the practice that I believe that is a core part of boundaries because boundary work is emotional work. That's often why people don't set boundaries. I feel guilty. And what does guilt mean? I did something bad. So if I do have this idea going back to Activating Event, Belief and Consequence, if my belief around everything is, I'm guilty, I did something bad, I did something bad, it's not okay for me to do this, then the consequence is you not having boundaries. You just continue to tolerate this thing.

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And so the BEST method was really a concept that I created to walk people through that emotional regulation piece. So of course the B starts for boundary. What is the boundary you feel you need to set? And as I shared and your example was perfect too, 98% of the time we need to set a boundary with ourselves. But also, how can I bridge that to the boundaries that I need to communicate to the people around me? And when you think of the boundary that you need to set, chances are you are going to have an emotional reaction to it.

So that's where the E comes in. Really pay attention to, have some level of emotional awareness, and pay attention to how that boundary makes your body feel. Do you feel tense just even thinking about saying that boundary out loud? Because most of the time that's why we're not saying the boundary. Because the thought of the boundary is already scary, which shows me at the root of the boundary, there's fear, there's anxiety. So you already have your emotional piece.

But then the next step that I think people skip over is the S part, which is the self soothing part. They just say, I got the boundary, I have the emotion, I feel scared, I feel anxious, so just forget it. We don't want to stop there because, again, we're not powerless people and we can work through discomfort. To work through discomfort, we have to engage in self soothing techniques. Everyone self soothes very differently. Self soothing could look like I need to journal out the different emotions that's coming up for me.

If I'm not going to write it out in a journal, maybe I need to engage in audio journaling, a practice that I also share in chapter one, where you just voice record yourself sharing some of your thoughts. And the reason why that can be so powerful is because when you talk out loud, you can hear the discrepancies in your thinking. Science shows that 80% of our thoughts on a daily basis are negative. So already we're at odds with ourselves. Our brain is already in survival mode, and it's already designed to perceive a threat.

And so 80% of our thoughts are already negative so we have to say to ourselves, what about this idea is actually bad? And maybe if I hear myself talking out loud, I'll be able to soothe myself because I'll be able to think, wow, that doesn't make any sense. Of course I need to set this boundary or this idea that I have that this person is going to hate me or cut me off. Why would they do that? Why would this be so drastic, right? And so that is the part where the self soothing technique comes in.

Sometimes I even encourage people to carry a self care toolbox with you, especially if you're someone who regulates through sensory, I'll always say have some candy in your bag or have a stress ball in your bag. Have something on you so that when you feel fidgety, you have some sort of mechanism that you can be engaging with to soothe you in the moment. I often also say use your body as a vessel. That really helps you to regulate.

I share it in my book but one of the beautiful things about our bodies is that it is a tool that goes with us everywhere in life, right? And so this is why breathwork and meditation is so popular, because in an instance where I don't have my stress ball or I'm not going to pull out my phone because this isn't really a setting for me to engage in journaling right now, what am I going to fall on? And sometimes your breath is literally the thing that will calm you down, right? And that's my biggest self soothing technique. The moment I take a breath, the moment my self regulation skills tap in and I'm like, all right, resist urgency, resist being impulsive. Think through it, don't respond right away. And literally a few deep breaths help me get there.

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And then the last step to it is your thoughts, right? So going back to now, reengaging your thought. Because with emotions come thoughts, right? So with feelings comes a thought. So after you start to self soothe, I want you to challenge those thoughts. What are negative thoughts that you have? And for every negative, I want you to reframe it to a positive one. And so that is what the best method is. Starting off with identifying your boundary, then identifying what is the emotional reaction to that boundary. Then asking yourself, how can I self soothe to get me through this emotion? And what are the thoughts that are attached to this emotion that I can start reframing them into something positive as a way to continue to self soothe?

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. I love all of those. And yeah, getting past our own discomfort without negating what we've clearly decided is a necessary boundary, or that we, if it was anybody else, right, like if you were talking to your best friend or a loved one and they were like, gosh, I don't know how to do this, this is what I think I need to do but it makes me feel bad. We would sit with them through like, I know it feels bad, I know it feels hard, but you can do it. You're totally capable of this. You can handle the consequences. We need to do that for ourselves.

Minaa B

Right. And I think that's why I love that audio journaling perspective too. Because that is why when we're talking out loud, we can hear those discrepancies where the same way we would have a friend in our ear saying you can do this hard thing and what you're saying actually isn't rational. Like, think about it. When you hear yourself saying things out loud, you might be able to do that where you're recognizing, oh, man, this wasn't a rational thought.

And the reason why I also share that mechanism and I share the BEST technique is because co-regulation is such a powerful way to regulate the body. However, in life, like I said, adversity can come in so many different ways. And how we handle adversity has to sometimes be in the moment where we don't have the power to co-regulate. I can't call my friend right now while I'm at work to say, all right, this happened with my boss. What should I do? Because I'm in the meeting right now while my boss is here. I have to self regulate in this particular moment.

And so I think it's really important for people to have a tool where they can engage in that self regulation process because often I think when you are dealing with trauma as well, again, going back to what we talked about earlier, we want that validation and so we want to lean on other people for support. But there just are going to be times where people aren't available to us. So we want to make sure we harness the tools internally to regulate ourselves when someone else's nervous system is not available for us.

Meagen Gibson

Yeah, and I think I saw something just a couple of weeks ago about the reactivity loop between two people and that it's only 6 seconds long and so we can be feeding back and forth to each other, within 6 seconds, that loop completes and we'll keep going unless one person stops it. Right? And so I think when we think of when you mentioned breath work or something, I think

often people in their minds are like, well, I also can't stop and do breath work in a meeting. Well, that would only take two breaths to break a six second cycle.

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And I think anybody also who's a parent can understand how few breaths it takes to stop your reactivity and to just begin to self regulate, to just begin to take three beats per minute off your breathing and heart rate and begin to feel your feet on the ground. And it's just that initial giving yourself the space to calm down and get some more space in your window of tolerance, if you will.

Minaa B

Absolutely.

Meagen Gibson

All right, so as we kind of wind down, I don't want to finish without talking about one of the other fantastic processes that you lay out in the book, which is one by which you can get to radical acceptance and solution oriented thinking. It's beautiful. And you have a series of sentence stems that are super powerful. And we've talked about people with trauma histories or anxiety and mental health issues and we get stuck in avoidance because that's what's readily available to us when we try to create safety. And we start with the first sentence stem, which you lay out as, when blank happens, I feel.

And then most people just stop and design their lives around avoiding that thing, right? If this happens, I feel this way, so I just won't let that happen anymore. But the process that you kind of laid out in your book is so reassuring and calming and really lit up all of my worst case scenario planning parts who love to have that job, but landed me, surprisingly, in this place of peace and self acceptance and radical acceptance that I didn't expect. So I would love it if you could share that process with us right now to radical acceptance.

Minaa B

Yeah, I mean, I think what you said really plays a big role in how most people engage with their feelings, right? This happened. I feel this thing, this thing now defines the totality of my life. This thing is now going to dictate my future. Catastrophic thinking, polarized thinking, all the different maladaptive forms of thinking start to manifest, and we feel stuck. We feel like, again, maybe I feel hopeless. What's the point? Or I feel confused, or I feel rage, or I feel all of these different emotions that at the end of the day, just strip me again of my self efficacy and my agency.

And I think radical acceptance is a solution focused alternative where we realize there are things in life that happen to us that we cannot control. But radical acceptance says, what is the thing that I can control? And how can I focus my energy and my attention toward that thing so that I can move closer to giving myself the life that I truly want and deserve for myself? And so I may not be able to control everything on a, and this is talking from an individual level, even to an institutional and systemic level, recognizing that there is so much happening in this world that if I allow myself to succumb to it, I am going to stay in a state of PTSD.

I'm going to stay in a state of chronic anxiety, and I know I want more for myself. And so what are some moments in life that I can realize I can't control that thing, but this is the thing that I can

control. I can control how I react. I can control my quality of life. I can control the things that I choose to engage in on a daily basis. I can control what I want to expose myself to.

[00:37:37]

And I think that being able to recognize that we realize we're not as powerless as we think we are, and that radical acceptance allows us to realize I'm not saying that what happened to you is your fault, that's not what that is, but it's also recognizing that I cannot go back in time to change it, but I can try to redefine my future. And to do that, what are the things that I need in this moment to make me feel whole and loved and nurtured, that I can get from other people, but that I can also give myself?

And by engaging in that, I'm problem solving. By engaging in that, I'm changing patterns. And that is what it really means to just lean into radical acceptance of a situation and say, how can I make sure this situation doesn't define me now? It's hard, it's heavy, it's painful. But how can I engage in a solution focused lens that allows me to say, you know what? I recognize what happened to me. It hurt me, it traumatized me. It wasn't okay. I can own that. Two things can be true at once. That happened, but I also can live a fulfilling life. So what are the steps that I need to take so that I can move closer to the thing that I want?

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. And we've mentioned agency so many times in this conversation and that's really what that comes back to, right, is recognizing and reclaiming your own agency.

Minaa B

Exactly. And I think that's the most important piece to my work and this book, by really recognizing that trauma is hard, validating that, validating that experience, but knowing that there's another side to it. Because I think what I see happen very commonly in the work that I do is trauma survivors, they have access to all this research. You read *The Body Keeps the Score* and you're like, am I ever going to heal? And so one of the things I notice is you engage in trauma, you experience trauma and you engage in that trauma healing work by learning about trauma.

And it can become easy now to say, well, Minaa, I heard what you said, but let me give you this evidence based practice of understanding that trauma rewires the brain for 20 to 30 years. And I'm like, yes, I put that in my book and guess what else can happen, right? So we take in all this information and we don't realize that sometimes we're feeding ourselves these false narratives by saying, well, the more I learn about trauma, the more it actually makes me feel like I can't heal from it.

Because look at what this says, look at what this book says, look at what this research says, and we're blocking our minds from the additional part of the work where it says, but post traumatic growth is a thing, but this is what happens to your brain, this is what happens when you experience trauma during childhood. But this is what healing work does to the brain. This is what co-regulation does to the brain. This is how therapy can help you heal your brain. We skip that stuff over and we say, but, but, but...

And so I really want people to own and recognize that this is not about invalidating your experience but, again, your experience does not define your future. It does not make you who you are. It does

not mean that you are going to just be this one thing. You are a multidimensional person. And when we allow ourselves to be open to that healing process, we can be able to recognize that, yes, trauma happened to me, but it can be healed. I can be made whole if I feel broken. And all those different moving pieces can be put back together in some sort of way through this healing work.

[00:41:29] Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Yeah. And eventually I think everybody in the trajectory of learning about trauma and being validated and self acceptance and everybody gets to a place at that beginning stage where it's finally either revealed to them, pointed out to them, or they learn it and figure it out themselves that they had trauma. And then they're just like, oh, well, that explains everything and I'll just rest here, but then that doesn't serve you. And you start to realize that you might have to do just a little bit more work to start growing and healing from it, integrating it, and all of those things that come with post traumatic growth.

Speaking of, and the last question that I have for you is I'd love it if you could end with a little pep talk on rest. And the kind of people that attend trauma conferences and do self help growth work are here because nobody else in our lives will do the work. So it can end up with us putting in hours to change ourselves, which can be just absolutely exhausting. And so you had such a beautiful way of speaking about rest and the way that we think about it. So I would love it if you could share that with us.

Minaa B

Yeah. So I think commonly when we hear the word rest, we automatically assume I need to get more sleep at night or I need more quiet time where I can sit on the couch in solitude or I need more Netflix time. That is what it means to rest, to be totally disengaged from everything around me. And there are so many different forms of rest that I break down in my book that is not equivalent to getting more sleep at night. Rest can look like maybe I need to engage in sensory rest because I've been staring at this laptop for the last 6 hours.

My mind is overstimulated, my brain is exhausted and I know it's exhausted because my executive functioning skills are not functioning right now. I can't concentrate, I can't problem solve, I can't engage in solutions right now. That is showing me my brain is tired. So sensory rest can look like I'm just going to close the laptop right now. So that's another form of rest, physical rest. Again, physical rest does not mean I'm going to get in my bed and take a nap. That could be the rest if you need that.

But sometimes physical rest could look like I've been over exerting myself all week and maybe I'm going to take a step back from physical activities. Maybe I'm going to take a step back from going to the gym. Maybe I'm going to take a step back from Pilates class or whatever that thing is that I've been doing because I've been so overstimulated, my body is super sore. And so I might realize that I'm going to get a massage. And if I'm not going to get a massage, I'm going to go for a walk. Or I'm going to do something that really allows my body the ability to calm down and regulate itself.

So in the book, I just walk people through those seven different practices that rest can look like so that we're aware that rest is not just let me get more sleep, but outside of those seven different practices, I often help people really engage in rest through a wider perspective about what you give your energy and time to. So in my book, you'll hear me say minding your business is a form of

rest. Knowing what to engage in is a form of rest. Knowing when to end a conversation is a form of rest.

[00:45:05]

And I think those things are really important because when we're overstimulated, the body is super active and the body is looking for ways to calm down and become dysregulated. And so we have to ask ourselves, what do I keep engaging and exposing myself to that is disrupting my peace? We might say, well, it's that person that I'm always hanging out with. But when you really break that down, you might realize it's not really that person. It's that when I get around that person, I act in a particular way that is maybe causing me to become very dysregulated.

And you might realize that maybe if I show up differently in this relationship, I will feel more energized, right? Maybe I am the codependent friend, and every time I'm around that person, I'm pouring out and I'm pouring out and I'm pouring out. And the reason why I share these concepts in my book, too, is because sometimes when we're dysregulated and we feel exhausted and we feel drained, it's easy to blame other people for that. I can't rest when I'm around you because you say these things or you do these things.

And you might realize that when I'm around this person, do I have to bring up certain conversations? I know how this person gets on this topic, but I keep bringing it up. I go there with them. I entertain that person. I'm upset that this person is living their life in a way that I don't think is right. I see this happen so many times in friendships and in relationships. I don't understand why my daughter is dating that guy or I don't understand why my friend is doing this thing. And it's like, who's more provoked here? You or the friend? Who's more stressed out here? You or the friend? You or the person doing that thing?

And so I really want people to think about rest in a larger capacity. Rest is not just about my body needing more sleep. Rest can look like, what are the different things that I'm exposed to on a daily basis that I need to disengage from? But then, even on a micro level, the way I interact with people, how does that also disrupt my peace? And resting can look like, I'm not going to bring this up because it's not bothering them. Why does it bother me so much? It's their life. It's their choice.

So you have to be thinking about it from that perspective too, because I find that's a common thing that I find just in relationships, we can get very attached to someone and now want and project our values and beliefs onto them and not realizing that I'm not minding my business. And that's why I just feel so dysregulated. And again, it goes back to I. It goes back to having that innate power to say, well, I have agency to change this, and it's me that has to do the changing, not them. I have to know when to stop. I have to know when to pause. And that is what rest also looks like.

Meagen Gibson

As you were speaking, I was thinking of just an example in relationships where people will comment on other people's body or food or whatever, and the real motivation behind that. And if you keep going and asking questions and deeper and deeper, it's I don't want to lose you. I want you to essentially be immortal. I think every morsel that goes into your bite is going to shorten your life. And I don't want to be without you. Which is a sweet and wonderful kind of lovely sentiment, but it gets so lost in the surface exchange of me not minding my own business and being critical about what the other person is eating or their body composition or whatever it is that I'm trying to not mind my own business about.

[00:48:44]

And so if we just pause and figure out why we need to criticize or comment or engage in those things, go a little bit deeper, and then figure out what it is that we're actually trying to get at then we can resolve that thing and stop saying unsolicited things about other people or their relationships or their work or whatever it is that we're expressing our opinion about that's none of our business.

Minaa B

None of our business. That is the model.

Meagen Gibson

Absolutely. Well, Minaa, I have really enjoyed being with you today, and I want to make sure people know how they can find out more about you and your work.

Minaa B

So people can find me on Instagram. My handle is [minaa_b](#). You can follow me on Instagram, but you can also visit my website www.minaab.com. And while you're on my website, you can order my book, *Owning Our Struggles: a Path to Healing and Finding Community in a Broken World*. My book is available across all book retailers and you can also engage in my work through my corporate wellness consulting, through my trainings and keynote talks as well. And lastly, I have a newsletter, mindful with Minaa. So you can also subscribe to my newsletter where I give people the skills to build healthy relationships.

Meagen Gibson

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

Minaa B

Thank you, Meagen.