



Conscious Life presents

Trauma Therapy and Resilience in Relationships

Guest: Terry Real

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[00:00:09] Alex Howard

Welcome, everyone to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Terry Real. We're talking about how sometimes psychotherapeutic work in response to trauma can actually make us less resilient, can actually make us feel a little more, sometimes narcissistic, but certainly can create barriers in our intimate and relationship life. This is going to be a really interesting conversation and Terry is a real expert and a real master in this space.

To give you a little bit of Terry's background, Terry Real is an internationally recognized family therapist, speaker and author. He founded the Relational Life Institute, offering workshops for couples, individuals and parents, along with a professional training program for clinicians to learn his Relational Life Therapy methodology. He is the bestselling author of *I Don't Want to Talk About It*, *How Can I Get Through to You?*, *The New Rules of Marriage* and then his most recent book, which was a New York Times bestseller, which is called *Us*. Terry, firstly, welcome back. I always have such fun in our conversations. I'm really happy you're here.

Terry Real

It's always great to play with you, Alex. It's a joy.

Alex Howard

We've done this a bunch of times. I'm curious, as a lot's happened in the world in the last year. There is a lot more awareness of trauma, and that's a good thing. Maybe that also comes with some challenges as well. There's also some real complex stuff happening in the world with politics, with wars and what's going on. And I'm curious as to... You're someone that I know is always giving thought to these topics and always developing ideas. So I'm interested in what's most alive in your thinking right now. When you think about how childhood and trauma shows up in us and it shows up in our relationships, what's front and center of your mind?

[00:02:11] Terry Real

Well, first of all, let me say, as you well know, I've been a great critic of the system of patriarchy for the last 40 years, traditional gender roles, and of individualism, including the antirelational individual bias of psychotherapy for 40 years, and of trauma. When we think about trauma and trauma work, we think about somebody going off to an individual therapist or maybe an intensive group.

The work that I do is called RLT, Relational Life Therapy, the therapy I've created. We do intense trauma work with your partner sitting right next to you, and we're the only people I know who do that. But oh my God, it is so much more heart opening to be sitting next to your partner, understanding what happened to them in childhood that has turned them into the jerk they are now, that you have to live with, and then hearing maybe 5 minutes about it behind some closed door session.

So we do relational... Look, all trauma is relational. I mean, unless you're talking about what we call "type one," a tsunami or a war, but the kind of childhood trauma that we're all dealing with these days, it's relational.

Someone either boundary-violated you and injured you by what we call active trauma, or they neglected you, they emotionally abandoned you and left you to your own resources when, as a little kid, you shouldn't have been, and that injures you. But both injuries are relational. And the healing of trauma, I believe, needs to be relational as well. I make a distinction between individual empowerment and relational empowerment. And individual empowerment...

I'll tell you, Alex, I ask audiences, "What is the one value shared by mainstream patriarchal culture and by all of the so-called countercultural movements? Feminism, psychiatry, psychology, Twelve-step..." Is to value the individual. Personal growth, even the name of it... Personal growth is personal growth, not relational growth. And personal growth looks like, "I was weak, now I'm strong. Go screw yourself."

Feminist, early feminist, Twelve-step sponsors getting over your codependency. Therapists, everybody and their sister applauds individual empowerment, gets up on the chair and cheers you, "You go, girl." Bullshit! Relational empowerment is much more sophisticated. It says, "Alex, this is what I need from you." Not, "Alex, let me tell you how miserable I am because of the way you just failed me." No, "This is what I would like from you. What do you need from me to help you give it to me? We're a team. We're working together."

And relational empowerment, which is very assertive, "I'm going to tell my truth to you, but I'm going to cherish you and the relationship at the same time I'm telling the truth." And it's a different world. So I talk about learning to live relationally. I offer a map, a new vision of relational living and a toolbox of how to actually live it. But here's the new map.

In individualism, we stand apart from nature. That's what the word means of an individual, distinct from nature. In patriarchy, not only do we stand, and this is for men and women, not only do we stand apart from nature, but we stand above it and we dominate it. We control it. Whether we're trying to control our kids or our spouses or our mind, "I've got to be more positive," or our bodies,

"I've got to lose ten pounds." My GP wants to write a memoir of his life, and he wants to call it *How I Lost Ten Pounds in Forty Years*.

[00:06:34] Alex Howard

That's a good title.

Terry Real

All of the people I work with live the serenity prayer. I'm in charge of what I'm in charge of, which is me. And results, other people, it's in the hands of God. It's not my business. I'm in charge of my game over here. And when you break out of that win/lose, right/wrong, fair/unfair contest thinking, which is really subcortical... It's not the best part of us. It's not what we call the wise adult prefrontal cortex. It's the knee jerk flooded with trauma, or flooded with your adaptation to trauma that you learned as a little boy. When I'm in that automatic knee-jerk response, all bets are off. I'm not going to use skills. That part of me doesn't want to use skills.

Coming out of that survival, 'it's all about me', world to the more enlightened, non trauma saturated consciousness of here and now. You and me, we're a team. We're in the ecology. And I call this waking up to ecological wisdom. And it is beyond our culture. Ecological wisdom is not the world of patriarchy. Ecological wisdom is, "My relationship is my biosphere. I'm not above it, let alone, God forbid, in control of it. I'm in it. I breathe it."

And so it becomes in my interest to keep my biosphere clear, because I'm in it. I don't talk about altruism. I talk about enlightened self. And when you start thinking ecologically, globally, instead of the delusion of power over and dominance, everything changes. And problems that look... Can I give you an example?

Alex Howard

Please, yeah.

Terry Real

This is a true story. And I'm sure your listeners can relate to this. I don't know how it is in England, but certainly in Boston and New York... I'll do it straight. It was straight, heteronormative. She to him, "You're a reckless driver." Him to her, "No, I'm an aggressive driver, but I'm perfectly competent." Anybody recognize that one?

Alex Howard

That's a great one.

Terry Real

"No, you're not competent. You take risk. You do this to..." Him to her, "No, it's not really risky. I'm in total control." I call this an objectivity battle. Who's right and who's wrong, and you marshal your evidence and you argue your case before the judge, and it's ridiculous. One session with me. This is a true story.

[00:09:22]

Her to him, "Honey, start with that. Start with the change in energy. Honey, I know you love me. Right or wrong... This isn't about right or wrong. It's not about objective reality, it's relational. Right or wrong, when I'm in the car with you and you tailgate, you switch lanes, you drive at least 10 miles above the speed limit, I drive myself crazy. I am white knuckling. I am in a state of terror driving with you. Now, look, sweetheart, I know you love me. You don't want me to be miserable every time I'm in the car with you. When you're on your own, drive any way you want. But when I am in the car, as a favor to me, would you please slow down and drive more conservatively so that I don't have to be a nut job?"

And the husband looks at her and says, "Sure." And what would have been a fight that lasted for 40 years is solved in 10 minutes, because it's no longer about winning, losing, right, wrong, fair, unfair. It's about the relationship. We're a team. Let's work together. And this is a complete revolution. This is not the way we're taught today.

Alex Howard

You know, Terry, the thing that's been in my mind as you've been talking, and it was a little bit implicit in the way I think I framed my first question, is that one of the things that I've noticed in recent years is there is much more awareness around trauma. And a lot of people have had a real breakthrough of recognizing that they have been shaped by trauma. But then what happens is that recognition turns to now an identity. I can't do this because I have trauma. So that's the first and the second piece I want to put here...

Terry Real

Let me just comment on that one.

Alex Howard

Yeah, sure.

Terry Real

For the Harvard Couples Conference a few years ago. And the name of the talk was "My Triggering Made Me Do It."

Alex Howard

That's a good title.

Terry Real

Everybody's running around taking these victim positions. In RLT, we don't like victim positions. Here and there you are victimized. Real victims exist, but taking a victim position is, "I'd love to do this, but I'm a small force being moved about by larger forces I have no control over. Don't blame me. Blame the force."

[00:11:51]

And that very much includes, "Hey, Alex," we're a gay couple, we've been dating for a year, "I would love to commit to you, Alex. You're a sweetheart of a guy. My ambivalence just won't let me, I'm sorry. But I'm working on it. I've been in psychoanalysis. I'm on my 15th year of working on it." So a lot of people are taking their trauma and turning it into a shield that they use to protect themselves from the rough and tumble of the world.

Alex Howard

Yeah. And then the second piece... I want to add another piece to this as well. The second piece that I'm seeing is people going into therapeutic work with really good intentions. But one of the seeming outcomes of that therapeutic work is, in some instances, folks appear, as a result of that work, more narcissistic, less resilient, and less able to compromise relationally, because in a way, what they've learned is to meet the needs of their wounded child. They've learned to be in contact with their emotions, but now they're stuck in that place, and it makes them less able to be healthily relational. So I'd love you to speak about that as well as part of this jigsaw.

Terry Real

Not less able, but less willing, because they've been empowered. This is that individual empowerment I'm talking about. We live in an antirelational culture, including psychotherapy. And so, "I'm going to get empowered and find my voice and stand back, brother, because I am woman, hear me roar. I'm going to say it any old way I want, and it's going to pin your ears back, and I don't really give a good goddamn."

No. Look, I said it's a revolutionary new map and new tool. Here's a tool. Under patriarchy, I've said this to you before... Under patriarchy, you can be connected or you can be powerful, but you can't be both at the same time, because power is dominance. It's power over... When I step into power I don't give a shit about you anymore. It's about me. And that's not a power I'm interested in, that's old patriarchal power.

That's shifting from the traditional, accommodating, quote unquote, feminine part of the binary to the independent, "I don't give a damn. I'm going to do what the hell I want," quote unquote, masculine part of the binary. I want to blow up the binary. I want you to be caring and assertive in the same breath. And we literally teach people how to do it.

Come to our course, and we teach you how to... We call it standing up for yourself with love. And we have to teach people this. It's not in the course. So instead of saying, "Alex, look, I'm not being disrespectful to you. I don't really like the way you're talking to me right now," I say, "Alex, honey, I want to hear what you have to say. Could you tone it down and be a little nicer to me so I can actually hear it? Would you do that for us?"

Two ways of saying the same thing, but one's about screwing you into the ground, and the other is about empowering you to come through for me, which is more sophisticated. And this culture does not understand relational empowerment. It's either "Go along to get along" or "Stand up for yourself" and Katy, bar the door. So, like the woman who spoke to her husband, "I know you love me. Let's not argue about who's right or wrong. I get crazy by the way you drive. Do me a favor.

Drive a little..." "Sure, I can do that." And that's living relationally, but we have to teach it. It's not in the culture at all.

[00:15:37] Alex Howard

Yeah, I think part of the issue here as well is that we use the language of, let's say, the wounded child or the wounded part of us that hasn't been seen, and then we come into psychotherapeutic work, and we get to see that part and meet that part. And then it's almost like we become hypersensitive to anyone that doesn't recognize and take care of the needs of that part. And it's like there's a partial truth that part of us needs to be held and be seen, but it's like, how do we then hold that part of us, not just reject it again, but also meet people in this relational way that you're describing? Because that part, maybe it's screaming, maybe it's activated, but then if we respond from that place, as you say, we're taking the conversation in the wrong direction, not the right. So how do we hold that place and do what you're describing?

Terry Real

In a moment where that wounded child is screaming, and then we wind up screaming. We're not taking the relationship in the wrong direction. The wounded child is now in charge, right?

Alex Howard

Well put.

Terry Real

And we don't like that. Look, your wounded child... And I also want to talk about the adaptive child, because that's pesky. These inner children absolutely need love, care, and attention. They need to be reparented, basically. But guess what? By us, not our partners. And I have 8 million sayings, and one of them is, "Maturity comes when we tend to our inner children and don't voice them off on our partners to tend to."

It's a two-step process. So one of the things I want your listeners to get today is this. If you are plagued with an outsized feeling, a disproportionate, extreme feeling. It's not yours. That's not the prefrontal cortex wise adult. You're being triggered. It's a subcortical part of you from childhood, and it's not your... For example, if you're a love addict, you have a lot of abandonment in your childhood. Your partner storms off in a huff, you feel like all the air is out. You're going to die. You're not feeling an adult feeling. How old are you, Alex, may I ask?

Alex Howard

43.

Terry Real

That's not a 43-year-old feeling. Adults don't get abandoned. Adults get left. But if you have abandonment trauma, you move right into the wounded child part of you and you'll feel like you're going to die, because that's what children feel, because they will die. So you feel that, and then our

work is, "Alex, take a breath. That's not your terror. That's his. Turn to him. Put your arms around him, ask him to tell you about his terror, and talk to him. And you hold him."

[00:18:51]

I say, when an inner child kicks up, you want to put your arms around them. You want to hear them out, and you want to take their sticky hands off the steering wheel. You're in the backseat. I'm driving the bus. I've got you. When Belinda comes at me, my wife for 40 years, in anger, we're both fighters. Our adaptive... She comes at me in fighting mode. I take little Terry. I know him very well. I've got a composite about eight years old. I put him behind me, and he's physically behind me, holding onto my shirt, and I make a deal with him, "Between Belinda's anger and you is me, my big body, my adult self. You are safe back there. Can you feel that, little Terry?" "Yeah, okay. Good."

"That's my part of the deal. Here's your part of the deal. Don't you try and deal with Belinda. You will make a mess. You make me deal with her. And it's a two-step. And I deal with captains of the universe. I deal with movies. I have big burly guys, whatever. In the middle of a fight with somebody, "Excuse me, I need 5 minutes." Zip off to the bathroom, close the door, take their little boy on their lap, "What's going on, then? Okay, tell me. All right, listen. They're not going to hurt you. I got you. Can you feel that, honey? Come behind me, and I don't want you yelling and screaming at my wife. I'll take care of it. Got it? All right, good." And people literally, physically, do this six, seven times a day if they need to.

I call it relational mindfulness. What makes relationships so dicey is that when the heat is on, when you're wafted with the imperfection that is inevitable, you get triggered, you lose the wise adult, you're back in your childhood. You react the way you've always reacted, and you're off to the races. The first skill is taking a breath or a break. Take a day, I don't care how long. Get recentered. I call it "remembering love."

This person is not the enemy. And even if I can't feel like I love them very much at the moment, that's okay. That's normal. I have to live with the son of a gun. So let me see what I can do that actually might be helpful. And so you are in charge of your own reactivity, so that when you're trauma triggered in Dan Siegel's work, you move from the reactive mind to the responsive mind. You know, Dan Siegel's famous.

Here's the mammalian brain stem, here's the emotional brain, the limbic system, and here's the thoughtful brain, the prefrontal cortex. When you're triggered, this goes offline, and this lights up. And both in intense trauma work in someone's office... But to me, that's the beginning. That's to set you up to do this in your life. Every day you soothe that little boy or girl. You remember that you're not, for they're not your screaming mom or dad. You're okay.

You parent that inner child, and then you turn as an adult to the adult facing you, and you use your skills, and that is healing. We think healing is going to come when they give it to us. We all want that. I understand that. But it ain't ever going to work. You have to give it to you. And then you can have the joy of a beautiful relationship which will heal your trauma, but not by getting them to be the parent that you should have had.

[00:22:47] Alex Howard

Well, it's almost like the strategy that you're often describing is adopted, is I need my relational partner to be the perfect loving mom and dad that I didn't have. And then one goes to some forms of psychotherapeutic work, and the guidance is that you've just got to rescue and sometimes collapse into and feel the feelings of that wounded child and that adapted child.

But there's not a lot of focus on cultivating and developing the adult. Who's the adult self that's going to put the wounded child behind them? Who's the adult self that is going to be more skillful in their language? And how do they frame the response to their partner in the ways that you described that actually are going to downregulate the conversation rather than sort of upregulate the conversation? So I'm interested in what helps develop that adult capacity. How do we recognize it, and how do we practice responding more from that place?

Terry Real

Well, it is spiritual work in a way. I call it relational mindfulness. It's the same skill as mindfulness. It's like, "Wait a minute. I know I'm being triggered right now." A hallmark of the adaptive child, which I want to get to, is that they're automatic, "The whole world is going to collapse if I don't do this thing. I mean, I got to do this thing."

And for those of you who are listening, here's a simple rubric. We all know the first two, fight, flight, and I've added a third "fix." By the way, for the somatic people, Peter Levine's freeze is frozen flight. It's paralyzed. And if you look at Peter's work, he unfreezes the... People literally shake. And it's like they're running. "Fix," which evolutionary biologists are now calling "fawning." When the animal starts licking the other animals, it gets subservient, "Hey, sorry, baby, don't eat me." "Fix" in adults is that co-dependent, knee-jerk, compulsive, "I will twist myself in the knots to make you feel okay. Because if you don't feel okay, I can't feel okay."

That's different from an adult saying, "Okay, what can I do here to make the relationship work?" This is young and compulsive and anxious. You lose yourself. So fight, flight or fix, that's your adaptive child. And we focus a lot in trauma work on the wounded child. Young, first weeks of life, up to four or five, the part of you that just experienced it all. And 90% of trauma work comes straight out of psychoanalysis. It's abreaction, it's release. It's what Dick Schwartz calls unburdening, letting go of the trauma.

No, that's not how I do it. Our work is relational. You, the wise adult, turn to the adaptive child and wounded child, and you reparent them. And parenting consists of three things. Nurture, and all trauma work's about nurture, nurture, nurture these days. Yeah, great. But that's only part of it. There's also guidance. "Honey, calm down. It's going to be okay." And limits. "No, you can't yell or scream. I'm not going to let you do that."

Trauma work is all about indulging that wounded child. It's all about nurture, nurture, nurture. Psychotherapy is all about that. And they don't do guidance and limits, which gives people license to act like real jerks.

And we do. There's a saying in AA, Hurt people hurt people. And for 40 years I've been detailing the dynamics of violence, emotional and even physical violence, moving from that victimized one-down helpless shame state to the self-medication of going up into grandiosity, superiority, self-righteousness and attack.

[00:27:20]

These are the dynamics of violence. And if we don't understand both parts of it, this shit's going to go on over and over. No one wants to hear this right now. It's so interesting. We're so focused on the victim. When are we going to start focusing on the perpetrator? Like, where are all those perpetrators? They're not in the literature. Nobody is analyzing what was going on with them. Nobody's saying, "Oh, I can be a victim in this relationship and a perpetrator in that one."

Alex Howard

Which is often what happens.

Terry Real

Of course it's what happens. We're not dealing with that at all. I gave an interview. I said, "If we're all victims, who's victimizing us? Are we all hitting ourselves over the head with a hammer?" I mean, somebody's on the other side behaving badly. If we're going to work with trauma, let's work with healing the results of trauma. Let's also work with preventing the transmission of trauma. Because there are flip sides of the coin.

If you don't deal with trauma... You have to deal with trauma and you have to deal with your adaptation to trauma. The adaptive child, older child. So the wounded child is often shame-based. The adaptive child is often grandiose, entitled. There's a whole lot of what therapy used to call "offending from the victim position." I'm your victim, and I get to paste you with no shame or compunction because I'm your victim. I mean, the whole sort of Cancel Culture. Self-righteous indignation is toxic. It is a dangerous drug. The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion consultant we brought into our school is a genius, Duran Young. He is fond of saying, "Shaming someone is not an effective social activation strategy."

But how much shaming is going on in our culture? And it's about going from the one down to the one up. We have to deal with grandiosity and the one up as well as the one down.

Alex Howard

Terry, what's in my mind as you're talking, and this is a great conversation because you're speaking a lot of things that are cooking in my own thinking and providing some great clarity. But one of the things that's in my mind at the moment, I think it's technically referred to in psychological literature as the father wound, but it's quite a narrow definition. I'm thinking about it more broadly, which is the absence of that more traditional father energy.

If the mother energy is, I adore you, I love, you're perfect as you are, and that father energy is, You've got this, go stand up for it, I'll stand behind you. Fall down, I'm going to pick you up. Let's go make things happen in your life!

It strikes me that a lot of the psychotherapy world has been overindulging that mothering energy, and there's the lack of that. And then I think one of the impacts of that is then lack of real self-esteem and self-worth. What you were just speaking of, I'm wounded, therefore I can do what

I want, and I'm going to tear down other people to kind of cheat at inflating myself and try and feel better.

[00:30:46]

I'd be really curious as to your thoughts. The other piece that's in my mind around it is, I got three daughters between six and twelve. There are so many amazing female role models in kids movies at the moment, in kids TV shows. Where are the male role models? That's why we get people like Andrew Tate that get this massive social influence, because of the void of this more masculine quality. I'd love to hear your thoughts on that and how that relates to these pieces.

Terry Real

I think RLT is somewhat unique in the field in that we start off by confronting you about what you're doing to blow your own foot off. That's where we start. I learned first you form a trusting relationship with a client, then you confront them. Two years later, you start to tell them what they're doing. We form a trusting relationship by telling you what you're doing right out of the store. Now, you have to be skillful at it. You can't clobber somebody and call it joining through the truth.

Hey, look, Alex, I'm just obviously going to make this up real quick. When your wife gets busy and is unavailable to you, there's a little boy in you that gets abandonment and triggered from your childhood, from your family. You have about 2 seconds worth of tolerance for those feelings and helplessness. And you go into the one up and you start getting demanding and controlling. "Honey, I really need you to blah, blah, blah." She reacts not in her best adult, but she's like, Don't tell me what the fuck to do. You get even less from her. And then you move from control to retaliation. And you get mean.

Then your meanness becomes the reason why she's cold to you next time. This is endless. And I would say to you, how am I doing? Did I get that about right? You would say, yeah, because it's right. Okay, I can get you out of this. Would you like to get out of this? And who's going to say no to that? So I don't know what most, it's all hand-holding. I start off by telling you what's going on and offering you a lifeline.

The first is loving comfort. Then we move into childhood. Where did you learn this? Let's talk about the abandoned little boy. And let's talk about the angry, controlling little boy. Because it's both. The wounded little boy is young and the controlled little boy is what you learned to do to deal with that abandonment. You've been doing it your whole life.

Okay, let me tell you about the wise adult. Here's what I want you to say. I want you to say to your wife, "Honey, when I start talking to you, and as you're talking to me, walk out of the room and keep talking, you shoot me. That feels terrible to me. Could you do me a favor and not do that?" "Okay, I can do that." Great. That's a new move.

It's loving confrontation, going back and doing trauma work. Where did you learn this from and how did you adapt to it? You're dealing with those inner children and then reaching for a new skill, which you have to learn because it's not in the culture. "Honey, as a favor to me, would you please?" It's a combination of all three of these that I think produces such profound dramatic change so quickly.

[00:34:20]

People can do it on their own, too. I really want people to come, if I may. We have two courses for the general public, and they're flip sides. One is a self-esteem course, straining out your relationship with yourself, really loving yourself and intervening from going one down into I'm defective, I'm less than, or one up into judgment and entitlement. Really you're staying the same as. And the liberation of inside out. So I have worth because of who I am, no better or worse than the guy next to me. It's a done deal. Peace.

And then the other course is called The Art of Relational Living, which is how to manage other living beings and the planet and spirit. So we can learn all of this. But psychotherapy and the whole trauma field is amplifying the individualistic antirelational bias of the culture. The people are getting empowered and they're acting like brats in their relationships and feeling like that's progress, but we can do better than that.

Alex Howard

It's such a tricky thing, isn't it? Because it's like... There's one of the things I love about conferences like this. And some people will be thinking, how do they find out about these courses? We're going to wrap up, and I'm going to ask you where people can go to find that. But I just wanted to say that one of the challenges is that there are lots of pieces to a jigsaw.

I think the problem is, the breakthrough at one stage becomes the trap at the next stage. Someone goes to a therapeutic path and it's a breakthrough. One identifies the wounded child. One starts to take care of that. But the problem is, we tend to stop. People tend to see things too simply.

They go to that thing, they stop and don't realize that to heal that thing they're compromising perhaps another thing. What I really appreciate about frameworks such as yours is that we can understand there are these different pieces, but also, what's the macro effect of over-indexing on one side as opposed to recognizing that that piece is true, but if we only do that piece, what's the wider price potentially that we pay for that?

Terry Real

Well, you can just get selfish. It's a different brand of selfish, and you lose the wisdom of, It's in my interest, my enlightened self interest to take care of my biosphere, because it will come back to me. And it's not in my interest to indulge a temper tantrum, for example. It's not in my interest. I'm hungover the next day, and it will make a mess between me and my partner.

One of the great open secrets in the field is that unlike shame, which feels bad, grandiosity feels good, that's why we turn to it. It is an effective self-medicator. When you're feeling abandoned and helpless and small, and you move into rage and indignation, "Get your fat ass off the couch and get over here. Goddamn it." You feel better. You're less depressed. But drinking three Martinis would make you feel better too. But you don't want to do it. It's bad for you.

One of the things I track is the energy of contempt. A great insight that I had one day is that shame and grandiosity, one down, defective, one up, superior, entitled, are not different emotions. It's the same emotion in different directions. Think about a flashlight, and that emotion is contempt. When that flashlight is on me, I'm so terrible. When that flash is on you, Oh, Alex, what an asshole! It could be even the same language, but certainly the same energy.

[00:38:31]

What I teach people to do is, Turn off the flashlight. Live a contempt-free life. And when you find yourself in a one up contempt state, either toward yourself or toward another, you're off. You're in your adaptive child. Take a break. Take a breath. Come back into center. Remember love.

Remember love to that person. Remember love to yourself. You are a flawed human being, just like the rest of us. No better or worse than anybody else.

Come down from the one up. Come up from the one down and enter into real intimacy, which heals. I love poetry. There's a beautiful couplet from the poet Auden which captures this. "You shall love your crooked neighbour / With your crooked heart."

Alex Howard

That's beautiful. Just to say, before you give people more information, Terry did a wonderful interview around self-esteem and grandiosity as part of healing toxic relationships. So people that have access to our membership and are watching this, go and check that out because it's great. Terry, you mentioned a couple of courses. Tell people where they can go to find out more about you and your work and those courses. And also, I know you train clinicians as well, so speak to that as well, please.

Terry Real

If you're a mental health professional, go to relationallife.com. That's the name of the therapy, Relational Life. All the courses are there. Also, if you want to find an RLT therapist, go there. We have accredited people all over the world. If you're what I like to call a normal person as opposed to a mental health professional, you can also try just terryreal.com, just my name. We have a beautiful course on real self-esteem, what it is and what it isn't.

This culture gets it wrong. Confidence is not self-esteem. Self-esteem comes from the inside out. It's an ontological, existential, spiritual fact. You have worth, as long as you're hearing, you're breathing, it can't be added to, can't be subtracted from, can't be better, can't be worse than anybody else. Once you really get that, your world relaxes. And so how to assess your relationship to yourself? I had a blue-collar, South Boston Irish guy, and I did self-esteem work with him. And at the end of the session, he said, "I feel like I just did couple therapy with myself."

Alex Howard

That's great.

Terry Real

Your relationship to yourself is a relationship that can be worked on. And then the Art of Relational Living is a ten session course, where I just go through all of the skills. How to speak up with love, how to listen without being defensive, how to make repair, how to cherish your partner, how to be powerful and a teammate both at the same time. Really essential skills that I would like our schools to be teaching our kids, but you can learn them now.

[00:42:00] Alex Howard

Wonderful. Terry, thank you so much. I really appreciate you, and I appreciate your time.

Terry Real

Thank you, Alex. It's always a joy.