

The Heart of It All: Where Care Meets Courage - Episode 1

[00:00:00] Welcome to Care Out Loud. I'm Mary Coughlin and this is the heart of it all. A solo series where we'll explore the sacred space between trauma, inhaling science, and soul care and courage. This inaugural episode is called, this is What I Know About Love, and I wanna begin not with data, not with policy, but with something much older.

Something cellular. I've spent my career caring for babies born too soon, and what I've learned is this love is not sentimental. It's biological. It is the first medicine. A baby in the NICU doesn't survive just because they're intubated or medicated.

They survive because someone holds vigil because someone speaks gently through the incubator wall. Because [00:01:00] someone dares to love a life so small, so fragile, it feels like it could break you just to care. I've seen nurses touch a baby with such intention that the baby's heart rate stabilizes.

I've watched a mother terrified, grieving, brave place her hand on her child's chest and whisper, and here, that's love. It's not flowers and poetry, it's presence, its protection, its relational regulation. It's a fierce kind of noticing that says YOU MATTER, but here's the hard part, we work and live in systems that aren't built for love.

The healthcare system doesn't reward love. The political system doesn't center love, and yet every single act of trauma-informed care is an act of [00:02:00] defiance. It says, I see your metrics and your detachment. I raise you a heartbeat, A relationship, a healing moment. We live in a world where tenderness is often mistaken for weakness, but I've seen love do things.

No protocol could. I've seen love stitch back together what trauma tried to unravel. So, when people ask me, “why are you so passionate?” Or “why does your work feel so personal?” I say because trauma is not just clinical, it's cultural. And love is not just a feeling. It's a force. Love, real love asks something of us.

It asks us to stay, to stay awake when it would be easier to go numb, to stay with someone's story when it's uncomfortable [00:03:00] to stay grounded. When the world pulls us toward fear, towards judgment, toward apathy. In the

NICU, staying present is an act of love; in democracy, staying involved is an act of love; in leadership, staying honest is an act of love.

That's why I am calling this series the 'Heart of It all', because that's what I'm after, the root system, the pulse beneath the protocol, the soul of why we care and why we must keep caring even when it's hard.

So, here's my question for you. What do you know about love? Not the kind in the movies, the kind you practice in your NICU, your kitchen, your neighborhood, and your nation.

What kind of love are you being called to embody right now? [00:04:00] Pause, listen, and then act. Whether that means holding space for a parent's tears or speaking out against injustice, love is a verb. So this week, do one thing big or small that says, I'm still here. I still care, because that is what love does.

Thank you for listening to Care Out Loud, the heart of it all series. And if this resonated with you, please subscribe, share it with someone who needs it. Visit the website to explore the movement of care, courage, and community. And remember, care is language, love is practice, and your presence matters. See you next [00:05:00] week.