

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 45

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Dr. Dana Surviving Sexual Abuse

Kim Fauskee 00:00

Sometimes, we have to talk about topics that aren't so pleasant. And Dana and I thought that this topic was important to discuss with our audience. And and, again, I'm going to forewarn everybody that this has very sensitive subject matter, and adult language and adult content. So if you're listening to this in the car around small children, or you're listening in a public space, you need to put your, your air pods or your headphones in, to listen to this. So again, we're going to talk about sexual abuse. And and in a subsequent podcast, we're actually going to talk with a sexual abuse survivor. And it's important to to understand how your trajectory in life changes based on the abuse that happens to you, and that we fall back into these familiar patterns that we talk about all the time on this podcast and, and how those patterns can be passed down if you don't deal with the trauma that happened to you. So Dana, what are some of the important things that the audience should get out of this hour long discussion that you and I had?

Dr. Dana 01:14

You know, Kim, one of the things that I think is most important for our audience understand is that sexual abuse is incredibly common in our society. Seven out of 10 women and six out of 10 men report having some kind of inappropriate sexual contact as a child. So that's more than half, almost two thirds for women. And this is something that a lot of people have a really hard time believing is real. I have 30 years of experience working with sexual abuse survivors, and I've heard everything that you would never want to imagine. But I think it's really important for people to understand how common it is, and with COVID actually increased exponentially, because of the stress that a lot of families went through. Even though it's a difficult subject to listen to it, I think it's really important that we bring the information forward. All right, well, I hope you enjoy this conversation on maybe enjoys not the right word, but at least get something out of this conversation that Dana and I have on sexual abuse. There are two basic motivating forces, fear and love. When we're afraid, we pull back from life. When we're in love, we open up to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance. Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California. This is the fear me out podcast. We're not your typical Self Help Program. Our show takes a deep dive into those psychological issues that affect us on a daily basis. We hope to shift your perspective and have you experiencing emotions differently. Now, here are your hosts, Kim Fauskee. And Dr. Dana Saperstein.

Kim Fauskee 03:09

So the subject that we're about to speak about happens to seven out of 10 women, six out of 10 men. It happens in the United States every 68 minutes. And generally, it's done by somebody that you know. And so we're talking about the very important subject of sexual abuse and sexual assault. So Dan, I

know that this is not only personal to you, but you have a lot of professional experience in it. I don't have that personal experience all tell a little bit of a story down the road about an experience or an encounter that I had, that had the potential of of sexual abuse in it. But like for you to kind of get this important unfortunate little dark subject started.

Dr. Dana 04:13

What I believe is most important to understand, like you just said, is that the lion's share of sexual abuse happens to a person with somebody that they know whether it's a friend of the family, a neighbor, a parent, grandparents, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, teacher, clergy, any kind of relationship you could ever imagine. Unfortunately, adults have exploited those relationships and use their influence to sexually abuse children. I also think it's really important to understand that it's not just men that sexually abuse children that women do it also. I know that that's a hard thing sometimes for women to accept but I will tell you that um, It's more commonly happening at the hands of a man. But it doesn't mean that doesn't happen at the hands of a woman also, because I've worked with many, many people who have been abused by their sisters or their aunt or their moms or their grandmothers, or teachers, it happens in all kinds of different contexts. And, sadly, women are as capable of sexually abusing children as men, which is a really sad thing for me to have to say. But I do know that it's true.

Kim Fauskee 05:35

And it seems to generate a lot of it happens with people with authority, like you were talking about teachers, coaches, law enforcement, bosses, people that that have control or authority over you, or at least they think that they do,

Dr. Dana 05:56

right. Well, I mean, it also has to do with neighbors and relatives and not you know, any adult that is capable of that kind of behavior finds a way to engage themselves in family situations where the children are vulnerable. The hardest thing from my perspective is that if you're been sexually abused as a kid, and you don't deal with it, or you blocked it out, for whatever reason, it's extremely common to have your children being abused as they grow up, because you have a blind spot when it comes to the energy of a perpetrator. And so,

Kim Fauskee 06:35

so you're not talking about the parents actually perpetrating that abuse on their kids, sometimes. But mainly, your context was that you have this blind spot, so you don't see it happening to your case,

Dr. Dana 06:50

I worked with a mom once who came to see me because she walked into the garage, and found her father molesting her 14 year old daughter. As soon as she saw her father molesting her 14 year old daughter, she then remember that he did the same thing to her. But she didn't remember it until she saw her daughter being abused by the person that abused her. So if you can imagine what it would be like to be a very loving mom and to walk in on your father, molesting your daughter, and then remember, he did the same thing to you, and that you didn't protect your daughter from it is a really difficult situation to deal with. And you'd be surprised how often that that happens that people block out sexual abuse, and then it happens in their family and that reawakens the memories inside of them.

Kim Fauskee 07:42

If it gets important to begin this conversation, about your personal experience, and what happened to you and again, I'm sorry for listeners that have listened to this 40 odd episodes. And, and I've heard this story before, but I think it's important for the context of this conversation for you to explain about what happened to you how you actually blocked this out how it affected your life, how you got that, the memory back of of being victimized, and how that affected you as a therapist in in dealing with people that have had sexual abuse or sexual assault.

Dr. Dana 08:29

Okay, well, what happened to me was that I was born with a double hernia. And when I was four years old, they decided to operate to correct the hernia. So my parents dropped me off at the hospital the night before the surgery, which was common back in 1959. Back in the dark ages, parents weren't allowed to stay with their kids. So they, you know, left me there, and told me they would be back in the morning after the surgery to pick me up and take me home.

Kim Fauskee 08:56

I mean, do you think a hospital is a safe place? Right, right.

Dr. Dana 08:59

So what happened was that my mom and dad left and then an orderly, later in the evening came in, just to check on me to make sure I was okay. And he forced me to put his penis, I'm sorry, it forced me to put my penis in his mouth. And he told me if I told anybody that he would kill me. And obviously, that was incredibly traumatic, and really overwhelming. The next morning, he was the person that wheeled me into the surgical suite. You on the gurney. And so I was really terrified about what was going to happen. And they started putting me under anesthesia and I thought that they were actually killing me because I was losing consciousness. And I didn't understand what the process was all about. So I figured that they were carrying out his threat and they were just killing me on the operating table. So I remember going under anesthesia screaming I won't tell I won't tell I won't tell you off the top of my lungs even though I couldn't do it out loud, I was doing it inside my head. So when I woke up from that surgery, I had absolutely no memory that this had ever happened to me, it was completely gone. From my consciousness, there was nothing there at all. And I a lot of therapy in the course of my life when I was in my late teens and through my 20s. And never once did it ever come up in any way that I could have had sexual experience as a kid that was really traumatic for me, it just wasn't a part of any of the symptoms that I had, or any of what it is that I brought to the table. And I was working with a really good therapist who I adored and really saved my life and a lot of ways, but he never even asked me the question, you know, did something ever happen to you when you were a kid sexually? And if he did ask, I would have said no. Now when I look back, and this is going to be a little bit candid. So again, I want to remind everybody, if your kids are in the car, don't continue to play this episode you quickly, right, because I never understood why people liked oral sex so much. So whenever a woman was performing oral sex on me, I would go numb, and not feel anything. And I would think to myself, I wonder why people liked this so much. Because everybody I knew thought it was like the greatest thing in the whole world when that was part of your sexual experience. But for me, it didn't cause me trauma necessarily, but I just would kind of go numb and, and it didn't really bring much butter. So I just figured,

well, that was just my preference. And it was not that big of a deal. But upon. You know, looking back at the experience, I understood that there was a reason why I would go numb. But I didn't know what at the time. So in the course of my daughter's fourth year in life, I started having horrible nightmares. And the nightmares were being in a hospital room and being chased by somebody with a syringe. And I remember really clearly for months and months waking up screaming and kicking and yelling. And having this just the same dream over and over again to the point where my wife was really scared that I actually might hurt her because I was so out of control. I went back to see my therapist and asked him what the heck was going on. He said he had no idea why this was happening and that he didn't really know what to say to me. So I started studying hypnosis and sort of working with somebody who was a famous hypnotherapist, and through the course of that experience, and then if you listen to the previous episode with my friend, Catherine, I came to understand exactly what happened. I remembered everything crystal clear. And that through that process of coming to terms with what happened to me, I can speak about it. Now. I don't feel any emotional connection to it. I feel like I've been able to kind of neutralize the experience. I know that it happened, but there's no emotional connection to it anymore.

Kim Fauskee 12:54

So what was the catalyst for you remembering this? I mean, was it a combination of the hypnotherapy? The combination of working with Catherine and having that writing? Or was there a certain moment where all of a sudden, that experience became clear to you again, because I've had a number of friends that I've talked to me saying, I think I may have been sexually abused in the past. And I have this feeling, but I don't have any memories of it. Right? So what was there? I mean, what was the moment for you where you finally remember this experience?

Dr. Dana 13:34

Well, I will say that it was pretty scary, having nightmares night after night after night. And I found out later on that it's not a coincidence. And when you're when you have a child that turns age that you were when you're when you're being abused, that it triggers unconscious memories of, of what was happening in your own life when when you see, you know, your your child's little body becoming the same age you were when you were abused. So I understood that, that the trigger for my symptoms to reemerge in a big way. Nightmares. And all of that was my daughter becoming a four year old young girl. So what brought the memories back completely was a combination of doing hypnotherapy. And then working with Katherine, where she began to write the story. And then the memories were crystal clear. So I was very much right to remember everything that happened. And I think it was very purposeful on a spiritual level. Because when I looked back in my practice, I'd already been practicing for maybe five or six years. And I looked back and I felt really badly that I missed some clues that some of my clients were giving me about the fact that they were probably sexually abused as a child based on the symptoms that they were presenting to me. But because I really didn't fully understand how all of this worked and because I was probably blocking my own memories. It was really hard for me to read cognize what they were bringing to the table.

Kim Fauskee 15:03

And the reason we block horrific or traumatic events out is because we just don't want to relive them. Again,

Dr. Dana 15:10

I don't think it's a conscious choice, I think it's a reflex inside of us, to protect us from the overwhelming feelings of post traumatic stress. That goes along with being abused. There was a man who studied adults, he approached adults that were in the legal system, who testified against their sexual abuser, as kids in a courtroom, you would think that those little kids would remember those experiences. But it turned out that 45% of the people that they approached said, I don't know what you're talking about, that never happened to me. So even people that went through the system and actually was part of convicting the perpetrator blocked out the memories of both their sexual abuse and the legal system. So we have a very powerful mechanism inside of us that is designed to keep us from being overwhelmed by trauma. Now, unfortunately, it creates a lot of symptoms in the process, which is what post traumatic stress is all about. It's your body's way of telling you that you've suffered trauma, and that you better pay attention to what your symptoms are, because usually they're an indication that something or some things have happened to you that are beyond what most people could handle.

Kim Fauskee 16:24

So when people come to see you, I'm guessing that they're not coming in saying I was sexually abused or sexually assaulted. And I need to deal with that. Maybe a few. But I'm guessing that they have other symptomatology, depression, post traumatic stress, anxiety, problems with relationships are something that's in parallel to the abuse that they suffered. And that it's kind of your investigative job to pick up on those clues to kind of find, again, that catalyst that's causing these issues with these people, is that a correct assumption?

Dr. Dana 17:07

Well, it's only partially correct in that there are a fair number of people that actually do know that they were sexually abused. A lot of times we will minimize it. Especially, you know, when we talk about those statistics of how many people that's on a continuum from being fondled to being raped on the far end of the spectrum. So we're not, you know, we're talking about a whole range of behaviors from none of it's acceptable, obviously, but but being fondled was a little less dramatic than being raped as you could well imagine.

Kim Fauskee 17:36

So when we when, in maybe it's just semantics, but when we talk about, like you said, from A to Z being fondling to being raped, would objectification be in that realm of abuse as well?

Dr. Dana 17:51

It can be I mean, I've, I've known people who don't. Does it have to be hands on? No, I mean, I've known people whose were, I guess, lived in a really weird sexual way by either family members, or relatives, or whatever it might be friends of the family. And that can be pretty traumatic, especially if you're really sensitive person, and you can feel the energy of the person, you know, basically abusing you without actually touching you. But it's way more common for people to actually be physically touched or harmed in some way. And people do remember, sometimes people have an idea that it might have happened, because they have sort of flashes of, of memory, but not complete memories, or

they have feelings. When you're sexually abused as a child, you completely lose sexual neutrality. And so generally speaking, you either become hyper or hypo sexual.

Kim Fauskee 18:47

So we're either gonna have too much or not, not at all, well,

Dr. Dana 18:51

it takes neutrality away from you. So either you feel compelled to have a repetitive experience of having sex a lot, and a lot of people become very promiscuous when they're sexually abused, or you become really inhibited by the experience, and you don't want to have sex with anybody because it's too uncomfortable.

Kim Fauskee 19:09

So I understand the latter. But I don't understand the former of why somebody would be hypersexual after being abused or assaulted versus I get it from the standpoint of I don't want to do it. I don't feel comfortable doing it. You know, this is going to happen again, potentially, to me, but explain why somebody gets hyper sexualized

Dr. Dana 19:32

from it. I think it's because they're trying to get a handle on the situation. And by having a repetitive experience over and over again. Somehow we sort of have this notion that we're going to understand what it is that happened in some way that we don't, but it does create a lot of anxiety and anxiety either propels you toward behavior or turns you away from it, because posttraumatic stress is basically an anxiety reaction.

Kim Fauskee 19:59

And when we When we talk about becoming hypersexual, we're not talking about a sexual addiction.

Dr. Dana 20:05

It can be, but not necessarily. I mean, there are lots of people that are not necessarily what you would call addicted, but at the same time, have a very compulsive relationship to, to being a sexual person. I mean, if you if you took a poll of adult film actresses and actors and, and prostitutes and stuff, I would say it's probably 98% have had a history of sexual abuse, I would say the probably the same thing is true in prison, especially for women. Because it causes intense, really uncomfortable reactions inside of people. So again, some people remember, some people don't, my job is not to create a memory for someone, I have to be really careful to take their lead and make sure that whatever comes forward is coming from them. I do sometimes ask people, you know, do you think anything has ever happened to you? And they asked me why I asked that question. And, you know, I told them that, you know, sometimes certain behaviors that people exhibit are a way of managing those feelings without always knowing that that's what you're doing.

Kim Fauskee 21:19

I think you make an important differentiation right? It's not up to the therapist to curate the story. No, it's up to the patient. It's the patient's story. Yeah. And it's up for you. It's up to you to draw that story out of Right.

Dr. Dana 21:32

Right. As an aside, some of the symptoms that people show are anxiety, depression, addiction issues, compulsive behaviors of different kinds. Sometimes people have explosive feelings of anger, and they don't know where it's coming from. There's lots of shame in being sexually abused, because I haven't met a single person that doesn't blame themselves for it happening, that somehow when we're being abused, we always assume that we ask for it or, or that we are somehow made it happen. A lot of times kids are blamed for it by the perpetrator.

Kim Fauskee 22:10

Well, and I think he made that statement to that, that victims tend to minimize, right, what happened to them? Right, because they keep thinking, whether they still believe it or not, they're still thinking I was a little bit of fault

Dr. Dana 22:22

in this, right. Yeah, that's something I must have well, and contributed to it in some way. Well, let's use a clergy example. People that have worked with that have been Abused by Priests as an example. The priests usually tell their victim that this is ordained by God. And so how are you supposed to go against something that's God's will. And so not only do you get sexually abused, but you also get spiritually abused at the same time. So most people I know, under that context, have a really hard time having any kind of spiritual life, because that's taken away from them along with their healthy sexual life. So it depends on the situation. I mean, I've worked with people who were told their dogs would be killed or their parents would be killed or they would be killed, there are some horrible harm would come to them. I also know many, many children that have tried to tell a parent and the parent blames them and tells them that they're if it's a girl, that their slaughter that they're making it up. There's a person that I had met fairly recently whose father started raping her when she was three years old. The mom knew that it was happening. It happened repeatedly over the course of her childhood. And the dad still lives with the mom. The daughter is estranged from the family and the mom keeps sin. You know, it happened a long time ago. What's your problem? Just come home. Everything's fine. He doesn't do this anymore.

Kim Fauskee 23:43

Yeah, I mean, that's just not a normal human response, right? Especially a mother protecting their children. Oh, my God, can you guess we could spend an hour or two in a separate episode just talking about this one family? Right. But I can't fathom how a mother can stand by and watch that happen.

Dr. Dana 24:02

I've actually had a situation where a father started raping his daughter when, again, she was four, and the moms began to participate after a while in the sexual abuse of all of her daughters, all four of them. So

Kim Fauskee 24:17

again, you'd be I mean, does that go into not only sociopathic behavior, but psychopathic behavior in that in that way? I mean, because it just it's not, it's just not normal behavior. I mean, to just sit back, I get it. There's perpetrators in the world that victimize people and they have all sorts of reasons why they do that, than what you're or shouldn't be. Let them off the hook for but for somebody else who does stand by and watch somebody get victimized horrifically like that. Or then not only watch it, but start partaking into the victimization of it. Yes. It's just I Yeah, I can't fathom that.

Dr. Dana 25:01

I think it's beyond most people's comprehension. That's why we have the myth that sexual abuse happens, you know, by some pervert in the park. Rather than recognizing that it mostly happens with people that, you know,

Kim Fauskee 25:12

the creepy van that drives by really slowly, right, which is a very,

Dr. Dana 25:15

very small power and a part of sexual abuse, it's, it's so much more common for it to be somebody that is part of the family or knows the family, or is somehow associated with the family in some way. But we don't want to believe that this is real. I mean, 1520 years ago, I went to a seminar, I've already spoken about this, on one of the podcasts, it was a sexual abuse seminar. And I was the only man in the room. Because most therapists, you know, are women. And so I started talking about the women that I knew that were sexually abused by women, and I just about got hung because all the people in the room were just yelling at me, like women don't do this. And so like I looked at him, like what the fuck you talking about, I should tell my clients that they're making this shit up. Because women don't do this. It was just insane. We just have so much prejudice and, and inability to accept the how much this is a part of our society. And I'm not talking about the ghetto part of our society, which is what most people would want to assume. I'm talking about middle to upper middle class, and sometimes even very wealthy family environments. Because of the, you know, the town that I practice in, well, I'm

Kim Fauskee 26:23

personally disorders don't select who they're going to affect,

Dr. Dana 26:28

probably either. Yes. So again, it's way more common than we were willing to pay attention to. And it happens to both men and women. And it happens at the hands of both men and women. And I think that's something that's really important for people to understand. And not to just sort of brush it off, or somehow, you know, well, that kids kind of acting weird or whatever. I mean, when I was going through my training, I was initially going to become a special ed teacher before being a psychologist and I was in alignment where there were people having trouble learning to read, they were diagnosis, having attention deficit problems, that sort of thing. And I was sitting down next to this eight year old girl trying to sort of help her with her reading, and I just got the saddest feeling sitting next to her. And I realized that she didn't have anything wrong with her ability to read, she was so traumatized by being sexually abused, that she could not pay attention to what was happening in the classroom. So all she did was stare out the window. And I said to the teacher afterwards, you know that there's nothing wrong with

this kid. Right? That, you know, didn't you didn't have any learning problems? And that you just said, What are you talking about? And they said, Well, this girl is being sexually abused. And she said, Well, how would you know that you're not supposed to look at their records as a student teacher, and I said, you don't have to look at anything, all you gotta do is sit with her for two minutes. And if you have any shred of sensitivity, you can tell that this girl is incredibly traumatized. And she said, Well, that's not what we're here for. So we don't want to hear anything more from you about this. And she actually told my master teacher, to not let me back into the learning class, again, because I was causing problems. And I just thought to myself, you know, this poor kid, being sexually abused, and then being taught that she's stupid, and that there's something wrong with her on an intellectual level, because people are too cowardly to face, what's really happening. And I really came to the conclusion after those experiences that a lot of people that get diagnosed with learning problems and attention problems are being abused. And the reason they don't learn is because they don't have the energy to do anything, but put one foot in front of the other, and stare out the window.

Kim Fauskee 28:36

Yeah, I wasn't obviously sexually abused, but I was abused. And I mean, that fits me, you know, from from a young child through, you know, adolescence, and especially in a learning environment that, you know, I didn't really have the bandwidth on any given day to take in any, any more information. Right from there. So I totally get that. From there. Is there? I mean, sexual abuse runs the gamut. But you know, from your experience, as a psychologist, is there a certain age where people either think that something happened to them, or seek your guidance to resolve it or figure it out?

Dr. Dana 29:25

Well, I will tell you that it can start. I know this is hard to accept, but it can start in infancy. There was a man that I worked with whose mother, when he was four years old, would force him to perform oral sex on her. And that was bad enough and sad and so traumatic. But as he started working on his trauma, he started remembering, and I'm not sure that people would necessarily believe this, but he remembered that when his mom was breastfeeding him she was playing with his penis at the same time. So his sexual abuse started as an infant and continued forward into his young childhood. And it didn't stop until he was of school age. And that's when it kind of came to an end. So you can start as early as when you arrive on Earth. Generally speaking, it happens when you're, you know, maybe 234, all the way up to being one of the people I was talking about earlier. Her father impregnated her as a 14 year old and a 17 year old. She had two miscarriages in the course of her teenage years, based on being raped by her father, it didn't end until she left home. So, and again, upper middle class people you would feel are met them in the world, you would think, generally speaking that it's a normal family, but it was so far from that it was ridiculous.

Kim Fauskee 30:47

So there's a lot of unraveling that you have to do. Yes. Right. So where does the unraveling start? Well, I'm

Dr. Dana 30:56

a big fan of hypnotherapy, as we've talked about before, when you're being abused, you go into a trance in order to cope. And the only thing generally speaking, that you feel when you're being abused

is maybe terror. But most of the feelings associated with the abuse get buried inside your body, because you're in survival mode. Hypnosis is sort of a deliberate recreation of the electrical chemical state that your body was in when it's being traumatized. And so it opens the door for you to remember and connect with the experiences on a very deep body level. And so I use hypnosis of people to help them release the trauma from their bodies, and to free themselves of the, of the energy of the abuse that they suffered, I find it to be quite helpful. I'm not going to tell you, it's the most pleasant experience for people to go through. But everybody tells me how effective it is. As time passes.

Kim Fauskee 31:54

As somebody that has done hours of of hypnotherapy, I can attest to the fact that it does work. And I can also attest to the fact that it is not a pleasant experience. And again, I've talked about this on previous podcasts that that when it was suggested to me initially, I was very skeptical about it, right? Because even though I kind of understood the premise, it was like, Okay, I've watched people being hypnotized on TV and start barking like dogs and, you know, acting out and jumping through hoops and stuff like that. And I know that that's not hypnosis and hypnotherapy are completely different things. But But I think what I was kind of worried about, and I guess the trepidation that I had was, you know, I didn't want to relive those memories, number one, and number two is, could I release enough control, to be able to let go of that trauma. And so I'm kind of interested the fact of, especially the people that have had greater traumas perpetrated on them than I had, are able to actually release during hypnotherapy. And I know when we're not talking about one session, you know, I like I said, I had hundreds of hours of it. So I'm always interested in how people actually can actually release and not try to grasp and retain that control.

Dr. Dana 33:29

Well, there's a misnomer about hypnosis, in that you have to give up control in order to experience it. And actually hypnosis, ask the right question. Yeah, all hypnosis is actually really self hypnosis. And that's important. Understand that, as a participant in the process, you're completely in control of the whole experience, there's no amnesia, there's no loss of control, you can open your eyes at any moment, you're completely in control of the whole thing. We're having a conversation while you're in a trance, it doesn't even matter how deeply you go into a trance from either feeling completely normal or feeling so relaxed, that if the world came to an end, you wouldn't want to move. So it's not at all what most people expect it to be, which is a loss of control, you actually have more control because you're deliberately choosing to deal with your feelings, which is so necessary for your healing process, in order to get a sense of relief that your unconscious mind, in my opinion, is dying for this experience and welcomed with open arms because it's such a relief to finally give voice to all the feelings that have lived inside of you for all these years, and to be able to release them so that they're no longer a reference point. Because part of what I've noticed is that as people heal their trauma, and it's no longer necessary to use all your energy to keep your your feelings in control, and to keep things blocked, that you become so much more creative and capable on For levels that you never imagined could even exist for you, because your energy is not going into management of, of your symptoms and your trauma.

Kim Fauskee 35:09

So, so the person that that is undergoing hypnotherapy that is sitting there thinking in their head, I'm not going to lose control, I'm not going to lose control, I'm not gonna give up control, just by the whole mechanism of hypnotherapy that you always stay in control, but still can release what has been built up inside of them.

Dr. Dana 35:32

You know, I don't think that people, at least that's not what people tell me that they do is I'm not gonna let go, I'm not gonna let go. When a person decides to do it. They've been where I educate them really well about what to expect.

Kim Fauskee 35:44

And let me Sorry to interrupt, but have those people also gone through some time of cycle therapy as well?

Dr. Dana 35:53

Oh, yeah, I don't just first visit, okay, let's get down to business. Close your eyes, let's

Kim Fauskee 35:58

relieve your trauma.

Dr. Dana 35:59

No, I you know, it takes a while to get to know someone and I always get a feeling very quickly about whether someone will benefit or not. But when you're traumatized, can you become really good at altering your state of consciousness? That's why people talk about being depersonalized or, or going into sort of a, you know, all these things are always pathologized. And you know, my issue with that, being depersonalized is really just coping with things that are so overwhelming that the only choice you have is to disconnect from yourself,

Kim Fauskee 36:34

I'm still altering my consciousness, that's for another podcast coming up. But anyway,

Dr. Dana 36:38

but I just think it's important to understand that you can either look at it from like, there's something wrong with you that you depersonalized or understand that it's keeping you alive. Because whatever it is that happened to you, and didn't happen for you in the form of protection is so overwhelming that your body just shuts you down and disconnects you to keep you from losing your mind. So in that way, it's not pathological, it's survival. And the more that you deal with the stuff that you need, the less you have to use your energy, whether you're aware of it or not, to shut yourself down. Now, I'm not going to tell you that it's a pleasant experience, you already know that dealing with the feelings can be a little bit overwhelming. But I've never seen anybody harmed in any way by hypnosis, the worst thing that ever happened, in my experience, is that a woman closed her eyes to get started, and she had a panic attack. Now, she had a panic attack, because as soon as she closed her eyes, she just got a flash of all of the sexual abuse, she suffered as a little kid that she hadn't remembered up until that moment. Now, we didn't do hypnosis or anything. All she did was close your eyes, but she was so ready to start to

heal the stuff that it just came pouring forward in a big pile. And you know, within five minutes, she was fine. It wasn't a great experience. But then it opened the door for her to really understand what she had been carrying around for most of her life, and how and how much it had been affecting her, which is it doesn't go away with the passage of time. It just lives inside of you until you deal with it.

Kim Fauskee 38:10

How about those people that are listening right now that said, Okay, I understand I've been victimized, I don't live my life as a victim. And I just use willpower to carry on from day to day.

Dr. Dana 38:22

Well, you know, more power to you. If that's how you choose to cope with your trauma, all I can tell you is that the energy that you're using in the form of willpower could be used to make your life much more interesting. And

Kim Fauskee 38:36

next willpower uses a bandwidth. What's that willpower uses that bandwidth

Dr. Dana 38:40

uses up a lot of bandwidth. And so it's your choice about how you want to manage it. I realized that what I bring to the table, a therapist, is not normal. Because I don't mess around with people. I want to help you get down to what is creating your symptoms rather than just focusing on the symptoms themselves. And sexual abuse causes so many different symptoms. I mean, there's a giant mystery by diets don't work. Right? I'm sure you've seen every bit of information, oh diet, the diet, this diet, you know, lose weight and and then for some odd reason, they don't seem to stick? Well, if you go to a Weight Watchers meeting, as an example, who are the most anxious people in the room? The people that are trying to lose weight? Are the people that have lost weight?

Kim Fauskee 39:27

I'm guessing that the people that are trying to lose weight, or is it the people that have lost weight because they're now worried that they're gonna gain weight back again,

Dr. Dana 39:35

the people that have lost that's a trick question. Well, generally speaking, I would say this is huge generalization. I have to say this, but the more weight that you lose in our society, the more people start to pay attention to you that's right with sexual energy, because in our society if you're overweight, and again, a big generalization, but if you're overweight, you're not looked at as being attractive except maybe answer and cultures, but generally speaking, the more you weigh, the less people pay attention to sexually and started looking at you. Like there's something wrong with you. Alright? So even though it feels shameful, and even though people don't, generally speaking feel good about. Otherwise, why would they be in weightwatchers. As soon as they start weight, losing weight, people start paying attention to him, and start looking at them with sexual hunger. I'm not saying that that's negative, I mean, how we'll study of us or get attracted to each

Kim Fauskee 40:28

other. But by the way, we look yeah, I get it, though, it makes you uncomfortable, right? If you're not used to if you have sexual

Dr. Dana 40:33

abuse, that you're hiding from yourself, or even knowing that I was there, and you become an asexual person, because people are not taking an interest in you, and then you start to have all that energy cheap, what's going to happen to your diet at that point, right, you're gonna feed those feelings as fast as you can, you're gonna gain the weight as quickly as possible. And it just becomes a vicious cycle. Because then you start to feel bad about yourself for not being able to be in control, but at least the sexual energy goes away. And I think that that I'm not going to say that to everybody. But I'm going to tell you, from my experience as a huge percentage of people that I have worked with, that struggle with whatever their symptoms might be, the symptoms start to go away when you deal with a trauma. And being overweight is a really cultural recipe to have people not look at you with sexual interest. Again, very culture specific. But it's really important to understand that if you're struggling with your weight, why not ask yourself Did something happen to me that makes it really uncomfortable for me to have people look at me with sexual interest? Is that part of what I'm covering up by keeping myself at a, at a, at a certain weight where I feel ashamed of myself all the time, but I can't control it because I feel so lonely and, and scared, because none of this happens in a vacuum. None of it. Right. And we're only talking about food right? Now. What about alcohol? Right? What about drugs? What about work? What about all the different things that

Kim Fauskee 42:01

people wanted distractions out there? Right? Or what about being

Dr. Dana 42:05

extremely promiscuous and having sex with as many people as you feel like having sex with? I don't think we're designed necessarily, maybe men are more than women. But I don't think we're designed for that as a safe way of living in the world. Because for women,

Kim Fauskee 42:21

no, it's all. It's all deflection. Yes. To me.

Dr. Dana 42:25

Yeah. So again, I don't think it's as mysterious as we make it out to be. But at the same time, who wants to believe that this kind of thing happens on a regular basis?

Kim Fauskee 42:36

All the time? No, out of sight out of mind, right?

Dr. Dana 42:39

And then there's the whole other issue is that we blame the victim. I can't tell you how many people have said to me, my mom or dad told me that I asked for it. There's a family that I know right now, the young woman is 20. She got sexually abused when she was a kid and her father said it is because she was wearing skimpy clothes as a four year old. I think that myself What the fuck is wrong with his dad,

he's a moron, that he's telling his daughter that she asked to be sexually abused as a four year old. And he does that. So he doesn't have to take responsibility.

Kim Fauskee 43:11

Is it that are a defense mechanism? Well, I

Dr. Dana 43:14

don't think he wants to take responsibility for not protecting his daughter properly. So if you just make sense about her inadequacy, or her whatever it might be, I mean, I'm sorry, Kim, I get super heated with this ship. Because I think people are so fucking stupid. Sometimes or at least unwilling to take responsibility. Yeah, humans. And in these circumstances, it is so harmful to tell a child that they asked for it or that they deserved it, or that they should just forget about it and let it go. Because it was in the past or whatever excuses people make up.

Kim Fauskee 43:46

See, again, I can't I can't fathom a father acting like that. Right. Being a being a father, you know, part and having two girls, right? ANISONG I'm, I'm the protector.

Dr. Dana 43:59

Well, when I told my mom that I'm sexually abused as a four year old when I remembered it. She didn't believe me. She made it all about herself. And her failure as a mother. And I don't think she ever believed me till her dying day that that happened to me. couldn't have happened. That was her response.

Kim Fauskee 44:15

Yeah. Do you think in a way that she potentially believed you and didn't want didn't want to admit that she wasn't there to protect you? And that was, that was just her way of justifying. I mean, that's it. I mean, that's hypothetical. I get it. But you know

Dr. Dana 44:32

Kim, I would love to give her that much credit. But I know that my mom was sexually abused as a lawyer by her father. And I know that my father was sexually abused as were her to his two brothers by my grandmother. And so that sort of behavior is rampant in my family history. My father was sexually abused terribly as a kid. My middle uncle was dressed as a girl until he was five years old and sexually abused by his mom until he went to school. And the only reason she treated him like a boy is because he had to go to school. And I remember seeing my uncle for the first time when I was 18 years old, and he was abusing his daughter. And my cousin was wandering around the house all night long with insomnia, because he knew something was happening. He just didn't know what it was. And as an 18 year old at that time, I could feel everything. And I knew exactly what was going on. And I just walked around thinking myself, I'm gonna fucking haunted house right now. This is crazy. It's insane. But, you know, when I tried to talk to my family about it, they just looked at me like, What planet are you from? Because they didn't want to deal with it, they didn't want to admit that it was happening right in front of their eyes, because people are so afraid to admit that this could be as rampant as it is in our society.

Kim Fauskee 45:46

As I mean, you're talking about going back into the 1950s. And even before and it doesn't seem that there has been this great evolution that's happened in terms of, of protecting and and, and educating in terms of sexual abuse and sexual assault that it that it continues to happen, and maybe more so today than it's ever happened before. It maybe it wasn't because it just wasn't talked about 3040 50 years ago, as much it was just kind of swept under the rug. Now, everything is transparent. Everything needs to be talked about, you know, whether the lines are blurred or not blurred, or where you stand on, it just seems that it's as prevalent as it's ever been.

Dr. Dana 46:32

Well, you know, Kim, during COVID, it actually became more prevalent than it's ever been. Because fathers and mothers and families were crammed into space with each other gonna say it's what happens when you unlock the cage. Exactly. And my wife actually got a phone call from a charity in Kenya. And she got a phone call from the elder to the village saying we really need money, because everybody here is unemployed. And the fathers and uncles are raping their daughters and nieces. Because they're all at home super frustrated, and gotten, and they have nothing. So they're just acting out like maniacs. And we don't know what to do to make it stop because everybody's so desperate right now. And I know that here. I actually remember asking you what's going on in the emergency room in, you know, the town that you were and you said, Oh, it's all drunk driving, and assault that's going into the emergency room now. So everything bad increases under duress. And so COVID Didn't help anybody in terms of this dynamic.

Kim Fauskee 47:34

Do you think now when you know a lot of these celebrities and a lot of being in the media, where we've talked about even more than objectification, but the sexual assaulting of actresses and and people underneath these powerful people that's been brought more so to the public's attention. Now, do you think that's helped the issue at all? Because I don't see that there's, and maybe there isn't a solution to it, right. But it's surely in the media on a consistent basis,

Dr. Dana 48:15

these days, more so than it's ever been before. Yes. And I have to take my hat off to the people that are willing to speak about it. Because generally speaking, they're made to feel like they're lying, or they're, they should be ashamed of themselves, or they're making stuff up or whatever it might be. But I think it's really important that it be something that is well known, because if it happens to more than half of men and women in our world, that's a problem, especially because of the implications of where it leads people. Everybody becomes self destructive, or other destructive or both. When they're traumatized. It's unavoidable. Unless you deal with your trauma. You either take it out on yourself, or you take it out on the people around you, or you do both. Because the people that become perpetrators have not invented the behavior. I would say generally speaking, like there's a woman that I know who, when she was a young woman and a young teenager, her father, molest her a bunch of times, well, it turns out that everything came out, he grew up in a really big family. And all his brothers and sisters had their way with him sexually when he was a kid. He didn't invent the behavior. He just became a drug addict as an adult, and started acting out on his daughter because he couldn't handle what it is that happened to him. So it's very much of a generational thing that gets passed on from one

generation to the next in one way or another. So there's no escaping dealing with it if we were willing to take it seriously and understand that it's an epidemic problem in our society.

Kim Fauskee 49:48

So we quoted statistics about how likely it is to happen to you and how likely it is to happen to you by somebody that you actually know. So those people that actually seek help for it And I'm not talking about legal help, but I'm talking about physical and psychological help. How many of those people are actually able to understand what happened to them, get over the shame and be able to carry on with productive lives?

Dr. Dana 50:14

You know, Kim, I don't know how to answer that question. Because I knew that before I answered that question, I'm not a normal therapist, I do think it's really difficult to

Kim Fauskee 50:24

ask you in your area and practice and the people that you've dealt with over the last 3040 years.

Dr. Dana 50:29

Well, in my practice doing things, the way that I do what people tell me and I can only go by what they tell me is that they feel a lot better, and feel a lot more alive and connected to the people around them. And in all kinds of different ways when they deal with their trauma. But I do things very differently than most therapists. I mean, look, hypnosis got a really bad name in the 80s. Because people were talking about implanted memories, and that people were making stuff up when they were under hypnosis. And I know that that happened. But generally speaking, it happened in legal situations where custody was part of the

Kim Fauskee 51:05

I was gonna say, that's a defense attorneys. Yes, defense.

Dr. Dana 51:09

Yeah. So. So hypnosis fell out of favor because of implanted memories. That doesn't mean that the sexual abuse stopped, it just means that people kind of gave up on doing hypnosis because because it got a bad name, I'd kept with it, because I saw how helpful it was to me and with the people I work with, there's a process now called EMDR, that a lot of people engage in that is supposedly really useful for trauma. I've tried it myself with some success.

Kim Fauskee 51:45

But I don't describe EMDR just a little bit for people who don't know that acronym.

Dr. Dana 51:50

Well, you know, I'm not the best person to just describe this, what it kind of entails, well, you sit with electrodes in your hands, and they they tap electricity in your fingers while you move your eyes. And I think all it does is help people go into a trance. I don't think it's that different from hypnosis, just another way of distracting yourself from your conscious mind. Gotcha. And going into a deeper place. But it's

not as deliberate as hypnosis can be. And again, I don't know, because I don't know anybody else who does hypnosis. People ask me all the time, you know, there's someone you can refer me to. And I don't know anybody that doesn't. So I'm sort of I can't I can't tell you what the success rate is. Because I can only have my, my reference point of my own life. And I'm as busy as I'd ever want to be. And people tell me all the time how helpful it is for them. And I can only go by anecdotal information, because I don't do any research. And I'm not really particularly interested in conducting research. I just want to help you.

Kim Fauskee 52:56

Well, I guess if they leave feeling better than they came? Yeah, I

Dr. Dana 53:00

mean, well, isn't that why you come in the first thing? Well, yeah, but I

Kim Fauskee 53:03

can't imagine that everybody walks out the door, you know, feeling better than they came? I mean, again, it's a long term law, I'm talking about long term, right? Yes.

Dr. Dana 53:13

Short term where you leave here, sometimes solving so intensely, that you barely can make it to your car. Yeah. Because that happens more than it does a feeling of joy. And because I want to help you deal with your pain, I want to help you release it. And sometimes it takes more than an hour. And when I do hypnosis, people always tell them, leave yourself some time, you're going to process this information in the feelings sometimes for hours or days afterwards.

Kim Fauskee 53:37

So So somebody's listening to this podcast right now, whether they're here in the US or abroad, that knows or feels that something's happened to them. They're not quite sure of how to deal with it, the maybe don't want to deal with the shame involved in it. They don't want to deal with the memory, potential memory that's involved in it and the feelings that may come up with it. I don't want to ever dissuade anybody from seeking help on this podcast that needs help. But I also understand that it takes courage to ask for help and to get help. Right. So what would be the first step for somebody that's listening to this thinking, Okay, I understand what he was saying. I understood what they were saying. I've been taking on other people I've been taking on myself, I need to get help.

Dr. Dana 54:35

I would say either talk to your physician or go to a university if there is one near you to try to get a referral to someone who specializes in trauma. Because not every therapist specializes in trauma.

Kim Fauskee 54:49

Yeah. So again, I'm going to take a little bit of liberty with the asking your physician Okay, only for the fact is that again, being in the healthcare world And in knowing what access is like, especially in primary care, and how many patients that have primary care physician, and them not really being trained on psychiatric or psychological issues, and having that script Pat handy, especially when you're coming in probably saying, I have anxiety, I can't sleep at night, and you're getting a prescription for

Ambien or Xanax and things like that. And yeah, great. That's a great patch to help for a moment. But I think, again, and I'm not trying to dissuade people from asking your physician for that referral, I'm just saying, again, you have to be very specific of what you're asking is yes, for people. So again, I encourage people to listen, no matter whether it's on this subject or anything in regards to your own healthcare, you have to take the reins of your own healthcare and be very specific to your practitioner about what your needs, wants and desires are, yeah, they're nice. They're not great mind readers, not a lot of them are, I'm not putting down the profession, because I'm in the profession. But you do have to be direct, and very dear practitioners and brave and have the courage. So again, going back, talking about asking for that referral, would be the first step. And, and again, we've talked about this on on other podcasts. And again, I'm going to take liberty, again to say that, if you do get referred to somebody, and this goes for any professional services, not only psychologists, a physician and accountant or attorney, that you probably should talk to more than one person, right? Because it's a bad idea, you know, people ask me all the time for psychological referrals, we're lucky enough for I mean, maybe not lucky enough, but we live in a small town where we pretty much know everybody here. So we kind of know who to refer to who not to refer to in terms of that thing. But I always encourage people to talk. Don't just don't, you know, if you feel that you have some connection to that person that you've talked to on the phone. That's great. But at least talk to one other person and see if this is the right, the right fit for you.

Dr. Dana 57:18

Well, my practice is 98% generated by friends and family satisfied customers,

Kim Fauskee 57:24

right? Because again, this is an intimate, this becomes an intimate relationship. Very much so rather quickly. Yeah. And you're now having this catharsis of extremely personal stuff to you that you probably not even wanting to tell your best friend. At that point.

Dr. Dana 57:42

Well, you don't necessarily have to tell your best friend the details. But I think you'd be surprised how many people you know, of course, sandbar was a unique place that are in therapy here. We're lucky that it's a place where a lot of people are willing to seek help. But really, truly, satisfied customers are the best source of referral. Because if you're doing a good job, and people like it, and they feel benefit, they're going to tell their friends and family. Occasionally, I get referrals from other sources. Those are not always the best referrals, because the people don't know me, and they don't know what I do. So yeah, talk to the people, you know, and tell them that you're looking for help and ask them if they've ever had the experience themselves in therapy, and whether they were satisfied with the experience.

Kim Fauskee 58:25

And so once they find that person, and they get in front of that person, what's the best way to break the ice with them?

Dr. Dana 58:35

Are you talking about sexual abuse in particular, or

Kim Fauskee 58:38

I'm talking about sexual abuse or or any, any of that area of abuse of where you have this trepidation, this nervousness, this anxiety about I've never really talked about it before, or I don't really know if this happened to me, and kind of cutting to the chase a little bit. So this isn't this wild goose chase four months before somebody gets clued into what's going on? Well, if you were

Dr. Dana 59:04

going to have surgery, would you ask the surgeon how many times they've done this procedure before you let them operate on you?

Kim Fauskee 59:10

I would be absolutely okay. Well,

Dr. Dana 59:12

I mean, I think that that answers the question asked the therapists how much experience they have in treating trauma, especially sexual abuse. And if they say a lot, then that must mean they know something about it? And if they say, well, not much, then I wouldn't stay there. Because you want to be working with somebody who's capable, and understands what it's all about and how it works. And I don't think that there's any shortage of people who will understand it, because I think if you took a poll of therapists that probably 90% of them had some mapping tool when they were kids. In some way it just like if you go the addiction route and find a therapist that specializes in addiction helped me find one that wasn't addicted at one point, right? Yeah, it just gives you a certain amount of expertise that you can bring to the table. If you heal your own wounds?

Kim Fauskee 1:00:01

And how about the courage to have that honest conversation with your therapist?

Dr. Dana 1:00:09

I wouldn't go unless I was willing. Okay, it's a waste of time.

Kim Fauskee 1:00:13

Right? If you're having the therapist have to play 20 questions with you? Well, no,

Dr. Dana 1:00:18

I asked people a million questions. But if I, if I, don't sense that they're really interested in knowing themselves, that they actually want to get help, yeah, or that they can tolerate a certain amount of pain, and not resort, very much like quickly overusing substances. As an example, I'm going to lose in working with somebody who medicates themselves really intensely all the time, because it's immediate, right? So immediate fix, it's an I can't fix people immediately, it's going to take some time, and it takes them enough time to be able to really feel what it is that's haunting you. And so I've had the tragic experience many times of working with people that have a really hard time letting go of their coping mechanisms, because it's so scary to let themselves really remember what happened to them and how it affected them.

Kim Fauskee 1:01:10

So you don't carry a magic wand,

Dr. Dana 1:01:12

I wish there would be a line out the door and around the block. There may be a line out the door, but it's not around the block.

Kim Fauskee 1:01:18

Like I say, everybody's looking for the shortcut right there. Well, you know that Kim, the magic pill, the magic potion, the magic something, right.

Dr. Dana 1:01:27

And I tell people when they , especially if we're going to deal with trauma, you're gonna go through a period of time, months, where you feel very tender hearted, not that you won't be able to function, but very quick to cry. It really tender in terms of sadness and, and pain. And that's a sign that things are working. Right. So if you're looking to walk out of here and just feel better from this point forward, I can't help you. Because you've got to wade through the pain as you have said many times you got to sit in your stuff, in order to be able to come to terms with you can't skip it over, or go under it or go around it, you got to go through it. And you know that better than anybody?

Kim Fauskee 1:02:04

I do. And it depends on how long you want to carry those sandbags on your shoulders. That's right before you want to get rid of them.

Dr. Dana 1:02:12

It's scary. I'm not going to tell people that it's easy, because it takes a lot of courage. But, you know, think about what your life is like now compared to what it was like before you die with the trauma.

Kim Fauskee 1:02:21

It's it's an antithesis of what it was before. I mean, it's, it's it's the life I was hoping to lead.

Dr. Dana 1:02:29

Well, and your life is still unfolding in some really lovely ways. Because it is you don't give up no matter what.

Kim Fauskee 1:02:34

There's no finish line. Right? That's right. Yeah. And again, you know, I've mentioned this on a podcast before. Is winning the hour in this conversation that, either fortunately or unfortunately, reality always wins, right? You can, you can hide from your problems, you can run from your problems, you can drink away your problems, you can substance abuse away your problems. But ultimately, it will catch up with you. And again, like we've talked about before, there's a commonality and all of all of your problems, and it's you. Right, so if if you're tired of you being the problem in your life, then you need to seek some help. So you're not the problem anymore.

Dr. Dana 1:03:21

Well, that's certainly our premise, for sure. And I do understand what it's like to face sexual abuse, and that it's not necessarily easy. But I can tell you that, from my own experience, personally, I can talk about it. I don't feel an emotional charge attached to it. I can speak about it very dispassionately, because I've come to terms with what happened and how it's affected me. And I don't think that my sexual trauma was minor. I mean, I thought truly, they were killing me when they were putting me under, but I can look at it and think, you know, I'm so glad that that's no longer a reference point. In my life, I don't use any energy to cope with those feelings, because I've got rid of them, they're gone now. And it gives me the opportunity to face other people's whatever they need to and not have to be managing my own feelings at the same time.

Kim Fauskee 1:04:14

There's also one other point before we in this conversation that I want to make. there's a huge difference between being a victim and being victimized. Oh, absolutely. And you know, living your story, as a victim, you can carry that for the rest of your life if you want. And that can be your story. Or you can come to the realization that you were victimized and that that happened to you, and you can craft a new story.

Dr. Dana 1:04:39

Well, I think it's the difference between feeling sorry for yourself and feeling sorrow for what it is that's happened to you and what didn't happen for you. Because usually it's equal measure. The abuse is one thing and the lack of protection, you know, affects people in some ways almost as much as the abuse itself.

Kim Fauskee 1:05:00

Well, you know, this is a difficult subject to talk about. I know it's a difficult subject to listen about, and especially some of the stories that you told about clients that you've worked with, but please, anybody listening out there that has been sexually abused or he's being sexually abused or or has been assaulted or continues to be assaulted right now. Please, please get help.

Dr. Dana 1:05:27

Absolutely.

Kim Fauskee 1:05:28

Thanks, Dana. You're welcome.

Dr. Dana 1:05:31

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