

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 2

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Guest Speaker

Dr. Dana Saperstein - Self Exploration

Fear Me Out 00:00

Warning. This episode contains graphic language and references to physical and sexual abuse.

Dr. Dana 00:17

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.

Fear Me Out 00:36

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 00:57

Hey, folks, thanks for joining us. This is episode two of what we hope to be a long and fruitful journey across the many rows of psychology. On today's episode, Dan, and I discussed the ins and outs of self examination, and how ultimately, it could be one of the greatest personal benefits in life. So I think it was Socrates that talked about living examined life. I think he was trying to look at the root causes, and patterns, behaviors and consequences of why people do certain things. This whole self Examined Life is become a very popular topic. What's your interpretation of a self examined life?

Dr. Dana 01:37

Well, first of all, I think it takes an enormous amount of courage to emotionally look at yourself in the mirror. In my experience, given the choice, most people would rather avoid the shame and the fear and the pain that haunts them. I think we have a natural aversion to things that frighten us or cause us pain. Most people that come to see me for therapy believe that there's something inherently wrong with them. And we're taught to blame ourselves for any emotional pain and fear that we feel. And this is especially true if a person has been abused or neglected as a child. I've yet to meet a person who doesn't feel responsible for the mistreatment. I think that makes it really hard for people to have the courage to really take a step away from their symptoms, and really focus on what they're feeling deep down inside, which is necessary for obviously, for self examined life.

Kim Fauskee 02:32

Most people probably don't peel enough layers away when they're doing the examination. I mean, I'm somebody that has, I guess, for all intents and purposes, lived a more self examined life, and probably the last decade than I have, and the prior four decades of my life.

Dr. Dana 02:52

Well, I think that's true, but you're a very brave person to be willing to really look at yourself deep, deep down inside. You know, I treat a lot of people who have been sexually, emotionally, physically abused. And again, most people end up being very self destructive as a result of those kinds of things happening to them as a child. And so they assume that because they've been self destructive, that they caused the problem, or somehow they did something to make it happen. And then they end up taking out all the pain and the fear on themselves.

Kim Fauskee 03:30

Yeah, as I, as I wrote, in the book, I talk about exactly what you just said, about taking on that, that it was my fault. You know, my dad abusing me was completely my fault. It had nothing to do with it. At least that was, what he made me to believe and what I believed in it, that the abuse was for a reason.

Dr. Dana 03:57

Would you mind being specific about what it is that he did to us so that our audience can understand the level of courage that it took for you to face these issues.

Kim Fauskee 04:11

He was an angry man, very, very fearful, still don't know today what the context of that fear was. But he would come home at night enraged, no matter what he was either from coming from the golf course or if he was coming from work. Alcohol definitely helped with that rage. He was not the kind of drunk that was happy go lucky and actually just feels his rage even more. So having a sister that was older than I and was out of the home, before I even, you know, reached mid adolescence at that point. It was between my mom and I who was going to get the abuse that night. It was both physical and emotional abuse. And I can still remember thinking about Jeez, what did I do today, you know that he's going to come after me about that I say something to somebody to do something that I not do something it does, just trying to justify my mind was I gonna, you know, stay off the radar or not. And ultimately, it didn't matter, you would have rage in his eyes. I mean, I can see it clear as day today, as today, his face would get beat read, his voice would be angry, he would go into his room and more times not either use his hand or most of the time, a belt, and I can still remember the belt and how shiny the belt buckle was. And I remember either being put up against the wall or bent over a chair. And I remember the belt hitting me on my backside and, and it's thinking about it right now, I don't even remember it being painful. All I can remember is it being shameful. And I remember crying. Through all those events, I remember my mom not really being there to console me, just kind of shaking her head and walking away. She did witness most of it. And, boy, it's still tough to talk about today. Um I remember, tried to avoid him the next day, the next morning. He would never say anything, he would just walk right by me in the morning and out the door to work. And I go off to school and just hope that that today would be a better day and that I wouldn't have to take the abuse. But that was really the first 18 years of my life until I till I actually left home a month after high school

Dr. Dana 07:11

to remember be sort of blaming yourself and feeling like you were at fault for the things that he did.

Kim Fauskee 07:18

Oh, absolutely. It was like I was saying that I kept searching my mind about okay, what did I do? Or What didn't I do? It? Was this going to be anything that he was going to be able to focus his rage on if you know he didn't want to take it out on my mom, you take it out on me. And more times than not it was me that my mom I think because I was the male figure in the house. And even though I was a young child, he still looked at me as a man. And you know, young boys aren't supposed to cry. Young boys aren't supposed to be different. Young boys are supposed to be tough and put up with it. And what ever justification he had in his mind was that this was good for me.

Dr. Dana 08:02

So he really believed that he was teaching you how to be a man by hurting you the way that he did. He never

Kim Fauskee 08:08

He never lectured. He never really lectured me in that way. I think in his mind that that's how he was justifying. At least that's how I assumed he was justifying it. No, he never He never talked to me. He just hit me.

Dr. Dana 08:22

So how did you handle the incredible shaman and sort of hypervigilance that you had to live with?

Kim Fauskee 08:29

I didn't handle it. Well, I think, you know, I think it changes your trajectory in life. I had very low self confidence. I tried everything to stay away from really engaging anyone in terms of where it could have negative aspects on it. I kept a very small, close group of friends that weren't really aware of it, because I wouldn't have anybody come to my house. I was just too embarrassed about it. And yeah, I was I felt the shame I still feel I'm sitting here right now talking about and still feel the shame right now that I still feel after going, you know, having years of therapy, having years of hypnotherapy on it and actually coming to grips with it in understanding and embracing that young child and so on and so forth. They still feel the shame today.

Dr. Dana 09:27

So, um, you didn't become hugely self destructive as some people do.

Kim Fauskee 09:34

I think you and I thought about that a lot. I think for me, my dad was an alcoholic and I saw how it ruined his life. It ultimately killed him. It surely and I don't know if it was just pure luck, timing or whatever. It was pretty successful in business. But he did alienate everybody. He came in contact With that was not only business associates, but employees and family members because I remember growing up early on and having a lot of his family and my mom's family around. And through the course

of years into my teenage years that dropped off to where nobody wants to be around him. So I think just seeing how he was as an alcoholic, kind of not only scared me, but steered me away from any of those addictive type of things, or trying to mask those things, or taking on any self-destructive behavior because I wanted to be the antithesis of him. So, you know, I luckily, I had some good friends that had fathers that, you know, were more nurturing in that way. I had some teachers, I had some athletic coaches, I was lucky enough, they probably kind of saved me as I was an above average athlete. And so athletics actually kind of took the place in terms of nurturing and mentoring and so on and so forth in my life. To get me to where I am today.

Dr. Dana 11:11

Where did you find the courage to do the amount of self examination that it took in order for you to get to a place where you're at relative peace for what happened?

Kim Fauskee 11:23

Yeah, I don't know if it's, I don't know if it's courage or not, but I guess ultimately, it is. I did a number of years of talk therapy, which helped immensely, but there was still something that was sitting inside of me, something that was bunched up inside of me, that I felt needed to come out. I didn't know what that was. There was a lot of self examination, you know, done through the talk therapy, but again, there was still something that wasn't sitting right with me, there was something sitting on my chest that I couldn't get off, um, at that point, and it was recommended that I try hypnotherapy at that point. I think I was a little bit pessimistic about hypnotherapy. I kept thinking about, you know, watching on TV, hypnotist on TV and hypnotizing people into doing Stupid Pet Tricks and thought that, you know, that was the natural parallel to hypnotherapy as well. But I was lucky enough to have a couple of friends of mine that had gone through it and had some pretty significant breakthroughs with hypnotherapy. So I thought, well, at least I'll try it for one or two sessions. And you know, I can remember my first session like it was yesterday and being on the couch, clutching the throw pillows on the couch and closing my eyes. And before I knew it, I was crying, or sobbing uncontrollably. And that hour seemed like it only lasted a few seconds. And, and from that point on, you know, through a number of sessions, probably a dozen or more sessions of hypnotherapy. Something happened one day, and I was thinking, Boy, I feel different. And what was different about it was I didn't have that bunched up feeling in my chest anymore. It was gone.

Dr. Dana 13:25

You know, you're bringing up a really good point about therapy and what kind of therapy works and, and and what kind of therapy is necessary in order to get to a place where you can experience the relief that you're talking about. The sad thing from my perspective as a therapist is that I, I see a lot of people have been to other therapists and they have been diagnosed, the treatment plan is, you know, presented to them, the person comes in feeling bad about themselves, and the therapist agrees with them, that there's something wrong with them. And then they go about trying to figure out a way to alleviate whatever symptoms the person carries with them. It sounds like you had a different experience in that your symptoms weren't the most important thing to focus on, but really what you were feeling deep down inside. The reason I consider that to be so important is that when a person is experiencing trauma, they don't feel what's happening to them, you go into an altered state of consciousness in order to survive the experience. And so the feelings get sort of lodged inside your body, they get frozen inside

of you. And they'd become a reference point and a lot of your energy then goes into managing those feelings. Usually not on a level that you're aware of. Oftentimes it results in depression and anxiety because most of your energy again is going into just keeping things at bay because it feels so scary to let yourself feel what it is that happened to you.

Kim Fauskee 14:55

I think the but going back to therapy, I think Probably one of the biggest epiphanies I've got during therapy was asking my therapist, how do I not fall back into the same behaviors and the same patterns, just we talked about in what Socrates was saying, that I had done for the first 30 years of my life, or maybe even longer when I had that conversation. And the advice was, you have to sit in your shit. I mean, it was that blatant. And then that right in my face, and it wasn't that you have to sit in your shit for a day, or a week or a month, you have to sit in your shit for a significant length of time to get through all those emotions of anger and sadness, and acceptance and compassion and empathy, till you actually reach a point of clarity. I understood that theoretically, when he was saying that to me, I wasn't sure I could do that. But I was willing to give it a try. Because I just didn't want to fall back into in live the same way I had been living, I knew it wasn't working for me, it wasn't going to work for me, I knew there was a better life out there for me. And so it was worth giving it a shot. You know, like I said, I'm willing to do anything once. It took, I'll have to have to be honest, probably for the first handful of weeks. I thought, This isn't gonna work. This isn't gonna work. For me, I don't know how anybody does this. It was, you know, I was crying, I was angry. I'm thinking, I'm not going to get through this. This is no different than just doing therapy. I've already done therapy. I've done hypnotherapy at this point. And, and I think there, there came a time, kind of in the second or third month of sitting there and sitting in my shed and trying to get to this point of clarity that I finally thought to myself, and I don't know what that feeling, it was just this intuition, I think, that I got that says, Okay, you're almost there, you're almost there, you just gotta keep going. So you could feel it deep inside your body, I could feel the changes on my body. And then there's this inner voice said, You gotta keep going, you gotta keep going on it. And then I got to a point where, for lack of a better term, the skies opened up for me. Right. And I finally saw things differently. I know that that sounds like a load. But that's how it happened for me. I mean, not that the seas parted in the whole thing. But this seemed like the sky opened up. And I had a completely different perspective on things. Now, not to say not to say that I'm 100% there. Because I think, going through so many decades of being comfortable with the default, and being comfortable with something that's not good for you, but it's still comfortable, its familiar. It feels good in some way. That I still have, I still go to therapy, just for the standpoint of holding me accountable to the tools I have now and that clarity that I gained. So I don't fall back into that default all the time.

Dr. Dana 18:31

You know, can you bring up a really good point, which is that no matter how painful it gets, you were willing to hang in there, and that you did what it took in order to manage the fear in a way that it didn't completely discourage you from moving forward in your healing process.

Kim Fauskee 18:53

I mean, it's, and I totally get why most people won't do it or can't do it. Because I was at that point where I thought that, you know, I was just gonna throw up my hands and say, Well, this is my lot in life. I'm just going to have to continue on this way. But it was worth the journey. It was worth the process. It

was worth working through all that pain. They like to said anything worth keeping. doesn't happen overnight. So, you know, I would encourage people. I mean, there is no magic pill, right? There is no magic book. There is no magic person. It's really just you and time and sitting with yourself and working through all of these things that weren't working for you. Things that made you angry, things that made you sad. Yes, most of us were victimized. You know, you have to choose whether you know you accept that victimization, or you're going to live as a victim. Right. And I think the important thing that I learned through hypnotherapy was, you know, I understood that I was victimized and so on and so forth. But it was really embracing the inner child. The inner child that wasn't nurtured, that wasn't embraced, that had no compassion had no empathy, which made it much easier for me to deal with.

Dr. Dana 20:21

You know, I've done a lot, a lot of research on trauma, because it's one of the specializations that I do in my practice, and it's really kind of interesting in a way that not just humans can be traumatized, but animals also experienced trauma. I read a book a number of years ago, about a man who went to Africa and he was filming cheetah going after Impala. And he wanted to just sort of understand the nature of the predator prey relationship. And he would, you know, watch the cheetahs chasing the impalas, and more often than not, the cheetah would catch the Impala and eat it and go on its merry way. But on occasion they would be running full speed. And then all of a sudden, the Impala would fall over and appear to be dead. And the cheetah got really confused because cheetahs only eat live kill, they won't eat anything that they don't kill themselves, because their digestive system is not able to handle things that are baked in the sun like other types of animals. So if they don't kill it, they won't need it. So the cheetah stops. And it does what cats do, which is kind of you know, battering the Impala around a little bit, but the Impala appear to be dead. So I am assuming I can read a cheetah's mind. But imagine what the cheetah said was, oh my god, I can't believe this gets up and walks away. And the researcher kept the camera on the Impala to see what would happen next. And what happened was the Impala started to tremble. And it spent about three or four minutes trembling back to life again, got up and looked around. And I'm assuming it said holy crap I can't believe I stole live and got up and just wandered away and lived a normal Impala life. Oh, this guy was really brilliant in his notions about trauma. And so what he decided to do the next time he witnessed this between an Impala and cheetahs was that he started messing with the Impala while it was trembling. And so it didn't get to complete its nervous system release of the trauma. And then all of a sudden, the Impala woke up, but it couldn't function normally. It became hyper vigilant, it was completely unable to function as a normal Impala. And, and that didn't go away. So it became a traumatized Impala, that was suffering post traumatic stress, and it ended up being consumed very quickly because it could not resume its normal behavior again. And I thought that was an incredibly brilliant thing to understand. Because as human beings are very much the same way, when we become traumatized, we become detached from ourselves. A lot of times people, they actually play dead. A lot of people that I've worked with, when they've been sexually abused as an example, become frozen, they don't fight. They don't say anything, they don't scream, they don't try to run away. They just play dead because they feel so threatened by the person that's preying upon them that they freeze just like the Impala. The difference between us as human beings and animals that don't have a cortex, which is the front part of your brain, is that human beings don't get the benefit of just trembling back to life again. Now, it's not unusual for us to tremble when we're afraid. But unfortunately, it doesn't do the trick of completely releasing the trauma. As human beings, we have to process that trauma not just on a physiological level, but also to be able to, to share the experience

with another person. And the healing takes place, as you described, by allowing yourself to connect with the feelings which are buried within your body, but also to feel like you're not alone in facing the depth of the terror and shame and all the other feelings that you experience when you're being traumatized.

Kim Fauskee 24:20

I don't know if any, if there's anybody out there that hasn't suffered some trauma in their life. But, you know, I, I had my fair amount. Obviously, we just talked about that. And it took me quite a while to work through the whole self examination and sitting in your ship process and so on and so forth. How does it work for somebody that probably hasn't suffered a lot of trauma in their life or are released and doesn't think they've suffered a lot of trauma in their life, in terms of self examination and what kind of breakthroughs they have? Well, I

Dr. Dana 24:57

i mean, you can imagine how many people I see that have symptoms of post traumatic stress, but don't really look at what happened to them as being traumatic. There was a fellow I was speaking to recently whose dad just raged at him every day. She didn't hit him physically, but she yelled at him intensely every day. And he would stand there and just sort of take it. And he would say to himself, you know, she'll get over this after a few minutes and, and I'll just go into my room and everything will be fine. And in his mind, that wasn't trauma. And so he didn't understand why he became such an anxious person, as time went by, and why he felt that the world was not a safe place to really live in, because he didn't associate his symptoms of anxiety and depression, to the fact that he was very, very mistreated in a very in a deep, emotional way. So I know, I'm not directly answering your question, because not everybody has deep trauma. But generally speaking, when we're born, we have a really strong need to please our parents. And we do whatever is necessary in order to get their love and attention. And even the most well intended parents have an idea of, you know, what makes a good person, what makes a close bad person, what they want from their kids, what they would prefer not to have their kids, you know, be like, and the more sensitive you are, the more that you become in tune with what your parents want from you. And if it's very different than who you are by nature, you stop really being yourself, and you start becoming, and this is not a conscious process, but you start becoming a different person. The sad part about that is that you can't ever trust love because it's based on false pretenses. But in order to feel a sense of security, you give up who you are, and you become someone that pleases his parents and does the best he or she can to, you know, to feel connected to the family, that is a type of trauma to be disconnected from yourself.

Kim Fauskee 27:02

I mean, that I mean, that's me, right? I, I'm the one that was led down a path, a way my parents wanted me to lead my life, right? Even though my mother called me different. And that wasn't in a complementary way. But she called me different. My dad said, I would never amount to anything in life. And he told me that not only my upbringing, but he told me that when I was married, and in my 30s, at that point, was still telling me that, and I believe that, right? It took me a long time to disengage from the path that they wanted me to go down. And, and not even clear what path that actually was. But whatever path that I chose to go down was never the right path. Right? When I decided that during college, I wanted to be a first responder for a period of time. They didn't back that up, they said, that's a

dead end job, it's not going to go anywhere, it's not going to do anything for you, why are you doing that? Right? Still, probably the best to this day is probably the best job that I ever had in terms of the adrenaline, the excitement, the being able to help people, the camaraderie and so on and so forth. So taking that step to the left, when my parents want me to go to the right, actually helped me, sir, break away from where they wanted me to go. And for me to start examining how I wanted to live my life, if that makes sense. Sure. At that point, it then comes, you know, from first responder to, you know, becoming a healthcare executive, and so on and so forth. They still never saw that as the right path for me. And I don't know if that was just jealousy, if that was where that was emanating from from them. But when you talk about wanting to please your parents, I think it went to a certain point for me, right? I always wanted to do that. I always wanted to please them for acceptance and validity and for the abuse to stop happening, and so on, so forth. But you get to a point where you realize, no matter what you do, it's never going to be good enough. Right? Right. And I still think probably in the last decade or so I've come to a lot more grips about it. And I've been a lot more. We'll talk more throughout the podcast and it's in the book as well. About the fear of happiness and reaching really a neutral point of contentment, which, you know, I reached a few years ago, where I'm very content in who I am, what I'm doing, who I'm associating with, in how I'm living my life. But if I hadn't gone through this whole self examination if I hadn't gone through depressions and, and PTSD I don't know If I wouldn't ended up here,

Dr. Dana 30:02

you know, I'm not sure because we can't ever know what we would be like without the experiences that we've had. You know, it's really interesting when you talk about the way that you were raised and the things that happened to you, and how you became someone who was eager to please and tried really hard to garner your parent's approval. When I looked back on my life, I was exactly the opposite. But for the same reason, I became an incredibly rebellious child at a very early age, I would say that by the time I was eight or nine years old, I probably got in a physical altercation with another child on a daily basis. I'm not sure why the neighborhood I lived in was, it was a middle class, you know, Jewish neighborhood, you wouldn't think it would be filled with people that wanted to fight. But I fought almost every day of my elementary school

Kim Fauskee 30:50

life, you were the antithesis of me, because I was afraid of confrontation.

Dr. Dana 30:53

Right, I lived for confrontation, because when I looked at other children, and I didn't really understand this till I was older, but when I looked at other children, and they saw vulnerability in their eyes, it made me want to hurt them, because I hated how vulnerable I felt. And I really didn't understand it at the time, I just figured that the way to be strong was based on my father's model, which is, either you're going to hurt other people, or they're going to hurt you. And those are the only two choices in life. So I became a fighter. And I was not a very nice kid. And I look back and I feel really ashamed of the way that I live. But I didn't know any better at the time. So I guess part of why I'm saying all of this is because being a pleaser is not the only way that people deal with abuse, you can also become quite rebellious. Now, I spent a lot of time in therapy when I was in my 20s. And luckily, luckily enough, my parents could tell when I was in my late teens that I was not the happiest kid on the block. And so they were luckily they were therapy minded at a very early time in the process of psychotherapy. And so they encouraged me

to start looking at myself, and I spent almost a decade there. And I really enjoyed the process. And I thought that it was really helpful and wonderful. And I became a psychologist as a result. Because my mentor took me under his wing and as a psychologist and told me that he believed that I had what it took to become a really good therapist. But when I was in my mid 30s, I started having the same nightmare over and over and over again. And I thought to myself, this is very odd, because I would wake up screaming and kicking to the point where my wife was afraid I was going to hurt her. Because it was the same dream. Every single night, I dreamt that I was in a green tiled room and somebody was chasing me with a syringe. And I couldn't get past that dream because I would wake up sweating and, and hyperventilating. And I thought to myself, boy, I know what the hell's wrong with you. But there's something that's not okay. And I had already thought that I did most of the therapy that person needed to do in order to get to a relative place of comfort, because I was until that started to happen. Well, this coincided with my daughter turning four years old. And I didn't really understand at the time, that sometimes when a child becomes a certain age, it can trigger memories inside of a parent that they have sort of repressed in a way. So I decided to learn hypnosis and try to approach it from that perspective. Because when I went back to talk to my mentor, he said, I don't know what to tell you. We've done, you know, we've examined every cell in your body, and I can't imagine why you would be having this difficulty. So I started doing hypnosis, and I had a really profound experience where all of the memories came back to me of what happened to me when I was four years old, which was the age that my daughter was when when all of these nightmares started to happen. Now, sadly, it was a very traumatic situation, I went to the hospital to have surgery, and I was molested by an orderly in the hospital. And he told me that if I told anybody what he did to me that he would kill me. Now, unfortunately, he was the person that wheeled me into surgery the next morning. And when they were putting me under anesthesia, I actually because I was starting to fade away. I thought they were killing me. I thought that he was actually in charge of putting me to death. And I remember going under anesthesia screaming. I won't tell I won't tell he was going to make good on his promise. Right? And I didn't because I was four I really didn't understand that. I wasn't being put to death. But I can tell you that when I woke up from the surgery, the memory of being abused was completely erased from my consciousness. It never came up in into the therapy I did. It didn't show up in any of the behaviors that I exhibited as a person. It was only when my daughter's little body was the size and shape that I was at the time that I was abused that I started having this nightmare and then remembered very clearly. What it is that happened to me

Kim Fauskee 35:00

I think that it's pretty common that we black out severe traumas that happened to us at various points in our lives.

Dr. Dana 35:05

Well, I'll tell you that before this happened to me, I was extremely skeptical about the idea that you could have a repressed memory. It was during the time that the therapists were being accused of implanting memories in their, in their clients and that, and that hypnosis was given a very bad name because people believe that therapists were, you know, convincing their clients that they were abused when they weren't, and so on and so forth.

Kim Fauskee 35:30

And I bet Trial Lawyers warn against that, though.

Dr. Dana 35:33

Well, I will only tell you that I just didn't know what to think because it was beyond my imagination that a person could have repressed a memory, that's significant. But then I became that person. And it completely changed my orientation toward being a therapist, and I looked back, and I thought to myself, Wow, how many times have I been working with someone and their symptoms were telling me that something happened to them. And because I didn't recognize it within myself, that I couldn't see it, in the person that I was working with. And so it really changed everything about the way that I approached being a therapist, because I understood that that is, you have to do your own work to get to a place where you can be successful and as helpful as you need to be as a practitioner.

Kim Fauskee 36:23

Do you think you're a more astute or more in touch therapist, because you've had those traumas in your life?

Dr. Dana 36:30

Well, it certainly helps me understand what people are going through. I welcome people into my life that have had things happen to them that in your wildest imagination, you couldn't imagine the kind of abuse that people suffer. I've worked with, with people that have been sexually abused by mothers and fathers and sisters and brothers and aunts and uncles and strangers and teachers and clergy. I sadly went to a seminar once and was talking, it was about sexual abuse. And I was talking to most of the members that were in the seminar. Most therapists are women. So the room was filled with women and me and maybe another man or so. And I was describing how many of my clients had been sexually abused by a woman. And I just about got chased out of the room, because the women in the room absolutely refused to believe that a woman could be a sexual perpetrator. I

Kim Fauskee 37:23

think the statistics are pretty even between male and female perpetrators?

Dr. Dana 37:29

Well, I think that it's more recognized that men are perpetrators more than women. And so, you know, I said to the people in the room, so you're telling me that I should tell my clients that are reporting being sexually abused by a woman, that they're just making it up, and that they're all liars. And, you know, they didn't have a lot to say to me. Because I was dispelling a myth that has, you know, been perpetuated in the therapeutic community forever, very uncomfortable experience from my professional life.

Kim Fauskee 38:00

I don't, we hit on the subject a little bit earlier, about depression in PTSD, and I don't want to gloss over that factor. I may have admitted already, or having admitted that I am a depressed person, right, I've suffered three bouts of fairly significant depression in my life, all in adulthood, probably started earlier on as an After Effects of PTSD because I was not diagnosed. Until later in life. I'm lucky enough, I guess from my standpoint I was a functional depressed person. I wasn't the person that couldn't get out

of bed in the morning, couldn't exist in life, and so on and so forth. I was able to go through life and carry on with most of the things that you have to carry on with life. But with a dark cloud over my head. Medication did work for me in terms of that, once I got off the medication, I was fine for a period of time had had rebound depression. And then the third time, you'd think I'd be really knowledgeable about my own depression, psychological or physiological. And I'll have you're the expert on I'll have you explain depression. But I didn't listen to my gut. I thought that I knew more about it and didn't need to be medicated. I thought I could work my way through it on my own and so on and so forth. And and knew the difference between psychological and physiological depression in terms of my happy chemicals being depleted, but didn't listen again to my own intuition. Again, and this is a big topic that we'll talk about throughout the podcast. It's a big topic in our book, about the Listening to your intuition and things like that. And, I wasn't providing my own self care when I knew exactly what was happening at that time. And luckily, it got to a breaking point for me to where my back was against the wall. And I had to deal with it. And I dealt with it, and I dealt with it successfully at that time, but, again, I, because I think a lot of people that will be listening here that that will take the time to read our book, and so on and so forth is either dealt with depression, or has dealt with a PTSD scenario. So I'm kind of interested from your poor specialty, your professional perspective, can't say those two words together. Your take on depression in PTSD, and people that are kind of going through this world in a haze all the time,

Dr. Dana 40:50

you know, you're bringing up a really good point, because I believe that as a clinician, my job is to help people recognize what part of their depression comes from brain chemistry, abnormalities, and what part comes from post traumatic stress or whatever else is happening in the person's life. And I rely on my intuition, in order to sort of divine the combinations of these things for some people is, it's obvious that it's just the situation that they're living in and their past that's coming to haunt them. For other people, it's a combination. I tried to help people understand that having depleted chemicals in your brain is not something to be ashamed of. That your neurotransmitters are a lot of times genetically depleted, sometimes it actually does come from trauma. And I encourage people to consider taking medicine, if it feels to me like there's a medical problem that's causing psychological symptoms. So it just depends on the nature of the person and what it is that they bring to the table. I will say that my approach to therapy is very different than most therapists. I mean, I was educated to believe in the medical model of therapy, which is, there's something wrong with you, there's something wrong with you. And my job is to encourage you to believe that there's something wrong with you when you walk in the door, feeling bad about yourself, and then I'm supposed to come up with a treatment plan. And we're supposed to figure out how to make you quote better when you're in agreement with your patient. Right? That's right. And if the therapy fails, it's not because I've failed, it's because the person hasn't followed the recipe in the therapy handbook about how you're supposed to treat this particular malady? Well, I think it's, it's tragic enough that someone comes in feeling really terrible about themselves. And for me to agree with them, that there's something wrong with them, and that they're not okay. Just seems incredibly unethical and immoral, even though it's what I'm in quotes supposed to do. So my approach is very much different than that, in that I look at your symptoms as a type of communication. So if you're suffering from depression, of course, your depression is real. And sometimes it is coming from a medical place, and we treat it accordingly. But if it's coming from the circumstances in your life, either present or past or both, my idea is not necessarily to focus on depression, but to understand that you're depressed for a really good reason. And usually, it has to do with the way you feel about yourself

deep down inside. And that most therapy, you know, may play intellectual lip service to how you're feeling that doesn't really do enough to help you really recognize that the way that you feel pretty much determines the nature of your life, and how things are going to go for you. I think it takes a lot of courage to to be willing to be flexible and to, to be willing to trust your intuition as a therapist and, and to not have a cookbook that that's handy, because your life is a lot less fearful if you can just put somebody in a in a box and you know, tell them what the recipe is to get better.

Kim Fauskee 44:14

To me, I never wanted to readily admit that I was a depressed person. You know, it's not it's not something you want to go talking about out in public. It's not something that you want to admit to your friends. If I have any acting skills, I guess nobody ever knew. Because when I finally was brave enough to actually mention to people that I was being treated for depression, both in a psychological and physiological way. They go, You're kidding. I would never have known and I don't know if that helped me by not being in the forefront about it. Or it hurt me from not being transparent about it to friends. Because when you start talking about it, at least in my experience, it's allowed other friends of mine that have either gone through stuff or had been treated for depression in the past as well admit to me that they could empathize with my situation because they too, had been going through similar circumstances. And for friends of mine that later on had been going through certain things that now can come to me and say, Hey, I'm going through something similar to what you went through. I need your advice on this type of thing. I imagine in your practice that you probably see a lot of people that don't want to readily admit or be transparent about not only victimization, which we're talking about earlier, but depressions or, or PTSD is because it's insanely private, embarrassing and shameful?

Dr. Dana 45:55

Well, I mean, what I tried to help people understand is that it's known, if it's a chemical depression that comes from a depleted amount of neurotransmitters in your brain, it's no different than if you have diabetes, and you don't have enough insulin to balance your blood sugar. I don't know too many people that feel ashamed of being diabetic.

Kim Fauskee 46:14

That's a good point. I think that maybe because of depression, there's had to do dirty work, right? It's a little bit of a dirty word, it's more personal diabetes is more, even though depression is still medical, as well. But diabetes fits into that, you know, kind of chronic illness category where there wasn't a common belief in depression, you know, till probably in the last couple of decades, that there was some societal acceptance to that. Maybe I'm wrong?

Dr. Dana 46:55

Well, I, you know, depression, again, takes a couple of different forms.

Kim Fauskee 47:04

Give you an example. Like, you know, like, my mom would always tell me with, you know, when I was, I was this highly sensitive child, right, so I was crying, I was sad, and so on and so forth. And it was like, she always used the term disruption, dirt on it, it will be okay. Like, I had an abrasion on my skin, right?

Like, just by saying that was just pull up your bootstraps and move on with life, right? So there was this common belief that depression was made up? Well, you're just a weak person,

Dr. Dana 47:37

most people that come to see me believe that they have failed, because they cannot manage their depression by using their willpower. The last time that anybody ever managed to depression using willpower was never,

Kim Fauskee 47:51

I tried.

Dr. Dana 47:54

Most people didn't work. Most people will give it a really good try. And they feel really ashamed that not only that they're depressed, but that they're a failure because they haven't been able to overcome their depression, by using their mind to overcome the way that they feel. I don't see how that's possible. But I understand why we do it. Look, you can influence depression, by the way that you choose to live. Just like you can be influenced by being a diabetic, by the way you choose to live, you're not going to cure the underlying cause of the malady by the choices that you make.

Kim Fauskee 48:27

eating Twinkies and drinking Jack Daniels. Yeah, I

Dr. Dana 48:31

mean, that's it, you know, it's probably a good idea if you're diabetic not to do those things. Just like you know, in order to adequately, you know, you know, work with depression, you have to be willing to consider therapy to consider eating well, to consider sleeping well to get your exercise properly. All the different, you know, ways that you can manage depression, but you're using your willpower and shaming yourself and telling yourself that you're a failure is not exactly a recipe for success when it comes to most psychological issues. But depression, especially what

Kim Fauskee 49:08

so we have most people assume that come in to see you. Again, peeking, speaking from personal experience of low self esteem, low self confidence, whatever you want to call it issues. How did they get enough courage to actually pick up the phone and give you a call?

Dr. Dana 49:28

You know, I'm not sure about that. Some people tell me it's because they have a friend or a relative that's very concerned about them. And finally, if enough people tell the person that you know that they should probably consider getting some help. They're willing to do it from that perspective. I think that some people get to a place where they just can't do it by themselves anymore. And they do come in to see me with their tail between their legs feeling like there's something really wrong with them and that they failed terribly. What I try to help people understand is that it's usually not you, that's the problem. It's usually what happened to you, in the form of whatever it is that happened to you that shouldn't and what didn't happen for you, which is not being properly loved and protected as a child. And so you

develop an attitude of unworthiness, and looking at yourself, because all children blame themselves for whatever happens to them or doesn't happen for them. And that once a person begins to understand that it's the way that they look at themselves, not who they are, that's the problem. It can change things quite drastically, I asked people to consider it like, you know, there's people in prison now who declare their innocence. Now, I know everybody in prison says they're not guilty. But when they do DNA testing on some people, in the crimes they've committed, they actually find that there are people that have been imprisoned and they're not guilty.

Kim Fauskee 50:56

So, but we're convinced that they weren't guilty.

Dr. Dana 50:59

Well, either convinced or that they were, you know, railroaded by, you know, whatever. But when you start to look at your attitude as being more of a problem than who you are, it's kind of like doing emotional DNA testing, that you've been blaming the wrong person, or at least holding the wrong person responsible, all this time thinking that you're the problem, instead of really recognizing that, that the problem is what happened to you and what didn't happen for you. Now, I'm not interested in people hating their parents, and you know, and all that, it's really more of allowing the responsibility to go where it belongs. Because if you can stop looking at yourself as being a bad person, and start really recognizing that what's missing in your life is compassion. And that the lack of compassion leads to loneliness and despair, of all different kinds, then once you start to see yourself differently, and you recognize that, that's what's missing is really not being loved properly, and not feeling a sense of well being and security in the world, that's when your life can really start to change.

Kim Fauskee 52:06

You, we live in a world now, where memes and quotes and spiritual gurus and obviously, the United States being the largest self help publishing publication in the world, where there seems to be a lot of help, in terms of enlightenment out there, right. And I'm a believer that if somebody actually cares, whether they're a therapist, whether they're a coach, whether they're a spiritual guide, whatever, that's all in, they're gonna be there, they care enough to help somebody that in that somebody is going to get something out of that. So I think that's a good thing. Right. But I also think, in society, they were a little bit misled by this, this kind of self help journey, this, this ability to read a meme, or behavioral cognitive therapy in terms of putting 100 post it notes on your on your bathroom mirror and changing the behavior that way. I just don't see that as being a sustainable approach to healing your inner wounds, and having your achieve your highest potential.

Dr. Dana 53:29

Well, I mean, you're bringing up a really good point, which is that, unfortunately, therapy can be quite intellectual, in its in the way people experience it. And you know, then you can become incredibly self knowledgeable, but nothing really changes, because it's not what's in your head that needs to change. It's learning how to become more peaceful within your heart, and learning how to really focus deeply on your inner self, learning how to trust your intuition, learning how to feel that sense of connection to yourself. And again, I want to remind everyone that I'm not talking about being self centered, which is obnoxious. I'm talking about being centered within yourself, because most of us are conditioned to, to

be centered outside of ourselves. We care way more about what people feel and think about us than we do, the way we feel and think about ourselves. So I try really hard both as a practitioner, to show people what it looks like to be connected to my intuition, and what it feels like for them to be connected to their intuition. I hadn't experienced a number of years ago that was really important in my development as a practitioner, in that I was working with a man that I'd known for a couple of years, and it seemed as though we were making progress. But I was sitting with him one day and we were talking about his work. And this real difficult subject to bring up but I just kept getting this overwhelming feeling that we were not talking about what we needed to talk about. I was overwhelmed with this feeling that I needed to talk to him about oral sex, which was nothing to do with his work, or anything that we ever talked about before that time. And I had quite an argument with myself in my head for about 20 minutes, refusing to bring up the topic, because I thought to myself, he's gonna think I'm crazy. He's gonna, I was making more about myself than him, which is something I try never to do. But I was embarrassed to bring up a subject like that, because we'd never talked about sex before, and certainly not something as personal as oral sex. And finally, I gave in to my intuition that said, talk to him about oral sex, you need to bring up the concept. So I took a deep breath. And I said to him, you know, there's something we need to be talking about here right now that we're not talking about. And he looked at me sort of with a little bit of alarm, because he had known that at other times, I brought things up in our therapy that were kind of surprising to him. And I said, Do you mind if we talk about something that might be really embarrassing and very uncomfortable? And he said, No, you know, that's why I'm here. So I said to him, I'm really sorry, but we need to talk about oral sex. And within moments, he started hyperventilating and sobbing at the top of his lungs. And he looked at me. And he said, How did you know? And I said, Well, how did I know what I'm not sure exactly what you're referring to. He said, When I was four years old, my mother used to force me to do oral sex on her. And I've never been able to tell you this, because I'm so embarrassed and ashamed. And I can't believe that you would allow me in this room, if you knew that. That's what happened. And that's what I did as a little boy. That moment, it changed my life as a therapist, because I realized that if I'm going to encourage people to be connected to themselves, I have to be willing to be as brave as they are in terms of what I bring up. Now, I didn't bring this up telling him that something happened to him, because I know that I need to be super careful about that. I just brought up a topic that I was being told over and over again, inside myself, that we needed to focus on. It completely changed the nature of the therapy that we were doing together from that point forward. Because it turns out that that was not the only sexual abuse, he suffered as a little kid, that his mom was actually a very disturbed person that started abusing him when he was an infant and went on for most of his childhood. And he was so terrified that I would judge him and look at him as being obviously the problem. And and to be able to finally be able to talk about this was a turning point in his life.

Kim Fauskee 57:44

It's so, so important that you brought that up, because I think it's when you talked about treating the pathology in the in the normal way that you're taught how to be a therapist, versus how you actually are as a therapist, that would have never

Dr. Dana 58:02

come up. No, it not it, wouldn't you? Right, right. And this

Kim Fauskee 58:06

this patient of yours suffered, I shouldn't say suffer, but actually experience a huge breakthrough. Right? And I'm sure it changed the relationship that you had with that patient as well, in a good way. Oh, absolutely.

Dr. Dana 58:20

He felt safer in the room here than you'd ever felt before because he had no more secrets that he needed to keep from me because he was so ashamed of himself, talking about

Kim Fauskee 58:30

taking a building off your shoulders, right at that point. Anyway, we're coming up against the hour right now. This has been a tremendously valuable conversation. I hope our listeners feel the same way. But it's been tremendously high, both to me as well. I want to end it because we have talked about a lot of material here in terms of self examination, depression, therapy, intuition, and so on and so forth. If somebody hasn't done, or hasn't taken the time to do self examination in their life, can you kind of give us a couple of quick tips of maybe how they can start doing that?

Dr. Dana 59:14

Well, in a certain way, you're preaching to the choir, because I've devoted my life to being a therapist, and also being someone who is very much involved in my own process of self examination. And I believe it's a lifelong process. I would encourage people to find the courage and recognize that it's an honest, shameful thing to look at yourself in the mirror. And that if you're willing to really dive deep, as you have said, that you can find relief that you can't really imagine could exist in your life. But I also want to make sure that people understand that it can sometimes be a very painful process. But I think that experiencing that pain and dealing with the grief and the sadness and all that only deepens your compassion and makes you a more loving person.

Kim Fauskee 1:00:02

It's really well said people do the work. It's worth it. Dana we'll see you next time.

Fear Me Out 1:00:11

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