

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 29

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Guest Speaker

Michael Vogel – Competent Psychotherapists

Dr. Dana Saperstein 00:00

Today's guest is Dr. Michael Vogel, a very dear friend of mine, and a very talented mental health professional. He's a therapist in private practice and he is co-owner called the Janice counseling center. Now I invited Michael on the show because in the past, I've been a little bit negative about certain therapy practices on people that they don't respect and in the way that they practice, but this series is going to be on people in the mental health field that I admire, and respect a great deal. And I wanted to start with Michael because he's one of my favorite people and also an incredibly talented and gifted therapist. I hope you enjoy my interview with Michael, he's a very fascinating guy who comes to the field of psychology from a really unusual background. So again, hope you enjoy the show. 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 01:15

Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California. This is the fear meow 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 Dr. Dana Saffer Steen?

Dr. Dana Saperstein 01:35

Well, today I'd like to welcome my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Michael Vogel. Michael, and I have known each other for a long time and have a lot of mutual respect. And I was really excited when I asked him to come. And he agreed to share his philosophy and his life and who he is. So first question, Michael is who's Michael Vogel?

Dr. Michael Vogel 01:56

Michael Vogel? That's a good question. I'll let you know when I figure that. No, it's a pleasure to be here. Again, the feeling is mutual. And I was Michael Vogel. Well, I guess I'm a lot of different things. I'm probably a dichotomy of personalities, when it comes to the things I've done and what I like to do. I think the biggest thing is that I'm just open to new experiences. And so I'm always out there, trying new things and trying to learn new things. So I kind of had a varied career in life. So yeah, being a naval aviator, if you want me to start there was definitely not part of my thought pattern when it turns out, going into careers in life. I originally was going to school to become a psychiatrist. Really? Yeah, I was doing pre med and gonna go to either lane or Cornell, one of the two. And I was one day just walking down the hallway in the science building at Cal State Long Beach, and the recruiter came up and when

I was looking at a Navy Recruiting poster, it was uh, you know, come fly jets for the navy or fly Navy poster. And he said, Well, we're doing this thing down in San Diego, on Saturday, you want to go? And I said, Sure. Where do I have to be? Wow. So I rode the van down to San Diego to Miramar and flew the flight simulator down there, the the F 14 simulator and got hooked and decided instead of going to medical school, because I thought that would be a long career path that I've had go fly jets for the Navy for a few years and have you know, have some fun, and ended up spending close to 15 years in the military. discharged in May of 2000. So, yeah,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 04:11

so tell us a bit about what you did in the military and, and you know what it was like for you? Yeah,

Dr. Michael Vogel 04:17

well, I did started off as a Surface Warfare Officer. So I went in, in a program that was supposed to be two years active duty and then six years reserve and that was to drive ships. So I was actually initially inducted in the military. I didn't get into aviation because I stupidly opened my mouth to a microbe recruiter and said, Well, if I can't get jets, or go pilot I'll I'll go surface warfare, which is being a ship driver. And sure enough, guess where I ended up? Got the denial letter for aviation, and I ended up in a program for two years active duty. He went through surface warfare training got designated as a Surface Warfare Officer. So I was qualified to drive the ship. Towards the end of that period of time, I lateral over to aviation. And at the end of the two years, I ended up going to Pensacola and started off on an aviation career. So I actually ended up with two warfare specialties coming out of the military. Wow. Which is fairly unusual. So I ended up going to Pensacola and then on to Corpus Christi doing my primary flight training and then to Kingsville, Texas to do intermediate jets and advanced jet training. Got my wings in 1990.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 05:51

Wow, what was it like for you in my column in terms of I mean, that those are fairly powerful machines. They're not, that's not a run of the mill? Occupation? That's for sure.

Dr. Michael Vogel 06:00

Yeah. Well, I, when I was a kid, I was always interested in aviation. Living in Long Beach, I would see the Blue Angels fly every summer. And I always thought that would be really cool. Of course, it was the period of the lateral part of the Vietnam War, right. And growing up as a young kid, in that period of time. There was a lot of pushback from my family about not going into the military.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 06:27

Right? Yeah, it was very much an anti war. time in life, unless you are a very conservative sort of political person.

Dr. Michael Vogel 06:35

Right. Yeah. And then growing up in the yuppie era, right. I certainly probably had a little more middle of the road kind of political views at the time. And then ended up going into the military and flying these jets only because I thought it was just interesting to fly I love. I wanted to try and fly when I was 16, but couldn't afford it. So I'm going to school and trying to work a part time job. I wasn't able to afford the

lessons. So there was an interest there in the beginning. But, you know, like I said, I've got a lot of varied interests in life. Nothing seems to really hold my attention for a long period of time, except for this particular career.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 07:24

So Michael, I've read it. I read a book a while ago about what it takes to become a naval pilot on these jets. It's no small feat. I mean, they spend a fortune training you and from what I understand the training is quite intense.

Dr. Michael Vogel 07:40

Yeah. It starts off fairly, you know, slow, initially, you certainly go through all of the Oh, emergency training, when you're down in Pensacola, you do these, you know, a lot of physical exercise getting you prepared to be able to do it physically. Right. And then there's certainly a lot of testing, you know, in terms of, you know, you do a lot of, you know, hand to hand fighting and boxing and the obstacle courses and those kinds of things that really kind of weed out the people that can't make it physically. Okay. But having been in the military for two years prior to that I was already fairly physically

Dr. Dana Saperstein 08:25

fit. Okay, so that was relatively easy for you. Right?

Dr. Michael Vogel 08:29

Well, I don't know if it was easy. I remember the five mile swim and in in our flight gear, which was not

Dr. Dana Saperstein 08:36

exactly No, that would be fun. But

Dr. Michael Vogel 08:40

yeah, it was interesting. I always kind of took it as a challenge. So coming from a fairly sports oriented family, everything, I took everything as a challenge. I was involved in scouts and as a kid, and so backpacking every you know, just about every weekend, I could get up into the mountains. So I was fairly physically fit with time, right? Yeah.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 09:05

So Michael, part of the premise of the fermion podcast is helping people deal with their fear in a healthy way. Yeah, I can't imagine that you are living without fear of training to become a pilot under those circumstances. I'm wondering how you handled the emotional intensity of the experience.

Dr. Michael Vogel 09:24

Yeah. It was one of those things where you certainly would get nervous about, you know, say going out for the first time we landed aboard carriers and feeling totally unprepared to go and do it, but you really do just kind of push through the fear. And even though you're nervous and anxious about getting it done, you just I just kind of push through it. And

Dr. Dana Saperstein 09:51

is there any emotional training at all that comes along in the military for people that are like, you know, landing on an aircraft carrier and yeah, I mean, they can't I can't imagine they think it's an easy thing to do.

Dr. Michael Vogel 10:03

Yeah, I actually looked at when I did my master's thesis, I looked at personality types, and what personality types do well in the military and which ones don't. And, of course, they want people that are compliant. But I think they actually weed that out of you, in the very beginning, because the compliance, the compliance part, and it's interesting, because in Officer Candidate School, you go through this training, where they, in the very first two or three days, you've got people screaming and yelling at you, and pushing you to your limits in terms of your physical limits. But they also do some psychological stuff that really does kind of aid us or tear down the ego, but adjusting the ego maybe is a better way of putting it so that you become more compliant. And one of the things they would do to people is, you would have room inspections. And, you know, you would spend all this time getting your space prepared for the room inspection, only to have them go in there and tear it up to tell you that you failed, the whole idea is just to be compliant and go back in there. And there were a lot of people who would try and push back and scream, yell about No, I did it perfectly, you're all wrong. And those are the people that really struggle, rather than just going in there and just doing the job getting it done. Go back in there, put your space back together, have them bash you and then move on. So that's kind of where they tend to push you in the very beginning just to be compliant. And once you're compliant, they leave you alone. Oh, okay. After Officer Candidate School, and after my initial training, either as a Surface Warfare Officer or in the in aviation, it really was just a job. You just learn to do certain procedures at certain times. And landing aboard the carrier is doing it by the numbers. If you continually do it by the numbers and adjust for the variables. You do find and as long as you're listening to the LSO the landing signals officer, and you're gonna get aboard the ship.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 12:20

Well, you know, Michael, I was at your office once and showed me a video of you landing on an aircraft carrier at nighttime in the dark. Yes. And just watching it. I was wondering, you know, where you get diapers big enough to do something like that. So

Dr. Michael Vogel 12:33

Well, I'll tell you, that was probably the one time that I really did physically feel scared, scared, probably beyond anything because it was scary watching it. Yeah, you really do end up kind of just setting yourself up by the numbers and then kind of being okay with allowing for some abrupt change to happen. So I do think it's kind of pushing through that period of change. And I think as a psychologist, that's typically what we end up dealing with a lot, right is helping people get the resilience to change, right and make those transitions. Be okay with that transition.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 13:15

Did you ever get used to landing on an aircraft carrier at nighttime? No, no. Okay. So it's not something you can get accustomed to. Now, it's

Dr. Michael Vogel 13:23

that you want to talk about an abrupt change, you're really just inside the aircraft flying the instruments, keeping, you know, the crosshairs of the needles on path and on glide slope and listening to somebody in your ear. And all the way down until all of a sudden you just impact the deck because it's in the Navy, it's considered a controlled crash.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 13:45

Oh my God,

Dr. Michael Vogel 13:46

because you keep the same attitude and the same airspeed all the way to touchdown. If you tried to flare like you do in civilian aviation, or in the Air Force, you would miss the boat entirely, because you're looking for a small patch, right? So essentially about 32 by 32 square feet. Wow, to put the plane down in so you just did it, you just did it. And, and you really did do a lot of intense concentration, all the way to touchdown. If you tried to look out and see what was going on or try and you know, do something other than focus you're gonna you're gonna miss so

Dr. Dana Saperstein 14:29

a lot of courage. That's all I can tell you.

Dr. Michael Vogel 14:31

And again, it's it's it doesn't mean I wasn't nervous. I the first time I touched down at night. i My legs were shaking, literally shaking from the adrenaline rush that I got. Wow. And one night, they had me land aboard the carrier. And supposedly the minimums were 200 feet and half mile visibility. It was not even anywhere close because I never I never even saw the what we call the meatball. On touchdown because it was just so cloudy. They did literally just let me fly all the way down to the deck and that that was scary. I bet so.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 15:11

So what eventually happened that ended your career in the military? Michael, I know. It's a very sad story.

Dr. Michael Vogel 15:18

Yeah. As I was getting ready to go to the Gulf and do our rotation over in the Middle East during the Gulf War, actually during the Iraqi Freedom, or an Iraqi? Well, I don't forget the name of the the exercise. But during in Iraq, I had been flying for almost five months straight, getting ready to go over there. I had done my carrier qualifications, then I had gone to the red flag with the Air Force and done all of the workups they're doing joint exercises, and then back to doing weapons qualifications at Fallon. And just from doing so many landings because even at the airfield, we land the same way. I ruptured a disc in my lower back, and my flight surgeon decided to not do an x-ray. So I kept flying with what he kept feeling was just a pulled muscle. And after taking about five minutes to get in and out of the cockpit, I just finally said I can't fly anymore. And it turns out the disk it actually ruptured only to go be medivac down to to Balboa and San Diego, from Nevada to have a flight surgeon or not a slight turn, but it didn't neurosurgeon who was not qualified to be doing the work he was doing operate on me twice the first time incorrectly on the wrong disk. And second time on the right disk.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 17:03

Oh, my God, we just there's no, there's nothing you can do in the military, when you're having medical malpractice, right?

Dr. Michael Vogel 17:10

No, you're you're just a just a piece of equipment to the military. They operate on you to get you back to flying. And that was pretty much the end of my career because of his inability to do it correctly.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 17:26

And so you never went back to flying a plane for the military after that. No,

Dr. Michael Vogel 17:30

That was the end of it. I never recovered enough to be able to re qualify, even after trying to get back into flight status. I couldn't get the the military board of flight examiner's to re qualify me.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 17:50

So how did you deal with that situation in your life? That sounds really traumatic.

Dr. Michael Vogel 17:54

It was devastating. Yeah, I mean, it was ill recovering was what I focused on initially, right. And then after having those two surgeries about a year apart, it was kind of already devastating, to know that it wasn't ever gonna get back. And I just kind of focused on really recovering and then getting out of the military, because I knew that I needed to go to find a different career.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 18:21

And I'm misremembering that they diagnosed you with some type of mental illness to get you out of the military in some way or

Dr. Michael Vogel 18:29

yeah, they at one point, they decided after the first surgery that I was being a hypochondriac is what they felt. And so they sent me to a psychologist and diagnosed me with bipolar disorder.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 18:45

Come on. No, there's not a bipolar bone in your body. Michael, it's like to talk about another type of malpractice. Yeah, oh, my God. And they did that to absolve themselves of responsibility.

Dr. Michael Vogel 18:57

Well, it turns out and actually, my wife, Jennifer and I, who's also my partner, in the business, at Janus counseling, she was looking it up and she found that in the records that this particular neurosurgeon, who was I think he's in Tennessee still still still has a medical license now practicing, right? Still practicing. And he actually had operated on somebody previous to me, in the same way. And so he was being, I guess, under investigation at the time, for the same issue where he operated on the wrong, they're in the wrong area on somebody previously. So, so I think they were just trying to get me

out of the military so that they didn't have to look bad. And it turned out when I went back to get my disability from the military that they kept denying it all the way up until the time. I, my particular lawyer, had a friend who was a producer for 60 minutes. Oh, okay. And so we were about ready to go do a taping on this particular thing. And a Navy admiral called me up and said, we have a flight for you in your family up to Bethesda, we're going to do all of your medical exams, and there were five different separate medical exams all in one day, which was incredible to get those things done. And, they did it and ended up giving me 100% disability.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 20:46

So only because you had influence? Yes,

Dr. Michael Vogel 20:49

I think because I had learned about all of this and the previous court martial. Wow, that they really just want to be satisfied and go away. Right. So,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 21:02

so what happened from there and your life? I mean, now you're a practicing psychotherapist, and you got a PhD in right, you know, clinical psychology and how did you get from the military to that? Well,

Dr. Michael Vogel 21:14

that's kind of unusual. I did grow up with two parents. My stepfather and my mother were both psychologists and certainly had that in my family already, I did want to go into psychiatry. And I specifically wanted to go into psychiatry, because I wanted to do psychoanalysis, or analytical psychology. And so it just turns out that after in the 80s, there was a big blow up with psychoanalytic institutes, and they had let psychologists in so I think this was a better way, because I don't really care to be prescribing medications. Okay, so after recovering, and, you know, going through therapy for a number of years, as you know, we, I ended up getting interested in actually getting my MFT license. And then when I did that, I thought I want to go on and, and do a little bit more training. And so I went and went back and did my PhD in psychoanalysis, or psychodynamic therapy.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 22:20

So Michael, is there anything that you can think about in your childhood that might have influenced your eventual career path to be of service to others, and, you know, take care of the people that come to see you?

Dr. Michael Vogel 22:32

Yeah, I think, you know, after being sexually abused as a small child, I kind of found Boy Scouts as a refuge, safe place to be since my parents were otherwise preoccupied with their own lives, that that was a good place for me to be and be safe. That also gave me a sense of serving others. And I think that's probably the biggest influence on my life. Certainly, going through abuse as a child, you get this idea that you're somehow damaged. And I think, you know, try and make up for that. And one of the ways I made up for that, as a kid was always doing something for somebody else. If it wasn't helping other people out doing construction, or helping other people out in Boy Scouts by doing service work.

That was the way I kind of tried to make up for, I think, what I thought was damage, which actually turned out to be an asset in my life.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 23:36

So tell me a bit about your mom and your dad. Besides the fact that they were or your stepdad, I guess the they were mental health professionals themselves. Yeah,

Dr. Michael Vogel 23:45

my step dad taught psychology at Cal State Long Beach, okay, for 30 years. Previous to that he taught at Berkeley. And then my mother was an industrial psychologist. And so they did a lot of testing as well as teaching. None of them were actually therapists. Okay, so I didn't really get a clinical sense of it. I certainly, my stepdad taught clinical psychology, even though I don't think he ever had a license as a psychologist, okay, just as a teacher, and what about your biological father and my biological father, who was a big influence in my life in terms of going into the Navy, he worked for the Navy, he was a general foreman at the Naval Shipyard. Oh, okay. He was kind of absent in my life for a number of years because he was a functional alcoholic from what is essentially childhood all the way through till he was 60. Wow. But I'd certainly admired him for what he did. He was a very capable man. So he influenced me in terms of the Navy. He was in the Navy as well.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 25:02

And your relationship with your mom and your stepdad were the relationships, okay? Or what troublesome or how would you describe them?

Dr. Michael Vogel 25:09

I wouldn't say it's troublesome in the sense that they were absent. They were so more neglectful than anything else. Right? They were, they were busy with themselves. My stepdad was 22 years older than my mother. Oh, okay. And so they were constantly always going on vacation on the weekends. And we were left alone for quite a bit. Throughout my life, they certainly weren't interested in me. In terms of the things that I did. My mom was very interested in my sister's sports, and certainly interested in going to see my brother. In terms of his sports, they weren't interested in coming to see me play concerts when I played clarinet. Okay. And neither did they really, were they interested in the marching band stuff as well, which I think that was a big part of my life in terms of giving me structure, music in and marching band, and certainly allowed me to meet my wife, who was a cheerleader, a rap sister at the time, right. So

Dr. Dana Saperstein 26:21

so are they at all involved in your life at this point?

Dr. Michael Vogel 26:27

My mother is not involved in my life. My mother actually has Alzheimers, okay. And there was a split. And when, you know, my mom continued to tell me that she needed to take care of the girls so that boys could take care of themselves. My mother was also very interested in women's wear women's issues, she was the executive director for the Commission on the Status of Women for the state of California. That's a hard one to get out. Yeah. So she was always interested in politics. And, and she

wrote a lot of the legislation that the state of California passed. She certainly did a lot for women and women's issues. Right. And I certainly can be proud of her for that. But she was very absent in her children's life.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 27:19

So how did you deal with the neglect of sort of being left to your own devices?

Dr. Michael Vogel 27:25

Again, I think it was fun, you know, friends, and you know, a little bit of family. My sister certainly, you know, was around quite a bit till she met somebody and then went off to college. But I think it was more friends and, and scouts and music and other organizations that I got involved in

Dr. Dana Saperstein 27:48

to the abuse that you suffered and neglect that you suffered, eventually catch up with you psychologically, do you think?

Dr. Michael Vogel 27:56

Yeah, I think so. It eventually caught up with me when I lost my career. Okay, that's the period of time in which I really didn't have much of a oh, how can I say it a focus or an occupation, I kind of felt like I was adrift, the only thing I really had in my life was my wife. And my, at the time, my future wife. And because of that, I really felt kind of lost in terms of who I was as a person. Because I didn't have any area to focus on and didn't have others to focus on. And I think that's what my trauma, the abuse did was kind of forced me to focus on others if I was, which is probably what got me in trouble in the first place. I didn't have that it turned out that the person that abused me was a family friend who was around during my sister's baseball softball game, so when I would have to go to the softball games. That's where I met this couple. And he was the one that abused me. And he was also my custodian at the at the elementary school that I went to. Boy, that's a handy place for a pedophile to work. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And so there was, I think the fallout with my mother was primarily over that issue. And the fact that she didn't feel like she needed to do anything about it. She didn't want to, she knew about it. She knew about it. And she didn't do anything. She didn't do anything. She chose to, to essentially call me a liar and say that it really didn't happen the way I thought it happened. And certainly without going into the graphics of it, certainly, if it happened, it happened over and over because they would have these people over to our house to have parties on the weekends,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 29:58

and he would find you and take advantage of you. Yeah. So and your mom's mental health professional and she should know better than anybody.

Dr. Michael Vogel 30:07

Exactly. Yeah.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 30:08

So how did you handle it when you started to really look at the stuff, not feeling incredibly resentful toward her and really angry with her for abandoning you and allowing you to be abused on a regular basis? Yeah.

Dr. Michael Vogel 30:21

Now, we discussed it several times. And there, we had our splits at times when I wouldn't talk to her because I felt like she was not being present for me. But, and we discussed it, and she would always say, Oh, I'm sorry. But you know, as we know, as mental health professionals, when somebody says, I'm sorry, they're what they're saying, I want to end the conversation.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 30:49

So that was her attempt at making amends without having to make amends.

Dr. Michael Vogel 30:54

Right. Yeah. So but she still continued to be very absent in my life. And, and even as an adult, when I would go to her with, you know, issues or things I wanted to discuss. She was never available. So I just finally, you know, when she retired, she wanted us to then engage with her all the time, and take care of her. Yeah. And I just finally said I had enough because it was always very dramatic and very traumatic, because my mother, despite her ability to do good work in her career, she wasn't very good at being a mother. And because of that, it was really kind of all about her. And, and you had a little brother, older brother, I had an older brother. And what and something happened with him also, right, yeah, actually have four kids in the family. There was an older brother, an older sister, as well as myself and then my younger sister. Okay, both my older brother and my younger sister both died of alcoholism. Okay, both about the same age about 58.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 32:08

Do you think that they were abused also, when they were children, or you don't really know about that?

Dr. Michael Vogel 32:12

I think there was a, there was probably some abuse, I think the neglect in the kind of absence of my mother really was the big part of it. Right? My brother, you know, got into lots of trouble and got into drugs fairly early in life and as well as alcohol. And so same with my younger sister, my younger sister, my mom probably did the opposite. She enabled her in a lot of ways to continue to drink. And I think that drinking came from my dad's drinking, right? Didn't mean that my mom and stepdad didn't drink they drink every weekend. Oh, okay. So there was a lot of alcohol in the family.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 32:53

So so you're bringing up a really important point about trauma, which is you can be as traumatized by neglect as you can by overt abuse. Oh, yeah. And I think that's something really important just to mention in the context of our conversation, because even though you were overly abused, it sounds like then neglect was equally if not more damaging than what actually happened to you.

Dr. Michael Vogel 33:14

Yeah, because I didn't have any way of resolving the trauma. So the trauma just exists. And you end up with hyper vigilance and the kind of paranoia and all sorts of things that go along with trauma itself. And then you certainly have the dissociative parts of it. I don't know if I ever really struggled from dissociation, but I could have easily gone to what my brother and younger sister did, which is go to alcohol, right to manage the anxiety, because, you know, with trauma, you get both depression and anxiety, right. And I think I treated it by getting involved. They treated it by getting involved with alcohol.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 33:59

So they disappear and you move forward into the care of others. Right? Yeah. So how do you then at this point, you're, you're without a career, and you're kind of feeling lost? So what happens from that point forward in your life, Michael, toward making the decision to get educated in becoming a therapist

Dr. Michael Vogel 34:18

while getting therapy? Okay, fair. Yeah. years of therapy. I think, you know, the therapy certainly started when I was in the military. Okay. And then it carried on. After that, seeing a quite good professional sitting across from me, I think you might be very kind. And certainly exposing a lot of and going deeper, I think is the key to finally realizing what was going on throughout my life. I think getting out of the military, it seemed like the military was the focus. But you know, as going deeper in therapy, I finally realized that it was actually Going back to being traumatized as a child, right. So, I think, you know, resolving those, what they call the touchstone in EMDR, they call those Touchstone memories, right are the ones that you really have to get back to in order to really heal from it. So, after, what almost four years of therapy? It was you that said, Hey, why don't you do this for a living? And I thought, well, you know, I thought about it before. As an MD, certainly, doing it, as a psychologist is certainly just as good.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 35:39

Well, you know, I have a big smile on my face, because I remember actually very clearly after getting to know you, thinking to myself, Man, if this guy ever decides he wants to be a therapist, I'm gonna do everything I can to help him because he's certainly got what it takes, you know, your intuitive qualities and your sensitivity and your intelligence and your manner are all spot on to, to obviously be as successful as you are at this point.

Dr. Michael Vogel 36:05

Yeah, I appreciate that, ya know, and that was the impetus to go on and, and do my marriage and family therapy, master's degree. So and then you got a PhD. And then I went on after that and got my PhD in psychotherapy, which is depth psychology, which in turn was Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 36:29

Okay. So Michael, tell us about your professional life. Now, if you don't mind, because again, I have not been very kind in some of the ways that I've described the therapy process. But when I decided I was going to do a series on people I admire and respect you were the first person that came into my mind, because I've referred lots of people to you, and anybody that has come to see you is always reported back to me that they're extremely happy with the service that you provide. And actually, I can tell you personally, that after having a number of surgeries and not being able to sleep afterwards, because of

the trauma, you and I, you know, worked together for a while and it was extremely helpful. Amazingly enough, I can actually sleep sometimes now so I'm grateful also on a personal level. So tell me about you and the Janice Counseling Center.

Dr. Michael Vogel 37:20

Oh, well, Janice counseling centers located here in Santa Barbara, California. And it's J A N U S Jn us the god Janus. Okay, a lot of portals and transitions, okay. And we, I started that with my current wife, Jennifer

Dr. Dana Saperstein 37:37

Vogel, who's going to be on the next podcast, by the way.

Dr. Michael Vogel 37:41

And she, she and I have worked since 2016, to start this Counseling Center to do both. therapy as well as doing training. We just recently started Janice community counseling services, which is the nonprofit side to do training for trainees who are going through their either psychology or MFT, or LCSW or LPCC. Training. Okay. We will be doing that as well. So,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 38:18

but you specifically do have a specialization or a few. I know you work a lot with trauma.

Dr. Michael Vogel 38:25

Yeah. And trauma is primarily what I do. I work with probably a predominant amount of people who have have either trauma through the military, first responders, firefighters, police officers, they certainly work with even a few of the district attorneys here in town, because they have a deal. They deal primarily with trauma. Oh, absolutely. Yeah. And so I've done quite a bit of work, my dissertation was in trauma. I did my dissertation on complex trauma Complex PTSD, people who had trauma as children, and then trauma again in the military. And then I do a lot of work with EMDR, which is evidence based therapy, cognitive behavioral therapies as well. And then I also do a lot of work, psychoanalytic work, where I do work with people who are just trying to, to grow in their life and in individuate, into into who they really

Dr. Dana Saperstein 39:26

are. And what is the age range of people that you see. I

Dr. Michael Vogel 39:31

think the youngest has been seven all the way up to the oldest is 86.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 39:38

Okay, so it's a very wide Yes, wide range range. Do you do couples counseling also, or just individual?

Dr. Michael Vogel 39:44

I do couples counseling? For some reason, I've been tasked to do a lot of that for first responders I can imagine. So, I do. I do couples counseling as well. Yeah.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 39:56

And how much does your intuition play into the upper approach that you take and working with people, Michael?

Dr. Michael Vogel 40:02

Oh, I think it's almost all of it. It's really that intuitive part that really is, is key to trying to understand people's stories. That's primarily how I work is trying to look at people's stories and look at the metaphors that might be associated with their story and see how their story kind of tracks their life, in terms of trauma, if it's trauma, it's always looking for people trying to teach them how to get out of the trauma cycle, so that they can get back to a life that is more resilient, and certainly more productive in their life. In terms of working with couples, I think I got a lot of education from you on that. And working with the kind of chess game that people play in terms of who's you know, trying to get more power and in this, the struggle and trying to work with the person that I typically work with the person who has, you know, the least amount of power in the, in the couples trying to help them get back to a better balance in the couple. So,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 41:17

I don't know if you remember this, Michael, but when I was working with you doing EMDR, to help me sleep, casually, you just mentioned to me in passing, you know, I think your life is going to change and something really big is going to come into your life. I don't know if you remember saying that? Yeah, I do. And then within a relatively short period of time, I woke up and realized it was time to write a book and start a podcast. Yeah. And then I look back and I thought, How did Michael know that? How do you know that?

Dr. Michael Vogel 41:45

I think like you, I think things just pop into my head, I typically get these images that just kind of pop into my head, I don't I don't always understand them. Sometimes I do. Sometimes they're related to what we're talking about. And sometimes they're just just a strange image of, you know, whether it's a fairy tale or a Greek or Roman story that I've heard before, or even even sometimes, it can be parts of the Bible that pop out in my head. And I can see how this person's story is matched to that kind of metaphor. Interesting. And so it's, it's just, I don't really have much control over when they pop into my head.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 42:29

Well, I'm glad that you don't censor them, because it was quite a gift to me when I looked back and thought, wow, he was really on to something. So you just mentioned something that I consider to be really important, which is having a spiritual life related to your professional life. Right? Do you believe there's a link between the two for you? Oh, completely? So are you comfortable describing how that works for you?

Dr. Michael Vogel 42:53

Well, I yeah, I think it's interesting. It's an interesting subject. I certainly grew up with two religions, I grew up with Catholicism and grew up with Judaism. So both

Dr. Dana Saperstein 43:04

Yeah, both have a corner on the marketing guilt, right? Yeah, guilt and shame,

Dr. Michael Vogel 43:09

shame. So, and so I had a lot of that in my life. So I was exposed to those kinds of things. But I also was really interested in certainly reading and reading, you know, philosophy and history and those kinds of things. So that, that those kinds of backgrounds are in there. But in terms of how I feel about my spirituality, I, I've been exposed to just about everything. Certainly, when I went through my training, and we had a lot of training, in depth, psychology and young in psychology, he went around the world and looked at all sorts of different religions, so and they all have a similar tie into each other. I also got interested in quantum physics, oh, really how that works. That's interesting. So the whole idea of that we exist in multiple realms, or that we exist in multiple lives. Or, you know, certainly, if you go into Catholicism or go into Christianity, or even Judaism, there's the whole idea of in Catholicism and Christianity of Heaven. In Judaism, it's more about we're living it now. So the whole idea that we're living those lives, as we speak, I kind of use that idea of that we can get in touch with either people on the other side, or we can get in touch with ourselves and maybe another life is if you look at quantum physics and the idea of that there are realms or other aspects of who we are living in other places. And I am a big believer that in terms of that energy He never dies. I mean, the quantum physics or the physics idea that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, or I have to exist beyond this, right? So I kind of use that in my own psychology in terms of seeing how people live lives. This life is similar to another life, but doesn't mean we can't change the lives we live in terms of making ourself better as we go through each iteration of her life. And that might be for me, it was starting off as being molested as a child, and then going on into the military, I feel like was a totally different side of myself, and certainly a different life. Sure. And then going into this business is another part of who I am. So they're all parts of myself. And certainly in young human psychology, we have the belief that there is parts of ourselves when we have dreams, there, it's really not about other people or about other things, it's parts of ourselves. So we can get in touch with those things as well. Certainly, I think trauma, going through the trauma cycle is that I finally got in touch with that stronger part of myself where I learn to say no to things, as opposed to continually getting traumatized. Okay, neglected or abused.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 46:29

So one of the premises that Kim and I have, have a really strong belief about is that your intuition is the voice of God inside of you. Now, some people object to the notion of using the word God, or higher power, your collective unconscious, whatever, whatever term that you want to use, do you believe that your intuition is divinely connected?

Dr. Michael Vogel 46:53

Oh, yeah. Yeah, no, I feel like I've had periods of time in my life where God has, I felt has come to me in different ways. Okay, in order to help me in my decision making, and certainly in my intuitive part, I would say, yes, I think God exists within us, as well as outside of us.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 47:15

So when you're working with your clients, to feel that connection is there to help you kind of get whatever you need in order to be the best that you can be in the context of whoever you're serving.

Dr. Michael Vogel 47:27

Yeah, I think as long as I'm not distracted by other things in life, and I can be in the moment, which I think is key for a lot of people, right, and you can get in touch with that. But I think if you're distracted or busy doing other things, you're not going to be able to get in touch with it. But I do think most people can get in find it and get in touch with it, they just have to one believe in it, and to be open to it,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 47:53

to try to teach some of the people you see how to do it have that relationship,

Dr. Michael Vogel 47:57

I think if they're individuated enough, meaning they're mature enough in their life cycles that in their life that they can, they can get in touch with it. And sometimes I can teach it to people. Or get them to realize it. And most of that work is done through dream work, right? Because people seem to be more open to those ideas in dream work. Because

Dr. Dana Saperstein 48:23

What's interesting, I never thought about it from that perspective. So if somebody brings a dream to you can help them see that it's their unconscious mind trying to help them heal, I guess for lack of a better way of putting it. Yeah. So that's one of the pathways that you can use to help somebody feel more connected to themselves by encouraging them to take their dream seriously. Yeah.

Dr. Michael Vogel 48:43

I think there's a therapist and all of us that I can get in touch with. Yes, yeah. And you can use the word God that you can get in touch with.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 48:53

So um, I know that in my training, religion was looked at as a form of mental illness in the psychology world, right. But I, you know, come to understand that having a spiritual life seems really essential to healing, especially trauma. Yes. Has that been your experience? Oh, yeah,

Dr. Michael Vogel 49:13

definitely. I think if you don't have a sense of who you are in terms of the world, and you don't have a sense of God in the world, then you're just going to miss a whole lot of beautiful things in your life. And the only thing you have to focus on is the experiences you have. And then you end up in victimhood as opposed to seeing the beauty of the world. The my trauma, despite the fact that it was painful and hurtful, gave me a lot of attributes that I now can use. One of them was seeking spirituality. The other one was, you know, being aware of what's going on around me despite the fact that some people will feel trapped by that. To me, it's a I am so aware of what's going on around me that I use all of those little cues. It could, could be a sound outside, it could be a, you know, something that I see moving by the window that I all of a sudden see as a metaphor. So it's one of its I use quite a bit of the hypervigilance if you want to call it that leftover in a healthy way, as a way of healing others.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 50:25

Okay. So when you face someone, like if you met me in my 30s, and you asked me what my religion was, I would have told you I was an antagonist. Right? I was not agnostic or atheist, I was an antagonist because of the trauma that has suffered in the name of, you know, being forced to go to Hebrew school and all the stuff that I hated. So how do you do then because I've traveled sometimes with people that have been traumatized religiously, to help them see the God and religion are separate that they're not the same, right? How do you help people in that kind of situation? Is there anything that you found that works to help someone except maybe the notion that you shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater?

Dr. Michael Vogel 51:01

Right, I think I would probably ask them to tell me more about their antagonism. That'd be easy for me. Yeah. And so because I think it is an underlying story, and it might be one of those things of, you know, maybe religion just didn't come at the right time for you, as opposed to it, whether he religion should be there shouldn't be there. Because that to me, is too binary, right? I think being young in psychology certainly teaches us that. You can say the same thing to somebody over and over again, and just might not be the right time for them to hear it. Right. So keep saying it. Just say the different ways

Dr. Dana Saperstein 51:38

well, and I know that when I was in therapy for at least a decade with a man that I adored, who became my mentor, he tried really hard to help me heal those wounds. But he kept doing it from a religious perspective, because he was Jewish and believed that, right, that was my path. But that didn't work for me, because, sadly, Ike kit sort of came of age in the early 60s during a time that was very close to the end of, you know, World War Two. And so most of the rabbis and teachers that I encountered in Hebrew school are really damaged, really unhappy, very miserable people. Yeah, I just remember the guy that did my Bar Mitzvah. He was so old and so bitter. And just thought, you know, there's nothing sacred about any of this. It's all bitter, really unhappy people. I just want to go play baseball. That's where the fun is. Well, there's a long time for me to get past all

Dr. Michael Vogel 52:33

right. Yeah. Well, I think it's one of those things. Some people get caught up in trying to interpret the words as opposed to just hearing the words, right. And maybe that's just what you needed was to be able to hear the words in your time, right and not in their time.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 52:53

Well, especially when you're stubborn like me, it takes an act of God to wake me up to God's existence. It just didn't happen in a religious context. So I didn't become born again. Because it happened. Right? in a social context.

Dr. Michael Vogel 53:07

Yeah. I think when God appears for people, sometimes they're slapped upside the head. Yeah,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 53:12

I was slapped upside.

Dr. Michael Vogel 53:13

Some people just get tapped on the shoulder,

Dr. Dana Saperstein 53:15

right? Well, I mean, I'm sure you've noticed that, if you don't listen to the whisper, it becomes a normal tone of voice. And if you don't listen to the normal tone of voice, it starts yelling. And after that, it's a slap on the head, right? And then even still, a lot of us don't listen. Yeah,

Dr. Michael Vogel 53:31

so Exactly.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 53:32

So if somebody's looking for a therapist, how would you suggest that they go about doing that? Because there's a lot of people that listen to this podcast, we have been encouraging to get some help and to go deep. But if they don't live in Santa Barbara, I mean, what's your recipe for when somebody says, Well, I got a friend who lives you know, so somewhere, how do you help them find somebody that is capable?

Dr. Michael Vogel 53:55

Yeah, well, I my, my suggestion is always to, you know, call and talk to them. And I think you'll you'll find somebody who will resonate with you and be open to that, that feeling that you get from them. Sometimes you can call me and only get me for a couple of minutes, as opposed to a long period of time, certainly, the way. I mean, if you want to be practical about how to look for somebody, certainly looking online, looking through Psychology Today and finding people who have written a bio or something that seems to resonate with you, a lot of the people that come to see me, it's because of my background that that it resonates either my training or my my experience, because I certainly don't hide that I was in the military before, right. And it's also the things that I I believe in, that I post in either on my website or the things that I write about myself on my web Right. So try and use all of those good old technological factors to try and look for the right person, right? Look, if some people will even come to me via the internet via telehealth, really, so we do zoom, I certainly can only do it in the States, I'm licensed by them. But right there are a lot of people who can zoom. I have people in Northern California, somebody in Napa Valley, and I have somebody all the way down in San Diego. So I do telehealth with those, and certainly can do good work. They seem to think it's good work. Okay. And then I certainly, you know, see people in house that people come to visit me and some people, you know, only come and see me for a time or two, I don't think you should be, you know, you stick with somebody just because you, you felt like you made a contract with them. If you don't like them, sure, move on. And try and find somebody else. But find somebody who's interested in the career of being a therapist. There are a lot of people in this business who use psychology or, you know, psychotherapy, the occupation as a, as a part time job. I mean, like a hobby or something. Yeah. Because they have other things they want to do. And this just gives them a few extra dollars. Those are the people you want to avoid. Right? So look for people who are trying to make a career out of it.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 56:32

And are well trained, hopefully, yes, yeah. And I'm assuming, like my business, I would say 90% of the people that come to see me are satisfied customers that refer their friends and family. Does that work that way? For you? Yes. Yeah. I think that's very true. So encouraging people to ask their friends, right? Oh, yeah, it's probably the best way to find somebody, because I can imagine somebody would talk well, about somebody that's not helped them,

Dr. Michael Vogel 57:00

right. Yeah. No, I think that's probably an excellent way of getting the, you know, finding out who's the best.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 57:07

And the other issue has to do with monetary value. There's lots of people who can't afford to see the two of us. So, before we wrap up, could you tell me a bit about I'm gonna, I'm going to ask Jennifer, when I speak to her about the, the new project that you're doing with trainees is it? Is it low cost, or yes, it's going to

Dr. Michael Vogel 57:27

be sliding scale, okay, low cost. And we certainly take things into account whether you can afford it or not. So, we will slide the scale to whatever you need in order to be able to see somebody because that's our goal, as, as people who served in this business is right, we want to see as many people as we can, and we want to bring good people, even if they're a trainee, they, our trainees have a lot of experience in life, right, certainly in the middle of their training. So they have a lot of expertise in the newest and latest ways of doing therapy. Plus, they also have us as supervisors, right? You're going to be a supervisor, I'm going to be a supervisor. So they get all that background. So they actually get two therapists instead of one, right. And we certainly monitor those individuals to make sure they're doing excellent training. We train them in the various modalities. I've got training everywhere from psycho athletic training to evidence based training, right? So we're going to make sure that they get the same kind of training, whether they get it at school or not.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 58:40

So is there anything else that you would like to mention that I haven't asked you about? You've been incredibly candid, and, and certainly very forthright in describing your evolution as a person and in your professional life? What What have I left out that that might occur to you in this moment,

Dr. Michael Vogel 58:56

I think probably the thing that I thought about when I was coming over here was the idea of not falling into victimhood. I think we these days, we look to try and find something that's wrong with us, and then seek out people who will reinforce that. I think it's fine to have something, you know, unusual happened to you or something traumatic happened to you? Do you just want to work to get out of it, or at least get it in the right spot in our psyche, so that we can use those parts that are good for us. And then discard the ones that are bad for us. But don't don't stay in victimhood, because it's not an easy place to live. Right. And there are people like us out there, just keep looking, keep seeking.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 59:47

You know, Mike, you're bringing up such a good point of, again, Kim and I have talked endlessly about the idea that if you find a therapist and they pathologize you and they agree with you that there's something wrong with you. You're not in the right place, right because all you need is somebody else to agree with you that you're the problem, right? Instead of trying to help you understand that mostly it's what happened to you and what didn't happen for you that has created the misery that you're suffering and the loneliness and the lack of connection. So I'm really glad that you just said what you just said. It's really, really important. Yes, yeah. So Michael, thank you so much for coming in. It's been a pleasure. Again, you're one of my favorite people and favorite therapists in town. So it's a double pleasure,

Dr. Michael Vogel 1:00:29

that the feeling is mutual. I look forward to seeing you in the future.

Dr. Dana Saperstein 1:00:35

And you know, Michael, I would love to ask you to come back onto the podcast when I'm going to do a series on trauma in the future. And I would love for you to come and talk about EMDR because I think it's either very misunderstood or people just don't understand what it is and because I don't do it, I would love for you if you're willing to come in and do a podcast on EMDR.

Dr. Michael Vogel 1:00:59

I would love to very good. Get your ideas on hypnosis to very good. Alright, I look

Dr. Dana Saperstein 1:01:03

forward to that conversation in the future.

Fear Me Out 1:01:07

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