

# *Fear Me Out Podcast*

## Episode 8

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

### Dr. Dana Saperstein - Conscious Introspection & Emotions

#### **Dr. Dana** 00:11

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** 00:30

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** 00:52

We might be the master of our own thoughts. Still, many of us are slaves to others emotions. On this episode, Dana and I begin a discussion regarding the fear of taking on other people's emotions. Whether you're conscious of this or not, many of us have come to the fact and allowed to dictate the quality of our lives. So join us as we decipher the reasons behind taking on other people's emotions, and how you can practice empathy without taking a psychological toll. Well, folks, you get the pleasure of Dana and I again, after the first two episodes and of listening to both of us and then having guests since then, but we felt it was important for me and I to speak on the fear of taking on other people's emotions. And we'll have future guests that will also come on with us and talk about that, as well. But before we start this episode, I want to thank each and every one of you that have listened either through the first eight or nine podcasts because I think this may be 10 or 11 that we're doing today. Podcasting is easy is we found out but we're really enjoying what we're doing. We do spend a lot of time in preparation for these episodes in finding the right guest that not only has subject matter expertise, but can eloquently state that expertise. And hopefully you can relate to these people. So again, thank you for listening, and we're going to continue on. We have many more, not only fear episodes, but other daily psychological issues that affect us that we'll talk about, and months and maybe years to come. But anyway, Dana's sitting here anxiously waiting for me to start this episode. So I guess the best way to start is to allow you the expert to tell us what an empath is.

#### **Dr. Dana** 02:57

Well, thanks to him. I agree with your appreciation for everyone that's been willing to listen, and I'm hoping everybody's enjoying what they're hearing. I would say that about 5% of the population has the

characteristics of being an empath. So it's a large number of people, but not inordinately large. And, you know, part of what being an empath implies is a heightened degree of sensitivity, in terms of feeling your feelings, it also implies a certain intensity with which you feel your feelings. So it's not just being exquisitely sensitive, it's also the intensity with which you process the information. I would say the lion's share of people that come to see me are empaths, and they don't realize it because being an empath, and not understanding what it is that you bring to the table causes a lot of pain and suffering when you're a child. It's really unfortunate because it's a gift if you understand it, but it feels like a liability if you have to live with it. And you don't understand why you're so different than most other people. So part of what I do is to educate people who walk into my world with this quality, to help them understand number one, it's a genetic quality, it's not something that that you will acquire over the course of time your your relationship to it obviously, is is acquired either you fight against it, which most people do, or you learn to accept it and use it as an asset which I try to help people do. But really the degree of sensitivity that you possess is like a lot of other traits. It's very much genetically programmed into your nervous system.

**Kim Fauskee** 04:56

So being an empath is something that's been scientifically proven? Or was it a theory through psychology? Or how did the term Empath come about? Do you know?

**Dr. Dana** 05:09

Well, there's a woman who did a lot of research on being a highly sensitive person, which is another way of describing being an empath. Are you talking about Elaine Aaron? Yeah, she's written a lot of books about what it means to be highly sensitive, as a kid as a partner in a relationship, just, you know, from a general perspective, so she's the first sort of professional person that opened up this notion that there is a percentage of people that are a little bit different than average.

**Kim Fauskee** 05:40

And you know, you recommended that book to me, many maybe some 20 years ago. Yeah. And I read it. Like she wrote it about me.

**Dr. Dana** 05:50

Yes, yeah, most people that read it, if it really applies to their situation are actually quite stunned at the accuracy and, and the things that she described, because it really, it really is a very fundamentally different way of experiencing reality than then 95% of the population. It doesn't mean that it's so different that you can't relate to other people. But it does preclude having an easy time with superficial conversation as an example.

**Kim Fauskee** 06:22

And like I had, I think, I don't want to go back and rehash Episode One and two. But it is the reason my mother called me different, right?

**Dr. Dana** 06:33

Yes, she could tell there was something different about you. Usually, parents are quite nervous about this quality in their children. Most people have secrets that they're ashamed of. And they can sort of

inherently sense whether those secrets are going to remain that way, or whether there's somebody in their presence who might be able to sort of divine the information in a way that would make the average person feel a bit uncomfortable. Now, this is not always a conscious thing. But I will say that, that parents just sometimes have a feeling that their kid is a bit of an emotional threat, because the kid looks at them in a different way than maybe some of the other children in the family or other people and most people would prefer their secrets to be kept a secret.

**Kim Fauskee 07:22**

Yeah, I think it was. For me, it was being constantly fearful number one of my dad's rage or the rage that was in the house, or anybody being rageful and the constant amount of tears that I had as a kid.

**Dr. Dana 07:39**

Well, and we are often shamed for being really sensitive for reacting as strongly as we do. For you know, how many times have you were you told why it makes such a big deal about this? It's nothing. Why you make a mountain out of a molehill all the different ways you can shame people for having the perceptions that they have. Right.

**Kim Fauskee 07:59**

And and when I was growing up, boys were supposed to cry, right? boys weren't supposed to show emotion. Outwardly, they weren't supposed to publicly show it. You were supposed to just pick up your bootstraps and move on. And I don't understand why you're sad about this.

**Dr. Dana 08:13**

Right? Yeah. And you're often made to feel ashamed of yourself. Because you know, your role until you are different. I don't think that was a compliment.

**Kim Fauskee 08:24**

No, I didn't take it as a compliment. I didn't take advantage as a compliment. I don't take it now as a cop, either. So I don't think I understand. So she didn't make it. Now. She's, she's I was, I was different. I wasn't fitting into her norm right on point. So

**Dr. Dana 08:36**

Right. And I think in a certain way, your father was jealous of you. Because of the attention maybe that you got from your mom and the fact that that he could sense that there was something about you that was a little bit different. That was a threat to him and his pathology of being a raging alcoholic?

**Kim Fauskee 08:54**

Well, I think I was a threat to his manhood in many ways, right? And I wasn't, you know, being seen by him, at least in the way that he thought having a son should be right, you know, again, that I was had feelings was just not the way that that he wanted me to be in life.

**Dr. Dana 09:17**

You know, when I think about this aspect of being a person, I had a really unusual experience when I was actually in utero. I was about six months in development inside my mom. And I have a very, very,

very clear memory of being in the basement of the house that we lived in. And my sister who was two years old, two years old, at that time, clinging on to my mother's dress, and my father coming home from work and my parents having a knock down drag out fight about the fact that my father was having an affair with his secretary. And I remember really, really clearly as a developing fetus that my mother believed that the reason that my father was being unfaithful was because she was ugly, because she was pregnant. Now, I don't know how I knew this, but I just had that feeling at the time. And I remember this feeling of taking my mother's ugliness into my body through the umbilical cord and feeling like I was being poisoned by her self loathing, and her self hate and her feelings of ugliness. And it was a really sad, awful experience, obviously. And when I was born, actually, I suffered from what's called failure to thrive, I wasn't able to rely on my mom for comfort or nutrition, I was actually allergic to her milk. And it took months for them to figure out why I was so miserable. Eventually, you know, they discovered that, from a physiological standpoint, they needed to feed me something other than the milk with lactose in it. But it was a really difficult beginning to my life. Now, I didn't have this memory till I was in my 30s. And I remember coming home from a therapy session when I had this memory, and saying to my wife, you know, telling her the story. And she said to me, Well, I'm not so sure that, you know, what you're telling me is real. I'll trust that you believe it's real. But you know, there's no way to prove that you can know something that clearly when you're that age. And so we just sort of left it at that, well, about a year later, my wife was having lunch with my mom. And just out of the blue, my mom described to my wife that exact situation. So for whatever reason, the memory came back to my mom about, you know, being in the basement, having this terrible flight, and so on and so forth. What my mother didn't recognize was the exchange of energy between us and my absorbing her self hate, because my mother was a person that was very disconnected from herself. So she wouldn't have known that that would have been part of the experience. But she did describe the event, in many, many details, and my wife came home, and you'll never believe what happened today. I'm, you know, your mom told me that whole story that you told me a year ago that I didn't necessarily believe were true. So, you know, from the very early part of my existence, I recognize myself as being an empath, and feeling extremely responsible for the pain of people around me.

**Kim Fauskee 12:35**

I don't know if you felt the same way that I did. I always felt this way because I didn't understand the empath relationship that I had within myself. And till later on in adulthood, so I always felt there was something wrong with me. Yes. So I mean, is that common from empaths people that you've dealt with professionally? Or personally? If they don't have that understanding? Do they think there's it because there's a negative and a positive to this? Right, right. So the negative is, why am I like this, I'm a feel other people's emotions, it makes it makes my emotions 10 times even worse, so on and so forth. Is that, so that's pretty common that

**Dr. Dana 13:21**

it's extremely common. And sadly, usually, if you are a really sensitive person, you're made to feel ashamed of what it is that you're perceiving. So not only again, do you feel the anxiety of the people around you that are not taking care of their psychological business, but you're also made to feel ashamed that you are a to you the house feels like it's on fire everybody else around you sitting around saying, oh, yeah, it's a little warm in here, but just not that big of a deal. So don't worry about it, and what it feels like to use, you know, a five alarm fire into them, it's just life with a little heat attached to it.

So that feeling of misunderstanding often creates a need for you or I to actually become a different person than we were designed to be. Because if you want to feel connected to your family, you do whatever is necessary in order to sort of be what they want you to be.

**Kim Fauskee 14:18**

You become a chameleon is what I is what I say. Right? Yes, change

**Dr. Dana 14:22**

colors. Absolutely. Because it's so painful to feel alienated from the people that you need, that it's a lot easier to just to assume their reality, then to try to stick with what it is that that you feel inside.

**Kim Fauskee 14:39**

People are surprised when I tell him I'm actually an introvert. I'm not an actual extrovert. It was, the extrovert piece was just like we talked about being a chameleon, right? It was my way to survive, right? So I had to put on this act that I could fit in. That I could survive in a crowd. random people, I can be friendly and so on so forth. When actually I prefer to be by myself, right. And I still do to this day, I still feel more comfortable being by myself alone than I do around people or in crowds. And that fools a lot of people that don't know me well, because they think I'm extroverted. But, again, trying to fit in and not stand out, because I was always told that, you know, that I was different. And, and I didn't want to be seen as different, right around friends or family or anybody that I came in contact with. I just wanted to be seen as normal.

**Dr. Dana 15:42**

Well, So Kim, how do you get to the point where you began to accept that difference, and to actually recognize that it was a gift for you, and that it's helped you in ways that you didn't really realize, especially as an adult,

**Kim Fauskee 15:55**

I think it's, I mean, it's taken decades, you know, for me to, to get there and realize that truly is a gift and it's not a negative, that I can really tune into other people's energy, I can turn in tune into other people's emotions on it in not only sympathize, but can empathize with them in in, in not be able to be able to help them not internalize it into my own self being, which I took on for you know, not only as a child, you know, my father's rage, my mother's sadness, took on other people's grief, took on other people's emotions and took it personally and let it you know, contribute to a lower quality of life for myself. But now I now I can see that differentiation, right? That I'm able to help people without having to take on what their D what they're dealing with, and take on that emotion, and I can separate that and be able to help them.

**Dr. Dana 17:03**

Right. So um, one of the most common things that happen when you're cut from this cloth is that when you begin to have romantic relationships, you often engage in what you and I've described as a rescue fantasy that we find puppies, by the side of the road,

**Kim Fauskee 17:21**

the knight, the knight in shining armor, yes. For the rescuer, fantasy, because, and whether I talked about this in presenting episodes or not, or we definitely write about this in the book. For me, it was, it was validation for me, right, because I was seen in the family, if I could keep the peace in the family, that was the validation right there just trying to keep everything kind of even, and put out fires here and there. And my self worth was around helping people. And so if in romantic relationships was, you know, somebody needed me to do something, you know, instead of being on equal footing, but they needed me to save them, rescue them, lift them up, and so on and so forth. I thought that that was my mission, to a happy relationship.

**Dr. Dana** 18:20

Can you distinguish between caring for other people, which is what we'd like to do, and taking care of other people and taking responsibility for their pain, which is a completely different sort of dynamic than the natural, wanting to love and care for the people that are a part of your life?

**Kim Fauskee** 18:39

Well, I think it goes back again, to the what I had said earlier about, you know, being having some validity in the relationship and thinking that I had to experience what that person was experiencing. And I'm not talking about, you know, true experience, but experiencing that pain that I had to take on that grief or had to take on that anger. Because there was going to be a disassociation if I didn't do that, or they were going to see me if you're not helping me. You don't you don't get it. Right. I'm crying and you're sitting there trying to be realistic about this and you're not doing anything about my grief, or I'm mad at you. And why are you not cowering in the corner? Because I'm mad at you, why, you know? So, if I wasn't taking on that person's energy, then they didn't see me as being worthy, if that makes sense.

**Dr. Dana** 19:45

So you weren't lovable unless you were taking on the pain and managing it.

**Kim Fauskee** 19:48

I wasn't lovable unless I was taking on the pain of managing it. Yes. Okay.

**Dr. Dana** 19:53

Which is the essence of that rescue fantasy. I mean, if you think about Walt Disney and how much money he made with it, every movie he's ever made is based on that rescue fantasy. It's something that our culture supports, and really encourages that. It used to be the men were the knight in shining armor that would come and rescue women. Now it's switched from women rescuing men that are incapable and, and reponsible

**Kim Fauskee** 20:17

is not letting down her hair anymore. That's right. She's letting down her hair in a different way. Yeah, you know, I kind of preface it by saying it was like, Okay, well, if you can jump this high, well, then you should be able to jump this high. Well, if you can jump that high, you should be able to jump that high. And at some point, you reach a point where you can't jump any higher. And that person says, Will, you're no good to me anymore. That

**Dr. Dana 20:41**

is what you experience.

**Kim Fauskee 20:44**

Right? And that's how I That's how I've, I've put it in my context is that you know, there's a there's a certain there's a certain ceiling, right, that you finally hit in, in relationships, especially romantic relationships, where taking on somebody else's pain doesn't not only doesn't work for you anymore, doesn't work for them anymore, because they're, they're not getting from you. Because for lack of a better term, I started having compassion fatigue, right? At that point, and it was like, in what it was, was my intuition saying, Hey, dude, there's something wrong here. Right? You've done this for so long here, and you just need to stop this. And then that person turns their attention somewhere else where they can get what they were getting from you for, for that period of time. Right? Which happened.

**Dr. Dana 21:37**

So again, you risk being abandoned, if you don't perform, you're given room.

**Kim Fauskee 21:44**

Exactly. And that was, you know, that's how I was brought up. Right, it was not only because I was adopted, so I was already different, right? I wasn't biologically related there. So I was trying to always fit in. And if I didn't fit in, I thought I was going to be abandoned. Right? Whether that's physical abandonment, or emotional abandonment, or whatever, I felt like I was going to be abandoned. So I had to take on, I had to take on the pain I had to relate to what was going on there to be able to survive.

**Dr. Dana 22:11**

Exactly. So what has become the alternative in your way of looking at romantic relationships as an example?

**Kim Fauskee 22:21**

Well, the, the alternative for me is finding that level playing field, right? It's not, I understand that. The only way that somebody is going to be able to save themselves is to save themselves, it's not up to me to save them, right, they have to do it themselves. And I can see I can see that in certain people and in certain relationships and stuff like that. And I can provide that sympathy and I can provide that empathy, or I can help listen or provide some guidance in that way. But I'm not taking that responsibility anymore. Right? Right. So I'm I, you know, for me, it's looking for somebody that's probably not looking for that knight in shining armor to lift me up and to fill me up in beasts, somebody that I need, were missing in my life type thing, because there's some lack of fulfillment, or there's, you know, some other issues that I haven't dealt with in my life, and so on and so forth. So I need somebody to, that I can project either that on or can take on that responsibility. And that's just not me anymore.

**Dr. Dana 23:35**

So what you're looking for his party, somebody who can take care of you, and you can take care of them but not manage their pain, exactly. I'm assuming you can imagine that as a therapist, I had to learn quite early on, about how to have a relationship to people's emotional pain



**Kim Fauskee 23:55**

right in you. And I've had these conversations, right, because it's hard for me to fathom how you have done this job for so long. And I've seen 1000s and 1000s of patients and not been able to do and have these relationships with patients for years, and not be able to take on their pain, or not take on their pain to the detriment of you.

**Dr. Dana 24:22**

Right. People are quite surprised, actually, that I don't get burnt out, and that they don't feel that fatigue that you're talking about. I learned very early on that my job as a therapist, if you're my client, is to introduce you to your pain in ways that you don't understand and how it's affecting you. But I also have a lot of faith that I'm given time and understanding that people are quite capable of managing their own pain. And that if I start to monkey with your pain, you're going to feel inherently uncomfortable because That's not about helping you, that's about calming myself, because I'm afraid about what it is you're bringing to the table. So generally speaking, if you're seeing a therapist and you feel like they're trying to manage your pain for you, it's not going to feel right, because it's not about helping you, it's about calming the therapist and helping that person feel more in control of the situation. Because in my relationship with the people that I see, I look at it as a huge compliment that people are willing to share their pain with me, that they feel safe enough to open their hearts and their souls to Me. And so I have the utmost respect for them. And in relation to their pain, I don't want to mess with their pain. I want them to feel my compassion and my caring, and my and my concern. But I also want them to understand that most people don't realize how much strength they have to manage themselves in a way that that has not really worked very well for them before. Because most people are made to feel so ashamed of the things that they feel pain about, or that they caused whatever abuse they might have suffered, and so on and so forth. And I don't feel like Mike pathologizing that person and agreeing with them that there's something wrong with them, is going to help in any way. Well, don't

**Kim Fauskee 26:18**

I mean, we fear pain, right? I mean, whether it's physical or emotional pain, right, we want to get away from it as quickly as possible and step out of that box, right and make this go away. Even if we're not dealing with it, just go away. And so most of us don't have those tools or that perspective, to be able to deal with it. When it comes about,

**Dr. Dana 26:41**

well, you describe being told that you need to sit in your shit, right. And if you really want to heal, there's no skipping that process of feeling the loneliness that you grew up with feeling that incredible fear that you were subjected to feeling the alienation that you did from your family, feeling the loneliness that you had in your marriages, and being told always that you're a failure, and never good enough, and, and so on, and so forth. It's one thing to understand those concepts intellectually, which can be useful, but what you allowed yourself to do, at least from what you've described to me, is that you allowed yourself to feel the depth of the despair that you carried around most of your life. And then that process of crying and, and dealing with the anger and dealing with the fear and really facing those emotions, you get to a place where they were no longer a reference point in your reality.

**Kim Fauskee 27:37**



And they weren't useful to me anymore. Right? Right. In that way, it's, it's, whether it was an epiphany or whatever, I think you get to a point, like I said, with this, this, where you get to a ceiling word, it's just not working for you anymore. And it's not sitting there fantasizing about how life could be better, or how I could be better. I could be doing things differently. It's what happened to me, the cause and effect to why I am thinking this way? And why am I living my life this way, and I and then the only like you and I talk about cognitive behavioral therapy, and whether that works or not, but we won't get onto that subject at the moment. But really, it was really digging deep down in, like you said, and like I've referred to it as sitting in your shit for a very long period of time. And allowing yourself and then embracing those emotions that you're feeling. Um, it's really kind of an exorcism of getting that outside of your body. And kind of having the tank being empty and filling up with more positive emotions and more clarity, of really how you want to feel and live going forward. Right? on that.

**Dr. Dana** 29:02

It takes a lot of courage,

**Kim Fauskee** 29:03

it takes a lot of courage. And like I said, in preceding episodes, it was something I was skeptical about. It was something in the first few weeks that I didn't think I was gonna be able to do because it was extremely painful to do and, and I wasn't sure it was going to work or not. It was the biggest turning point in my life, right? Because I couldn't sit here right now. And be truthful, transparent, and I'd be a hypocrite if I if I, if I'm sitting here telling and giving, telling a story and giving advice and so on and so forth if I hadn't gone through that process.

**Dr. Dana** 29:42

You know, one of the things I say to people can when they're deciding whether they want to do this kind of work with me is that they're likely to go through a period of time, months usually where they feel very tender hearted, not depressed necessarily or Are are hopeless, but, but my job is to introduce you again to your tenderness to your vulnerability to your, to your deep down feelings of being a little kid and feeling helpless and scared and overwhelmed. And you have to be willing to acknowledge those feelings in order to heal them.

**Kim Fauskee** 30:17

Right. And those feelings and I think the vulnerability was definitely something that I felt for not only going through that process, but for some months thereafter, right that I was somewhat thin skinned, yes, at that at that point. But it helps me today to be very cognizant of falling back into a familiar pattern, right? Because I know right now that wait a minute, I'm taking on somebody, this is somebody else's shit, not my shit, right? And then right away, now it doesn't. It's familiar. But also it's like, Stop,

**Dr. Dana** 30:58

you're not tempted.

**Kim Fauskee** 30:59

I'm not tempted, I'm not tempted to do that anymore. It's not it's not it's not mine, it's not for me. So you know, I take a left instead of right now, you know,

**Dr. Dana** 31:11

I just want to make sure that everyone understands that it's not a lack of compassion that we're talking to, that you can be incredibly compassionate and very much present to somebody who's suffering, and respect the fact that they are capable of managing their pain. And what's required of you is just to be present to that person, and help them feel like they're not alone in the process of coming to terms with whatever it is that you need to face in order to heal.

**Kim Fauskee** 31:40

Yeah, I think one of the things that I realized and also talking to other people that have that empathic ability within themselves as well, is that they that being seen, as long as they've been seen, been heard or been seen. That's enough, right for them. Right? Well,

**Dr. Dana** 32:03

but there is another part of this that can sometimes make people very uncomfortable, which is that as a sensitive person as an empath, there's going to be a certain percentage of people that, without realizing it, are going to be afraid of you. And that's, that can be a little bit uncomfortable, recognizing that, why is this person avoiding me? Or why do they not want to sort of engage with me in any way? Why? Why does it seem like, you know, every time we get together, they're sitting at the opposite end of the table as far away from me as possible, or so on and so forth. Right.

**Kim Fauskee** 32:37

And I have a little bit of a different experience with that is that I've had people that are uncomfortable with me, because I can read them. That's what I'm, is that what you're saying? Okay, yeah, okay.

**Dr. Dana** 32:49

Yeah, they're uncomfortable, because what you bring to the table is vulnerability that they would prefer not to engage in,

**Kim Fauskee** 32:56

right? And then it's not that I'm reading in between the lines of what they're saying is I pick up on their energy. Right, right. And whether those people want to be close to the vast they don't practice vulnerability, or whatever, it does make them very uncomfortable, then I'm reading them like a book,

**Dr. Dana** 33:14

right? And I'm laughing because I hadn't experienced what's going on a short overnight trip with my wife to a bed and breakfast place. And in the afternoon, you know, they serve the wine and cheese and all the people that are staying at the badmouth replacer, you know, sitting together, and I always when I enter a situation like that, I say to my wife, how quickly do you think I can empty this room? And, and she starts to laugh. And she says, Why do you always say that? And I said, well, you'll see that I'll be able to empty this room within five minutes. Because I know what it's going to be like, the way that men interact with each other is that the first thing we want to ask the other person is what do you do for a living? That is, which is

**Kim Fauskee 33:58**

the most impersonal question, you can ask somebody? Well, it is, but it is a guy thing,

**Dr. Dana 34:03**

right? Unless you're a psychologist. And then it's a cause for great. It's an openness and comfort. Okay. Right. So I'm always the last person to answer that question. And I never know how I want to answer it. Because I know if I tell the truth, the rooms are going to empty out really quickly. Because once there's a psychologist present, it's not comfortable anymore. People just get inherently uncomfortable unless you're somebody who really is fascinated by your own growth and you have an orientation toward evolving as an emotionally, you know, spiritual person, you're going to be really uncomfortable when somebody tells you that what they do for a living is,

**Kim Fauskee 34:45**

you know, read people we connect with, because you're really going to find out about him.

**Dr. Dana 34:49**

That's right. So in this situation, it took about five minutes. You know, as soon as I said the word I'm a psychologist, the room went dead quiet. And then all of a sudden everybody had something to gravitate to elsewhere. They couldn't get out of the room fast enough. And you said, I think this is a new record. You ever did this room in less than 15 minutes? Good job? Well, you know, that's the way it goes sometimes. Well, it's

**Kim Fauskee 35:12**

like we talked about I mean, it being an empathic person, it is a blessing and a curse. Right. Right, in that way, because sometimes, you know, again, I, there's part of me that still wants to fit in, right? I don't want to clean my room. Right? Right. But again, I also don't want to have surface conversations with people, right. And I never asked anybody what they do for a living. And I ask questions that people, whether I know them, or don't know them, tend to make some people uncomfortable, right? But it's like, I've never heard anybody ask me that question before. And it's like, Well, it's because people have surface conversations all the time. And I don't have time to have surface conversations all the time. I actually, if I want to know about you actually want to know about you, right. type thing. And it is interesting, like you said, I think you quoted the Sizzix statistic that 5% of people are empaths. And, and I'm sure some people have some empathic ability, but it may not be complete impasse, but it's, it's interesting. Just the love this, the slight level of granularity that people ever want to get into,

**Dr. Dana 36:24**

right? Well, you know, Kim, my experience with people is that usually their sensitivity starts showing up when they're very young child. But when you go through puberty, it seems to take on a whole nother level of intensity. Because it's not just your body that changes when you go through puberty, but your brain goes through a huge conceptual change based on the hormones and everything that are flowing through your, your system. So it's not unusual for young teenagers on occasion to find their way into my world because of this concept. I had an experience once with a young woman who was just starting junior high school, and her mom would take her to school. And she would park in the parking lot. And this young girl got out of the car. And as soon as she got into the car and started walking toward her

classrooms at the junior high, she would start to have panic attacks. And she she'd never had a panic attack before in her entire life. But walking through the parking lot somehow was triggering an enormous amount of anxiety for this young woman. And she was referred to me and came with her mom to see me. And, you know, this lovely young woman comes, you know, bouncing in the door, and sits down on my couch. And I am you know, I say, oh, what's what's happening? She said, Well, I don't know what's wrong with me, but, but I'm okay all the way to school. But as soon as I get out of the car, and I start walking toward my classroom, I can't breathe. And I started to feel really scared and overwhelmed. And I said to her, " Can you tell whether what you're feeling is coming from inside of you, or coming from outside of you? And she said, Well, I don't really understand what you mean. And I said, Well, anxiety can come from inside of you based on something that's happening inside your body. But anxiety can also be like wind, and you can feel things that are happening on the outside that create a feeling of anxiety on the inside. And she said, Well, if I have to answer your question, I think it's coming from the outside, but I'm not really sure because I never thought about it before. So I said to her, we need you and I need to try a scientific experiment. When you go to school tomorrow morning, I want you to sort of check in with how you're feeling before you open the door to step outside the car. And my guess would be that you're feeling fine, maybe a little bit of anticipation because you've already had a couple of panic attacks. And you're not sure if you're going to have another one. But my guess would be that the more each step that you take through the parking lot, the more uncomfortable you're going to get. And she said, Well, that doesn't make sense. Why would that happen? And I said, well, there are certain people, and I'm guessing that you're one of these kinds of people that can feel other people's emotions really, really strongly. So what might feel like a breeze coming towards some people is going to feel like hurricane winds coming toward you. And this is just the way that you're built. There's nothing wrong with you. It's just that you are designed to feel what's happening around you on an emotional level, at a very acute level. And she said at all. I never thought about that before. But I'll give your experiment a try. And so the next morning, same thing happened. But she realized when she came back to see me the next time that what she was feeling was everybody's feelings around her. Junior High is probably the most painful, uncomfortable time in all of our lives when we're 12 13 14 years old. Everybody has a big question mark over their head about whether anybody's going to like him, whether anybody is going to want to be with them, whether they're attractive, you know, all the different anxieties that pop up during that age. And she was feeling all the anxiety that everybody was walking into school with. So I taught her an exercise on how to sort of build a structure around her using light, and that that light was going to stop other people's feelings from entering her body, that the only feelings that she was going to allow in were feelings of love and friendship, not other people's pain. And that if she was willing to, to do this every day, in practice it that within a very short period of time, going to school was not going to be a problem for her anymore. So I gave her a week to practice. And she came bouncing in a week later with a big smile on her face and said it worked and can't believe it worked. You know, and guess what, my daddy is exactly like me. Because when I came home, and I talked to him about what you told me about being a really highly sensitive person, he said, I always wondered why I was like this. And so now I understand that me and my dad are exactly the same. And it's so cool. And I taught him how to surround himself with that protective stuff. And so, you know, she, the

**Kim Fauskee 41:19**

teenager gave the dad the superhero lesson, actually.

**Dr. Dana** 41:21

Yeah. And I never saw her again after that. Because all she needed to understand at this point in her life, or at that point was that

**Kim Fauskee** 41:30

she gave the perspective she needed. Yeah, you don't

**Dr. Dana** 41:32

need to take people's pain into your body. It's that simple. And because she was so young, she wasn't about to complicate it with all kinds of other other notions. She just accepted it for what it was. And

**Kim Fauskee** 41:45

it's amazing that a teenager could actually have that revelation and understand that, and I don't remember if you had mentioned the context of why she came to see you, because she was having panic because he was having panic attacks. Yeah.

**Dr. Dana** 41:59

So it was directly related to the idea that she really didn't understand that other people's pain is not her concern.

**Kim Fauskee** 42:08

Yeah, that's amazing. You know, I wish hypothetically thinking back if somebody would have explained that to me, yeah. At 14 or 15, would I have understood it, whether I would have believed it, if they've given me that, that that experiment to do and how, understanding it sooner than later in life, how my life would have changed at that, at that point?

**Dr. Dana** 42:34

Well, it does make a huge difference. Usually, the younger the person is when I help them understand why they're so different, the easier it becomes to kind of accept who you are, and to start really honoring what it is that you know, as being really sensitive increases your ability to come up with novel solutions to problems. And it gives your imagination a chance to unfold in ways that the average person doesn't necessarily have the ability to tap into very easily.

**Kim Fauskee** 43:05

It definitely is a business person. You know, I don't think in that traditional sense as a normal business person does. And I don't like the cliché, thinking outside the box, I think it's completely overused. It's to me why do you need it? Why was there even a box in the first place? Right, so I always, I always thought, and again, use the word differently. I was thinking differently, as you know, especially in business, when I would question why we would do certain things nice. Well, because we've done it that way for 30 years. I said, Yeah. And so, you know, we've done it that way for 30 years, right? So again, it affects you in your professions, as well, because in being a business person and being an executive and publicly traded company, so I never felt like I fit in really well in this, this corporate culture, about the one upping each other and in, in so on and so forth. And, and, you know, I was thinking differently

than then what the norm is in business there. And then probably why, again, when I talked about a ceiling and relationships, there was a ceiling also, in my business career, that I hit, you know, because, again, back to the blessing and the curse of being, having that intuitive and empathic ability. It's still not openly seen as something of a positive thing in the business world, right, as well. So,

**Dr. Dana** 44:50

I know that that's true. But I also do recognize that the more that you can embrace The positive qualities of being an empath, the more richness that your life can have. And I'm not talking about necessarily financial abundance, although that could be part of it. Because really, as I see people develop, and I see people come to accept why life has always been a little bit different for them and start to really recognize the gift rather than seeing it as a liability. It's really remarkable the kind of success I see people achieve, and the kind of ideas that they can come up with, once they start to really listen to what their body has to tell them. It's quite unusual, I see people really sort of flower in ways that I never imagined, or they never imagined was possible.

**Kim Fauskee** 45:49

You know, and it obviously helped me gravitate toward people, professions. I've always been a people person, I like people, I like getting to know people and, and I like helping people with their problems. And so understanding the ability, this intuitive ability that I have, has actually helped me in that way, and actually made me more comfortable in relationships and made me more comfortable with how I can interact within those relationships. Also, you made an important thing that I forgot to mention, when we were talking about relationships, and you talked about not so much in money. I actually looked at it because back in a certain point in my life, I was chasing money, right? Because I also thought that that was part of the validity and taking on somebody's emotions and thinking that somebody's going to change, if I get to this certain point. So for a decade, I was chasing the money. Figuring out that this person would be happier, the person I was married to would be happier, we'd have a better lifestyle. And if I could just get to this point, and around the corner, here, everything would be fine. Well, I did it. I got to that point financially, and did anything change. Now. So I thought, well, then if I could just get to this point, you know, a little bit further had did anything change? Well, the only change, they're gonna be your house, but nothing, nothing changed. And then, you know, I did it a third time. And I'm like, wait a minute, it did it a third time. So making money isn't that hard, but nothing changed. I mean, the the problems, were still the problems. And, you know, there wasn't that that feeling that feeling that I had inside that something was, was still wrong was still there. on that. So I, you know, talking about, again, internalizing, you know, somebody else's emotion again, in thinking that if you do something, or if they asked you to do something, and that's going to change the situation, it's not, not likely not likely. No. And if it does, it's going to be for a short period of time, it's not going to be sustainable on that, because, I mean, talking about experiments, I did multiple experiments in doing that, and it never worked. Right. So I stopped that experiment.

**Dr. Dana** 48:24

Which, you know, which was probably wise on your part. Yeah.

**Kim Fauskee** 48:30



So, I mean, they're not only not only in your profession, or multiple professions out there, but there there are a lot of people and a lot of professions that have to deal with other people's emotions on a constant, constant basis. And, and especially now, when we're living in this COVID era, here, where the world has changed and the dynamic of the world is changing the way people are fearful of things and and people are outwardly thinking that it's okay to be a dick in public now or be mean to people. It's interesting, I think, if people haven't cognitively been cognizant of taking on other people's emotions, they may be so more so now is, maybe you've seen that or,

**Dr. Dana** 49:26

Well, there's way more anxiety in the world now than there's ever been before. And I think that there is an underlying feeling of frustration, and lots and lots of fear, because we have no idea what the real truth is about what's happening. All the statistics that we get are all sorts of partial statistics. So we can't really trust anything that we're being told. I know that when this last variant of the virus came out, you know, the first thing that happened was everybody was talking about it's going to be the end of the world. And I think that's incredibly irresponsible. approach for the media to take until there's enough information to really help people understand what they're dealing with. I remember when I was in high school, they had, I think it was high school, the DARE program. Yes. Where Nancy Reagan came around and said, Just say stay off drugs. Right. Right. And I think to myself, boy, if this works well, first of all, I knew it wouldn't. It just seems so simplistic and so stupid, because the good idea hypothetically, though, right? Yeah, of course, you're supposed to say no to drugs. Why? Because if you smoke marijuana, it's gonna make you a heroin addict.

**Kim Fauskee** 50:41

Some people enjoy the process. Right?

**Dr. Dana** 50:42

Right. So, you know, a lot of times, you know, things are handled in a way that is not really respectful for us as humans in this regard. But I will say that, you know, there are certain professions that suffer more than others, like you were mentioning, I think the from a professional standpoint, dentists have the highest suicide rate of any professional second in line are veterinarians. And I think that that's because I don't know about you, but whenever I go to the dentist, I'm not there with a big smile on my face. Right, the dentists carry that feeling, I

**Kim Fauskee** 51:20

thought it was more for how much I had to pay to go.

**Dr. Dana** 51:24

Yeah, along with how expensive it is, you know,

**Kim Fauskee** 51:26

you're dealing with other people's pain and uncomfortableness constant all

**Dr. Dana** 51:30

the time, right. It's awful. And think about how many pets that veterinarians, you know, sleep,



**Kim Fauskee 51:39**

I'm sure it's a constant practice every day. And the

**Dr. Dana 51:42**

the amount of pain that people have in their relationship to their, you know, to losing a pet is probably equal, or sometimes even more to losing certain humans in their life. So I don't know how people like that deal with it because I don't think it's part of their education, that's for sure. I don't think that most people are taught pain management as a, from a psychological perspective. So we

**Kim Fauskee 52:07**

spent the better, almost better part of 50 plus minutes now talking about empathic abilities, intuitive abilities, and, and how you were raised and how you do your profession and how I was raised and how I came about understanding the blessing and the curse of what's within me as well. But for those people listening now, there are the other 95% that don't have that empathy, ability in it. How, how for them, how do they stop and be cognizant about taking on other people's emotions and realizing where to kind of put that line

**Dr. Dana 52:50**

in place? You know, Kim, you're bringing up a really good point, because it's not a black and white issue. It's not like if you're in the 95th percentile, that nobody's even close to being that sensitive. It's all on a continuum. And everybody has a certain degree of sensitivity, and it is something that you can enhance by learning how to ask yourself on a very regular basis, how am I feeling right now? What's going on inside of me emotionally right now? Because we're not brought up to a pay attention on a regular basis to how we're feeling? What we're brought up to do is measure our performance. Right? What grade Am I getting? How am I how good am I at basketball right now? Well,

**Kim Fauskee 53:31**

you know, we become human doers, not human beings anymore.

**Dr. Dana 53:35**

That's right. So I think what I ask of everyone, regardless of where you might fall in that continuum, is that what matters most is that you treat yourself with the compassion that you didn't get when you were being raised. And that is to ask yourself kindly. How am I feeling and treating your feelings as though they are your connection to reality? Instead of thinking that everything has to happen inside your brain, your brain was given to you in order to decide what to do about how you feel, not the other way around. And I'm not advocating wholesale expression of feeling. I think it's very wise to use your brain to decide how you're going to react to how your feelings, but to understand that the feelings always come first, in every situation, and the more you respect that, the more you're going to enhance your ability to capitalize on whatever degree of sensitivity that you may possess.

**Kim Fauskee 54:27**

I wish more of us would do that.

**Dr. Dana** 54:29

I do too. That's certainly something I try to help people with every day.

**Kim Fauskee** 54:33

It would be nice if you know, instead of creating fear, the media would actually project something like that in a way to help us get through this more recent crisis and in this pandemic, in terms of feeding fear in your head and misinformation. Both ways you know, and not knowing which way to turn and how this world is going to turn out not only for us that have lived a good part of the life already, but for our kids and their kids, right on this mean, other advice too, because we did talk about and mentioned during this episode about, you know, the teenage child that you had with this and, and maybe parents that are listening right now that that could pick up on cues of their kid maybe being well, my kids awfully sensitive and I don't know why some more cues that may tune them into their, their child having this ability.

**Dr. Dana** 55:32

Well, I don't think it needs to be hugely complicated. I know when my kids were little. When they're really, really little, we used to take a bath together and then got too big for that. So I actually bought a hot tub. And they did it on purpose, because what I wanted to do was find a bathtub that was big enough for all of us to sit in comfortably. And because I certainly didn't want my children drinking, I figured if they sat in the hot tub and the nice warm water would help them relax. And I spent a lot of time talking to my children about how they felt I wasn't interested in what grades they were getting and all that stuff. That's not what the hot tub was for, you know, why do you think your friend is acting like this? Or why do you think people are like this, or I wanted them to start really thinking about their feelings, the feelings of the people that they care about. And to help them understand that that's really, the most important thing in life is to really connect deeply with your own feelings, and the feelings of the people around you. And again, obviously not to manage those feelings, but to be respectful of them. And I think it really helped and for after a while, they would get really upset with me if I wouldn't go in the hot tub with them if I didn't feel like it. Because it just became part of the ritual for them to be able to talk about who they were as little people and and I think that that's really what it comes down to is finding a venue to talk to your kids not to talk at them, but to talk to them, right? Not

**Kim Fauskee** 56:53

a forced conversation. Right? Right. The word they're feeling uncomfortable, where they're having to defend themselves, they're trying to explain feelings that they may not know how to explain, but just to have this conversation with your kids and kind of learn more about them and learn more about what their life is like

**Dr. Dana** 57:11

and to step away from performance as being the only thing that matters.

**Kim Fauskee** 57:16

Well, this has been a very good conversation, very interesting conversation and, and we'll have at least another episode or two, that you don't have to listen to Dan AI for the entire hour. That will bring in some other expertise on how these people look at not taking on other people's emotions and pain and,

and fear and so on and so forth. So, appreciate everybody continuing listening and we'll talk to you on the next episode.

**Fear Me Out** 57:48

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