CASAT Podcast Network

Hello and welcome to season four of CASAT Conversations.

I am your host Heather Haslem.

This season we will explore the impact of trauma on those who work in human services.

You'll hear from researchers, authors, and people with lived experience.

We hope you enjoyed today's conversation.

Today we welcome Dr. Michael Christie, Dr. Christie is a facilitator coach and chaplain.

We are thrilled to have him join us today.

Welcome Dr. Christie, thank you, Good to be here Heather.

So I'd love for you to share with us about yourself and um why you do the work that you do well.

Um, I'm a chaplain as it was mentioned with the department of correction.

Got there kind of a strange way in some ways some might call it a calling.

Um I grew up in the projects, projects in Connecticut went to school, University of Connecticut, probably not as prepared as I should have been.

Um but with determination kind of made it through that worked in the biotech space for a number of years.

Um then there was a downsizing back in um 2020, 20 or nine.

And um I was always an ordained clergy.

So I decided to do some work um in the, in the prison system where I was volunteering before and my initial intention was to do it kind of briefly and to get out of it, but I got there and just still in love with the work and um meeting the needs of men, mostly men that work in the men's facilities.

Um and on my path there.

I um I've done several things.

My my doctorate is in ministry.

Um and I've done several other studies um surrounding really what I call transformative work.

So uh got certified in mindfulness, uh mindfulness instructor, uh non violent communication, NBC.

Um uh new linguistic programming, um EFT and IFS, which is internal family systems.

That's just a few of the things, but I was just drawn to anything that can help people transform their lines.

And that really showed up for me in the in the prison.

Because as much as I was offering uh teachings and sermons and preaching and inspiration to the men, I saw that there was something missing for them uh in the work.

Um uh they they would often come to church and under services and uh leave and really on the high talking very inspired and then for some of them at all, they would come back and I often wondered why and then I realized that they, some don't have the capacity to hold the spiritual gains that they've made um primarily because of trauma.

And so I really got involved in educating myself and how to be more trauma informed and have to have more of a trauma informed presence.

And so all of the modalities I mentioned earlier, I used to kind of inform me and to navigate my way with the incarcerated and not just in customers.

I so I do personal coaching as well outside of the prison.

Um, and um, just love the work I do to kind of heal a lot of healing, uh, with folks from, from past events, from being stuck in certain things, certain thinking, certain mindsets just so folks can kind of live their best selves.

So that's kind of the work that I do in a nutshell, awesome.

Do you also work with the corrections officers or do you work primarily with the inmates?

Thank you.

So my role is, I'm, I'm chaplain for both staff and inmates.

And so initially when I got there, the staff really saw, saw me likely see most chaplains, prison chaplains as their, for the inmates, but it was part of our mission that we're there for the staff as well.

And if we can have, um, resilience on both sides and if we can have, uh, both sides have an empathy for themselves and each other, then it's a better space and place to be.

So I see almost as many staff members as I see inmates folks come into my office just to say, hey, this is going on in my life, this is going on at work and to help them kind of navigate through this and often times just to help them regulate themselves because they're feeling supercharged about something that is going on and you know, as you mentioned, um, being trauma informed and the need for that.

I'd love for you to speak about really some of the trauma that you see.

Um, and what that looks like if you can kind of highlight that for us.

Yeah.

So, um, one of, one of the gifts that the department of correction gave me was, I went to the facilities, I said pretty educated man and went there with the teacher mindset that I was going to teach, um, the inmates a few things.

Um, but I quickly realized that I was a student and they were teaching me as much as I or more than I was teaching then.

And one of the things I discovered was that, um, I had trauma, I was never fully aware and in touch with my own trauma and the only trump my own trauma as just being a black man in America.

And so, um, seeing that made me realize that a lot of these guys grew up in some of the towns, in the places I grew up.

Um, but trauma affected us all differently, how we kind of process and interpreted that.

And so how I see showed up for many of the men was oftentimes um, abandonment um, from their parents, many of them had, um, you know, the pathology of the incarcerated is that oftentimes the parents themselves are addicts or have significant trauma themselves.

And so there was just horrendous the stories I would hear of, of abandonment and neglect.

Um, and it wasn't when I say neglect, I use that word somewhat carefully because I don't think any parent really wants to neglect their Children, that they're doing it out of their own um, sense of scarcity and fear, um, and their own survival trying to survive themselves and oftentimes not having that stuff model themselves that they can model it for their Children in terms of how to love and care for them and nurture them.

So, um, I saw lots of that, lots of really dis regulated men.

Um, uh, guys that really had not processed a lot of the traumas in their life, a lot of the kind of hurt and um, the embezzlement stuff that had happened to them and they're in their earlier years and got labeled by the system.

Um, and almost surrendered to to the labels after a while because no one was understanding that their behavior was really a cry for help, um, not because they wanted to be disruptive or aggressive or cause harm to folks.

So, um, those are some of the highlights in terms of the things that I saw noticed, and and I also noticed that many of them are yearning and longing to, to have clarity and ease and to overcome what I call their demons, right to these things that kind of grip them to fall into certain patterns, patterns of thinking and patterns of behavior, they want that, but they don't have the resources, they don't have someone coaching or modeling or, or helping them to acquire the skills to kind of deal with their fears and to notice their triggers and the source of thing that would help them to kind of move forward on the path of what I call wholeness and healing.

I'm really curious your thoughts on like the prison system in and of itself do you think?

Like how would you characterize trauma just within the system itself?

So, um I really think that um the world certainly America needs to look at it this way that um um prison systems are really trauma institutions.

And so um practically everyone in the system, including staff, has had some trauma, but certainly the incarcerated comes there with a significant amount of trauma.

Um but we don't have a trauma presence or we don't have a trauma lens in caring for not all people, I'm certain there are others that do that, that having this trauma sensitivity um will really shift how we engage with inmates.

Um we really realize that the behavior of the aggression or the um how they approach you one is really coming from their survival brain.

Um and it's it's um it's what they've learned is how is how they've learned to survive throughout their lives.

And so it doesn't excuse behavior and it doesn't mean that we, you know, like Kumbaya that we were not cautious and we don't uh move with care, but we also move understanding that there's a way that you can get more compliance and get more collaboration, um, if you have more sensitivity that this about about trauma and how to approach somebody that is um triggered because of trauma.

So, um what a gift to the world it would be if if governments would really um resource institutions to have um folks that are trauma informed and and to care for and to training the staff as well, that they might be trauma informed, that does two things, not only caring for the inmates, but they're caring for themselves and how they relate to each other.

Mean prisons are very stressful environments.

I mean the nature, but it is a high level stress all on all on its own.

So to to be to be resourced to be able to navigate a stressful environment just to be a little bit more resilience and to be more self aware, uh to pay more attention to yourself, to pay more attention of your own biases, To pay more attention of your own triggers to notice when there's a shift in you from being calm to being irritated and frustrated that you have some tools to be able to take care of that and you're encouraged to take care of it instead of, you know, what are you doing or being chastised or wondering whether the supervisors are gonna look at you funny because you take some time off to go take some breaths just to calm yourself down so you can deal with the situation more appropriately.

So I think it's really a win win situation if we, if we develop an institute, the fabric of more trauma informed care and you spoke about really, you know, seeing so many dis regulated men in the work that you would that you do and I would imagine you see that both in staff and inmates and so what are some of the techniques that you use to help people regulate?

So um I teach a mindfulness into prison to both staff and and two.

and to inmates.

Um there's an organization called uh Mindfulness of Public Safety, uh, which is a fleet mall which does great work across the country teaching um law enforcement how to uh do mindfulness to help them to regulate and to navigate their their workspace more effectively.

So mindfulness is a very big part of what I teach, what is included in that package is really teaching folks about their, about their bodies about their breath.

Um, I also use NBC, which is nonviolent communication, which is a way is a language for you to cultivate empathy for yourself and other people uh, in a way to kind of process you're feeling and how you ask or make a request of someone to get your needs met whatever those needs might be without being demanding or aggressive or violent and um, and a host of other modalities, just really teaching folks to want to befriend your feeling, even the feeling that you don't like giving the feeling of irritation, frustration, but the biggest tool I would say that I use is is breath work and helping them to just pause, learn how to pause and take a few breath, um learn how to do a body scan, which is a mindfulness meditation technique because many of these men um struggled to sleep at night, They're full of anxiety and we and we know that being mindful about your breathing and taking deep breaths um forces your autonomic nervous system to calm.

You know, it's a way to calm your body into common nerves.

The calmer you are, the more you're connected to your resources, that you have, whatever resources that might be when you're irritated, agitated, you kind of lose contact with your resources and and you go to fight flight where you're, you know, it's uh it's the macho male that is showing up fighting for survival even when there's not nothing to really fight about.

So um those are the some of the tools that I think I rely on most.

And then when I do deeper work, one on one work with some of the men, I'll do, I'll use internal family system was essentially is dealing with um earlier um um schemas that they developed in their lives.

Earlier ways that they think that this is how life is supposed to be or how I'm supposed to live.

Um and help them to unpack that, but help them to do that in a way that it's not judging nonjudgmental to themselves um and two others, so love, love using IFS.

Work to do that.

And there's one of the two, there's there's one other thing which which matters and and and and um is to invite um um folks to incorporate their own spirituality, their own sense of faith, their own sense of the sacred and the divine.

That that is a really important part because sometimes it's we separate coaching and counseling folks from from a very profound resources which is there with the spiritual resources that was my addendum so much to unpack there, I want to start with.

Um really what have you seen as the impact of introducing these practices techniques um for the people that you serve, there is a waiting list to come into the classes uh that I that I have for for these um and from all faiths um with the muslim catholic christian, you name it whatever their religious tradition is, there is this profound hunger to learn how to regulate oneself.

Um and um they often tell me it's it's almost like getting high when they come to the meditation class.

I hate to use those those words but the sense of ease and calm that it brings to them.

Um the the sense of being in touch with themselves um and not having the mind flooded with anxiety and frustration um is a real gift.

And so there's a there's a yearning to really learn and if I'm honest, um many of them come, I do guided meditation and so many of them come so they can be guided.

Um and and a few of them will take it up on their own and bring it back to their dorms.

And I've had tons of stories of guys that say, oh yeah, I almost got into a fight and I paused and went away and took a few deep breaths like you said.

And boy, that made all the difference in the world, he said, uh that that the urge to kind of react and be aggressive, just kind of left me.

I was, I was able to think clearly and go, you know what, this is not worth it, right?

I would do, this is gonna get me more trouble than anything.

So I've had plenty of stories like that where guys said, you know, um just walking away and breathing or breathing and even in the moment they can have to breath and pausing or just leaving and going back to their their their their selves and their rooms, their dorms and sitting and just doing just paying attention to them, how they were feeling and breathing really help them to stay out of trouble.

Uh and and to stay calm.

And then there are times when that doesn't work, right?

They they're too flooded and they're too deep into this regulation to not do what they automatically usually do, which is maybe act out of aggressively towards someone else.

Well and I think of um you know, you talked about the environment being inherently stressful, which then puts us into survival mode.

And if you're in survival mode, it is hard to take that pause at times, especially when um your life is at stake if you know, I mean that's an extreme example but still.

Yeah, no, that's a great point.

Um So so the facilities that I that I work on, um I think I think America has um might have a misconception of prison.

The stuff that you see on tv where folks are walking around with shanks trying to kill everybody's where I am in, most of the prisoners have been too, that's not the case.

Their operations like that.

Um You know, if you, if you realize that uh these jails and prisons, um these men are there and somewhat um the volunteer is not the word, but they're, they don't have to agree to the rules.

They could go there and really cause cash, but they do.

Um and but to your point about it really being a stressful environment on so many levels.

You've lost your rights, you lost your uh well they might believe they've lost their sense of power.

They lost a sense of choice.

Someone is telling you what to do, want to eat, went to go to bed um on top of your freedom and the disconnection from your family and the stress of not knowing what's happening to your family.

Is your girl still waiting for you or did you find somebody else?

I mean, there's all these kind of thoughts that are racing through my mind and all of that is on top of someone that's probably most likely already traumatized.

So they already have a hypersensitive and Amelia, where were there?

Even the littlest thing which might not be a big deal to us might be seem like a threat to them.

Um, so they they might react to all of that is occurring for them.

And so to be able to, I'm amazed that it's safe as calm as it does because we're not, we haven't addressed the issue for the most part, you know, these guys do have access to mental health.

Um, but mental health are swamped because really prisons are mental health facilities.

They become mental health facilities, but there is not enough.

But you know, we probably need, uh, probably to switch the ratio of mental health care workers to the or at least match those of the correction officers that are there.

So so the, so the population can get the care that they need.

And I think if they get that clear the likelihood of them returning home more resource to kind of manage some of their stress uh, will be different, which will also help them to potentially reduce the recidivism rate for them coming back because they don't have the skill set to kind of navigate and to realize that oh, I'm being triggered, right?

Don't fall into this trap.

No, I know what to do.

Go, I'll walk away and go read, write.

And I do that before it's a 10.

Right?

I start to notice when it's a three where I have the capacity to walk away and then I don't wait till it's a 10 or eight where there's no walking away, right?

Your survival brain's already hijacked you.

And um you know, and it's inspired a flight at that point.

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

Um when you're introducing these practices, how much do you think language matters and how you present these different practices or teach them?

Oh, language matters a lot.

And so certainly um the language of invitation that you're inviting folks to do something and not telling them the language that embodies choice that you're giving them choice.

That is not just one way to do something.

But here a couple of options you pick what best works for you.

And the choice to also said that none of this is working for, you kind of do what you see do what works for you, right?

Uh which with some with some boundaries but that you built in choice in in your language and that um most importantly that you do not have the language of the fixer that I'm not the expert coming to fix you because you're broken and I know how to fix you.

I got all the screws and tools and hammers and whatever it is to kind of be good in you.

So I think all of those um the language that attends to all of that really creates the space for safety, creates the space.

So so they can feel safe enough to peep in and two pair in because particular and mindfulness.

Mindfulness can be scary for a traumatized person.

And so you know, giving them the option to keep their eyes open or to or to close it because in prison to tell somebody to close their eyes, they might not feel safe.

Um whether they're in prison or not, if you're traumatized, you could be home and don't feel really safe closing your eyes depend on your life experiences.

So to let them know that they have choice.

Kind of reminding that they yeah you have the power to choose right because part of trauma is feeling that you don't have choice that you've lost your the power to choose.

That you have no power.

Um so we use language to kind of um invite them, remind them to touch that again that you have some choice in this and you have some matter in this, not only in this moment really is that you have choice in your life, You have uh matter, you can you know, take the matter on, uh, for yourself as you're going forward.

And I would imagine their experience in your class.

Um, and then their peers either hearing about it or noticing the practices then is why perhaps you have wait lists for your class, which is very cool.

Absolutely.

The guys go back and they're, they're so excited.

I've had really big wrestler looking guys like linebackers in the class balling because um, the work that we do, um, reveal some of the hidden shackles, so to speak, Some of the hidden reasons even that is connected to the, I did a class called mindfulness for addiction and, and the work that we did in there, they really got in touch with, um, some of the background things that was contributing to their, to their trauma.

And um, I had one guy who was just, um, balling on men in prison don't like to cry, certainly not in front of other folks.

He was just in tears.

He was well and interiors because, and it was, it was a morning in the celebration.

It was more than the fact that he had something for so long.

Um, and he was celebrating the fact that he now realized what one of the causes were for, for his, for his, um, downfall, so to speak.

And um, and so he was eternally grateful.

And so that kind of energy gets back to the housing units and you know, not that he's crying, but they, you know, they respected him because of his size and, and they, they hear how, how he's talking and they see like his language, that how he's engaging others, there's a shift in um however small, right?

There's a shift in how he even talks to other, his intentions, his desires, his goals um might shift.

So that inspires others as well, because they get to see the calm and, and especially particularly when these guys are trying to sleep and struggling and they get some tools to do that and they're able to do it and say, hey, you should try this and this.

So, so then everybody wants to sign up for the class um which is uh limited, so we can't have everyone sign up.

What impact does spirituality have in healing trauma?

I think spirituality is a profound role in healing trauma, I think historically, um therapists and counselors and, and healers have kind of um it's like separating church from state have separated spirituality from, from therapy work and in the uh spirituality is already a profound resource this person has, you know, especially um reconnected to the, to the sacred, right?

Um it's a spiritual, to bring the sense that you're not alone bring a sense that there is, there is something um sacred bigger than you that that has the power to transform your suffering, if not deliver you from it, right?

And so, um the spirituality that gives me the strength to kind of endure the christian bible in the book of psalms says, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death and through my suffering, that is, I'm going to go through it, I'm not um designed to stay there.

So spirituality remind us that while suffering is a part of life, you don't, you can transform suffering, suffering doesn't have to be your enemy, can be become a friend, uh so to speak, and what I mean by that is that the way we look at suffering, um it can inform us about how we move forward in life, I mean if I, if I see suffering um as a friend, it is less painful and doesn't mean I don't feel the pain, but how I engage with the pain is differently um than if I just see suffering as um an enemy and something to make my life miserable, um there's a, there's a learning that can happen a growing that can happen in a matter of fact, I believe most of the time that we really grow is when we have at some level of suffering um that we, that we've grown, so I think spirituality is, is profound because you're, you're not doing this journey by yourself, you're doing it with um someone greater than you and more powerful than you um if that's your faith, whatever your, your faith is, but it's the belief that there's something bigger, right?

And then I think the other thing that spirituality does is it brings in hope.

It gives people a sense of hope, uh, hope for the future and without hope.

I mean, um, life just really sucks when you lose, when you've lost lost hope.

So those are coming, some of the things that I think um matters and spirituality and then also know that the act of prayers and meditation for me, um prayers are like meditation and and like meditation, prayers can have a common quality.

Can just help to um, one that gives you self expression.

It gives you the space to kind of really pour your heart out and say what you have to say to um, to um to someone that's not uh, to uh, the sacred that that's not going to judge you right, but can accept you for for for all of your, your success and all of your failures and and be with you in that moment.

Uh, and it's a way to offer self expression, offer self empathy and for you to be calm for the dust.

That prayers can calm you.

The act of praying um, can come in particularly in the black and brown tradition and in the black church.

You know, prayer, uh, the music, it's really um important part of regulating us from the trauma of, of, of slavery and the trauma of oppression and the trauma of racism or structural racism.

I think in many cases in many ways that emerged in the black church as a tool, a resource.

So it was not just our uh going to church was the act of being celebratory, the act of clapping our hands and dancing and moving was a part of uh, I don't think I just understood this myself fairly recently.

Uh it was our body's way of trying to manage the enormous stress um, of generations of, of oppression and generation of being dehumanized.

Um, so, um, so spirituality matters.

Uh, I think it was the spirituality of black, the black church that had kept and held um, uh, many black and brown people for those reasons, I don't know.

Um, and I speak from my own self personally where I'd be if it hadn't been for my faith, if it hadn't been for my spirituality, the sense when you think all is lost, that you find hope uh in the sacred and you find hope in God, that makes so much sense.

I'm thinking of.

I um do work around my body medicine and one of the practices that I introduces expressive meditation, which is that movement piece and that ability to sing and move and how healing that is for trauma.

And I never thought of it in that way to deal with racism and slavery.

Mhm.

Yeah, I'm not sure if they were conscious about it and we know we know from the science now that all of those things really impact trauma.

Um, and there's one of the things that, that's connected to spirituality, that is really important to me maybe to other things.

And, and those things, maybe they go together is gratitude and compassion as a spiritual practice that when we, when we are grateful, um, when we practice gratitude and when we practice it's um compassion, which practically all of the fake tradition teaches um, that uh, love is everything right.

And so when we can have that as our ideal to learn how to be more compassionate, not only to others.

Um, christian scripture says the greatest greatest commandment is to love God and to love your neighbors as you love yourself.

So it's to love is to love the sacred love the divine love God, but also love other people and, and don't and love them.

Like you love you, like don't exclude yourself.

I think a lot of folks exclude themselves when it comes to the love part like that we, we feel freer to love other folks.

And I feel like there's something wrong about if we love ourselves or even use those language about love.

And I think that's really important.

The truth be told, we fully can't love others until we, we we learn how to love ourselves.

Um, when we learn how to love ourselves to be empathetic to ourselves, wow the capacity the spaciousness to open to, to love others really is there because you're more grounded when you have empathy for yourself to be able to take the imperfections of others Um if it shows it shows up in your space and and uh and then and therefore be able to um to be more patient, more compassionate more came 11th them because you have your grounded in yourself with compassion and with love.

I love that I was just I was listening to a podcast with tara brock.

So buddhist meditation teacher and psychotherapist and um she was talking about, it was about gratitude and generosity and she connected it to the breath which I thought was really cool and so she was talking about inhaling gratitude so that's taking in the good and then exhaling generosity and so giving to others which I thought was such a beautiful um way to think about those two concepts and a cool practice too.

Yeah, gratitude is life changing and there's lots of science now coming, showing how powerful it is.

As a matter of fact I think it was, it was a course out of Yale University called the Science of happiness.

And essentially um the one thing I got out of that that would um the one ingredient that there are many that had the most impact on your happiness was gratitude was having a sense of gratitude about your life and practicing gratitude and then there's a difference between practicing gratitude from your head and embodying gratitude.

I am after the embodiment of gratitude which is a longer more enduring uh things we have to fight for.

Um it's easy for me just to say thank you without everybody and thank you.

Uh and um that language might be strange to some, How do you embody gratitude?

How do you feel it?

You can feel gratitude if you pay attention?

Right.

We pay attention to the times that we're grateful.

There's a felt sense in our bodies about what that is and the more and, and and our our our nervous system, the language of our nervous system is more felt sense than it is language, right?

It's not the words that I use, but it's the, it's the felt sense that that it recognizes more more quickly.

And so the more I can attune to what I'm feeling when I'm feeling gratitude.

One is the more I can bring gratitude back up in my body because it literally affects all of my being, my mind and my um my sense of peace and ease and hope.

It's just a profound gift to practice gratitude.

So if they get nothing else from this conversation, it would be practice gratitude, practice and learn how to practice.

Yeah.

I um worked for a company who wrote journals for people living in prison.

And so I worked on a journal specifically for gratitude and one of the things that came up and some of our discovery sessions really was this concept of how sometimes gratitude gets weaponized, which is an interesting concept in um you should, I feel I think parents do this.

I think it's it's kind of in a different few places but you should be grateful or I should be grateful, which is more of that thinking gratitude.

I think you're speaking to versus the embodiment of gratitude.

Yeah.

And and you know early talk about how does language, what is language has to do with it?

And this is a perfect example that they should uh we should and could and um have to that those those language are disconnected language language that disconnect us from ourselves to connect to some other people um and certainly will disconnect us from the embodiment of feeling gratitude because should have this demand quality to it right?

I should um it's there is a criticism or blame that I'm I was doing something wrong and I should I should do this.

Um And so we have to be even careful the language we use when we're practicing these things.

That to be mindful that we're not using disconnecting language language like um should um must uh because it it does have effect on I believe on how we wire our nervous system to receive things and and to hold things.

Mhm.

I had a lot of resistance um as I was doing that work, I noticed how much resistance I had to the practice of gratitude right?

Like I can cognitively understand the benefits but um I think I'm not sure I must have been told as a child like I should be grateful for what I have and so I kind of have this hard ad version and so it's taken me several years of practice to be able to feel gratitude like you're talking about.

Yeah, wow.

Well it's just, it's beautiful that one you, you notice your resistance, right?

Awareness is.

So what a powerful gift that we are that we become aware.

Mhm um and to be able to aware to be able to be aware of our resistance.

How beautiful is that?

Mm Then I can be curious like what's that about?

Why?

Why?

Why is there is this something from my past?

Right?

Is this, is this the voice of my mother shouldn't me that I should be grateful then I shouldn't myself, I should be grateful.

Right?

That kind of guilt that we put on ourselves until, which certainly doesn't empower us, right?

Really makes us feel um um somewhat beat up and less less less open to really embrace um, gratitude because yeah, it's hard to be grateful when you, when you're feeling guilt and shame at the same time.

Yeah.

Um I'm curious, you know, you have been in this work, it sounds like for almost a decade if not a decade and I'm curious what impact does the work have on you?

All of what I've shared.

I, so as a clergy as a, it is transformed how I engage my faith.

That's the question man.

Um it has transformed um, the value of gratitude like I shared with you, it has really changed how I pray and how I value meditation.

Um now I am more inclined to do some breads into this common nervous system down before jump into prayer.

Um I find it more enriching more connecting, I feel more connected to God that way.

Um and and the work has really transformed my relationship with my wife and Children.

Um and when they said dad, you know, you talk different and I get it, it's not in a critical way.

So it's a um much more reflective, much more um um considerate of their feelings and needs.

Um and I have the language of the tool to kind of self reflect when I get irritated and upset and annoyed the things and are them um that I'm able to pause without um rushing forward with my um most of what I'm looking for, the demand that I'm I'm the father, I'm the authority.

I'm the parent, anybody listen to me have more grace with, with that authority um, to allow my Children who are now young adults to have their say and really hear what they're feeling and what their needs are and um, so that's been, that's been huge.

And so it changes, transformed our council, others, I sit with others are engaged in how I listen to others, right?

I feel equipped to really listen on a deeper level and to listen what empathetically than I did before.

So it's been nothing but lots of goals, just my life just feels very enriched because of of this.

Uh the christian would say um I feel I tell people this all the time, I I feel born again.

I feel like I've been born again and again, right, Because um the awareness of um um the information that I've come across and ours informed my spirituality informed my humanity has been tremendous.

It's been tremendous and and then allow a lot of levels very healing for me as well and and I'm just really grateful for it because um I'm not always successful, but at least I know I have the tools to sit with myself in a way that is um I don't need to be coached.

What I mean by that is I have the tools to inquire within myself, um certain things and at times I do need to be coached.

And so um and to so one of the things that's always been a struggle for me until um recently, recently, I mean since I got involved with mindfulness in particular is really feelings, being able to sit uh you know, I have a friend that says that men, men are mostly um emotionally constipated and I would agree that we don't have access to our emotions and we don't want we're afraid of them.

And I'm in a space now where I'm less afraid.

I won't say I'm not afraid.

There's still some spaces where there is some resistance, but boy, what a difference it is.

Uh, and what a difference it is for me to talk about my feelings.

Um, which I didn't feel I had permission to do before just because of our culture.

So that's those are some of the ways uh, it's impacted mm.

Beautiful.

Thank you.

I have a lingering question that I'm hoping you can help clear up for me.

So, um, in so many of the spiritual traditions, it's talked about how being a human is suffering.

And I'm curious if you see trauma and suffering as the same thing or do you see them different?

It gets real sticky in my mind.

Ah so that's a good question.

Um, so it depends on how one defines suffering, right?

So it's suffering.

So some defined suffering is as how I interpret, it's my interpretation of obtain challenge because I can have the pain and that suffer, but I can't suffer without pain, right?

Some level of pain.

And so, so there's some degree of suffering and trauma, right?

The the and it depends on the kind of trauma.

So the and how severe the trauma is.

Um, if I'm if is it suffering if I'm not aware of it, right?

Because oftentimes, um, people are having trauma and they're not even aware it's just normal to them.

They're not even aware that um, it's the awareness like wow, this, this um doesn't have to be this way uh as as one arthur road.

Um It's not what's wrong with me, but what what kinda happened to me and to be able to notice what has happened to you um which can be labeled as trauma.

So I do think trauma can can have suffering in it, but um they have an interesting intersection between the two of them.

I see them kind of criss crossing where there's a point where they're suffering and trauma, but I can suffer and it not be trauma.

Yeah, it can have suffering and and not be uh traumatic can have, I feel like I lost my work and struggling to find employment and I feel like I'm suffering, I'm suffering emotionally and suffering because I'm not able to provide for my family, but it not be um not be a trauma that doesn't haunt me.

Um when I get a job it's done and I move on and um I'm not triggered every time I see someone unemployed.

Um So so those are um that's a distinction for me right now.

How did that land for you?

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense.

And that example helps.

I think it's, you know, you can have both um and suffering can be without trauma is really that that helps clear it up in my mind.

Amen.

Uh I'm so glad you joined us today.

You know, I think so much of trauma work historically has focused on treating any mental illness or treating the mind.

Um and I think we're starting to learn the impacts on the body.

Um and I get I kind of get stuck there with the body, but then um the spiritual peace is such an important layer of healing trauma.

And so I'm just so glad you could be with us today, My pleasure.

So as we wrap up, is there anything that you have anything else that you'd like for our listeners to know or understand?

Um No, I would say um to the listeners out there um that um you are immersion, creature creation from God and that we all have the ability to to heal and to be transformed to live really wonderful life, even if there's um imperfect, imperfect moments and experiences that we might have um to learn how to befriend those moments, to learn how to befriend ourselves and befriend our failures.

Um so um we're more compassionate to ourselves than to others.

And as I mentioned earlier, if I say nothing else, that to practice gratitude and compassion um and to and to embrace your, your spirituality, your faith.

Um that that will make, can make all the difference in the world, not just for you, but for the folks around you and we can change the world One Contact one Connection at a Time.

Well, thank you Dr. Christie, it's been a joy to be with you today.

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