



# Childhood Trauma & The Effects on Family & Romantic Relationships

Childhood Trauma and the Effects on Family and Romantic Relationships as well as Attachment Styles - Part 2 of a Joint Series, with Developmental Neuroscientist Dr. Denise Bossarte

- Anu:** Hello Denise Welcome back to the “**Victim 2 Victor**” podcast. How are you today?
- Dr. Denise Bossarte:** I'm doing great honor, thank you so much for having me back again.
- Anu:** It's a pleasure. And today we have a very interesting topic to discuss. And it's going to be on difficulty with relationships with family and friends, for those of us who have undergone trauma, or who may be currently undergoing trauma. So this topic of discussion is an important one for myself and Denise, and for many of you out there, I assume, because when you are going through your own traumas, is going to impact on how you have relationships with people the ability to connect the ability to bond and the ability to trust, and especially those who have undergone trauma from a childhood, you know, from the young age of three or four, then that's when you are actually developing at a very primal rate. So secure attachment is vital. And for those of us who may have been abused at such a young age, we do tend to lose that secure attachment, which leads to, you know, a lot of the trauma episodes that we experienced, at a later age, that age. And so today, we will be discussing difficulty with relationships with family and friends. And Denise is also here to obviously resume with these discussions and to share her own experiences with us. So what I think most important is to maybe, you know, identify the different types of trauma from a young age that many of us may experience. Denise, I know, you know, you're quite fascinated by trauma as well and developmental trauma. So be good for you to maybe share your own experiences of this as you obviously became an adult.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

Right. So I think we're pretty fortunate in the last few years that there's been a lot of research into childhood trauma, and the impacts on relationships and attachment, all the things that you discussed, it wasn't something that was really well known about 10 years ago, and it wasn't broadly shared about how the, the childhood experiences can really impact you into adulthood and impact your adult relationships, not just your childhood relationships. And I think it's really important for people who have experienced trauma, to kind of self-educate around that there's a lot of material that you can find out on the internet to help you understand. And for me, it was really enlightening to read through the different types of attachments that happen based on your experiences and his attachment. Disorders are complications that they can happen because of childhood experiences, they can happen because of traumatic experiences in adulthood. And for me to learn and read about a description that was like, oh, my gosh, that describes what I was going through for so long. And it was just helpful to me. We were talking before the recording started that I figured out I was normally abnormal, or, you know, normally unhealthy? Well, I was responding to the situation the best I could, as you mentioned, a young child, your brain, still developing your personality, your worldview, all those things are in flux formed and when you get impacted with this kind of trauma with the sexual abuse in particular that we've experienced, it is really hard to as a child know that that's something outside of yourself, you totally internalize it. And it's so impactful. For me, it was like you said it, it set me up for not being able to trust, I lost trust and the people who were supposed to be the ones that loved me and took care of me and treasured me and cherished me. And instead, I had this horrible experience. And so trust has always been a big issue for me, not sure that I can trust people and I'm not sure that I could understand if what they told me was true. I second guessed myself a lot is what they're telling me really true. Or am I am I just so naive, I'm not seeing the obvious that they're going to hurt me. You know, just as soon as I give them an opportunity that an interest, my ability to be with people and interest, my ability to read people and understand people because here I had been looking at these people that I was supposed to trust and they hurt me so badly. And so that was a really difficult thing to move into a place where I could build up my trust of myself and my capabilities and my ability to be in the world and not be afraid to trust my instincts and my intuition about people but I went through sometimes there I was so naive. I really, I really wanted it to be this is a face value. This is what the person's presenting, this is who they really are. But, you know, that's not necessarily how people live in the world. And it was a hard lesson many times over, you know, heart on your sleeve. That's what people would always say, I had my heart on my sleeve. And I just wanted people to be good to me, because to me that love me, and I was looking for that. But I wasn't able to understand how people are complex. And people, you know, can be multiple things over different time

periods. And I just was not able to understand socially how that worked. Because I just had such a screwed up experience as a kid.

**Anu:** Yeah. Do you think a lot of this started off at a very young age? I mean, when you were school, you know, were you able to form bonds with other girls? Friendships?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, it was really hard for me, I was a tomboy anyway. So I kind of was on the outside, I like to literally get dirty play in the creek and ride my bike all over the place and play sport. So I didn't bond a lot with the girls. At that time, I was in Girl Scouts. So I did kind of hang out with girls, I had friends that were girls. But for me, it was always something inside me said you're different. And you're not worthy of being, you know, a friend. And I had such a bad impression and understanding of myself and blamed myself for things that I was like, I was afraid to get too close, because I didn't want anyone to really know it was that fear of if they get to know me, didn't really know me, then they're going to realize what a horrible rotten person I am. Wow. And that was, I was afraid, I was afraid to let people get too close. Because I had been convinced that I was this worthless creature. And if I you know, I weren't present, I get good grades and work really hard. I was you know, trying to be the best person I can be. But behind that was the fear always of being revealed. People figuring it out people learning about it, and then I wouldn't have thought I'd lose everything. So there's always a distance that I had to keep. And I couldn't really relate a lot to other kids. Because I wasn't a kid anymore. What I had experienced that removed me from that childlike experience. I didn't get other kids as like it. Oh, so it was very isolating, is very lonely, and isolating, even though I would hang out with folks, you know, there's always this distance in my head and in my heart, and I was just a really lonely kid.

**Anu:** Yeah, so it sounds like you had your barriers of all times keeping people at arm's length. And, and that's a really powerful, it's what you said about yourself, you know, that people would start to realize who you really were, I mean, you really wasn't that that was a short own belief system about yourself, which had developed from such a young age. And it's quite sad, because I feel a lot, a lot of kids out there must feel the same about themselves, you know, where they're looking themselves in the mirror, and they hate what they see. It's such a sad state of affairs, you know, and it's all down to self-esteem. And you know, how one feels about themselves? I mean, do you know, are you finding this a lot? I mean, I don't know, if you have any connections these days with any children? You know, are you finding that this low self-esteem issue is still in existence?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, I think I don't have contact outside of like, my sister's children and things, you know, family members. But I think it's even worse, I think that these kids have to live in a world of social media, where they're, by the nature of the devices separated. And you know, even if they're sitting next to each other, they're chatting through their phones, you know, they're not

connecting on a personal level. And there's so much bullying, and so much that you can say, anonymously and be so mean and cruel. It really is an environment that marinates all the sort of negativity, and I just really feel sorry for these kids, because there's just so much they're inundated all the time with all these messages. And on social media, you've got these people that put all these filters on their videos. So the young kids think that that's what you're supposed to look and it's all glamorous and great and all they hear is a really positive stuff. And then everyone's claiming that their lives are full of and they can't help but compare and then adding on top of it, the you know, bullying that can go on it's just, it's overwhelming to think about these poor kids going through that and really haven't they haven't been taught about resiliency and how to take care of themselves and self-care. And, you know, I just think it's probably even more challenging today than when I was growing up. And there wasn't that kind of technology.

**Anu:** Yeah, for sure. I mean, do you find that everybody does undergoing some form of trauma as there, you know, becoming an adult?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** I think we all have challenging experiences, you know, I'm not sure if everyone would be going through something that would be officially from a mental health perspective identified as trauma. I think a lot of what I've learned from mental health professionals is that the trauma is trauma, because of how you react to it. You know, there's certain situations that are incredibly challenging, and can be traumatic for an individual. But it depends on that individuals, some people are very resilient, they've had really supportive families, and they're able to get through that without it becoming one of the defining moments of their life. You know, it's not traumatic, it's just challenging. And I don't know all the nuances of what tips the scale in that, you know, I think that if you're a young child, and you're sexually abused, that pretty much is going to be trauma, because you don't have any way to make that less than what it is. But I think there's other people that go through experiences that could be devastating for someone that doesn't have that resource internally or the support system for them. It can be very traumatic and go through many of those challenges and other people, for some reason are able to go through that without those events being traumatizing. So yeah, absolutely. As human beings, we're challenged over time, as something become traumatic, very easily it can, but I think it is something that has a lot of factors that come into play to determine if it's going to be a trauma, especially as you get older, you know, and how much of a trauma? Is it? Is it something that is overwhelming and you never recover from? Or is it, you know, overwhelming in the moment, and then you work your way through it eventually. And, and so it's I think it's really depends on the situation depends on the experience, and it depends on the person. But in my mind, again, fatherhood abuse, is just, you know, by definition is going to be traumatic, because there's no resource in term really internally for children to fall back on. And often, if the abuse occurred, it's in an environment where there's no supportive resources to recover.

**Anu:** Absolutely. And there's a lot on the internet, for those of you who are interested in learning more about their stories a lot about developmental trauma, and just the impacts on identity formation as one, you know, becomes an adult. And then there's, you know, it's very important to understand like the attachment styles, then if you want to explore on attachment styles, because, as I mentioned already in a secure attachment is obviously what we require, as you know, from a young age, but unfortunately, when one is traumatized, then, you know, it leads to a lot of other types of attachments such as dismissive, avoidant, fearful, avoidant, anxious, preoccupied attachments. And again, you know, these all interfere with your brain development. So which ones do you think that you suffered from as a consequence of your childhood trauma?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** You know reading them, it's like, well, I feel like they're a little bit of all of them. But I think that really, the one is anxiety based, you know, attachment, and just not feeling like I had anyone had my back. And with that, when we're, you know, using this language about attachment styles, it's good as an adult to recognize that because we can learn about it, and we can learn to move through that. And out of that, you know, that these attachment styles are a tool and a description to help people understand their current state, but it's not a life sentence, you know, it's not something that we can't grow out of. So for me, it's information is simply information that I say, oh, okay, this sounds like where I have been having my experience, but that gives me a starting point where I can start to figure out how to work with a therapist or do some work to move out of that situation. So I think all of these things are useful tools, and are not something we want to try to self-label with. Do beat ourselves up and, and maybe make excuses, you know, but just to say, Hey, I recognize this behavior pattern in me. And I see now how it might have come out of the abuse. So what does that mean for me? What How do I use this information to move away from this type of behavior because they these not secure attachments have consequences in your life that are not necessarily a positive thing. And we all want to be close to people but how we can do that how we can approach that how comfortable we are with that is defined in these different attachment styles and I think it's helpful for people to understand But is kind of working in in their world and in their hearts so that they can figure out where to go from there. But yeah, and it's not all clear cut and you know, cookie cutter, I think that, like me, I kind of feel like I cover a few. What about you? What do you think, is working in your space or used to be and what was working?

**Anu:** Well, mine was the big one was insecure, I felt so insecure about myself about everyone around me. And I think that may lead to Milo's low self-esteem and insecurity issues growing older, you know, which led to a lot of other occurrences such as, obviously, you know, not feeling good about myself and trying to find love from the wrong people. You know, the fact that I did feel like, my childhood was lost. And, you know, I did feel like something was

missed during my development. And also, you know, it talks about avoidance of relationships, but I wasn't really avoiding relationships, I think I was trying to have relationships with people, but they were just so wrong relationships, you know, which, I know that you've spoken about that as well. And, and I think it's just avoidance. Did you find that you were trying to avoid yourself or being with people, because you did say that you were on your own? And I know that there's a lot of people who do like to be on their own. Which, you know, it's, it's all to do with, you know, how they feel about themselves, right. And I'm an introvert you know, and so that, that's kind of my natural tendency, was to enjoy being by myself, I didn't mind playing records and reading books, when I was a kid and watching a little bit of television, whatever, by myself, I was comfortable with that. But I so desperately wanted to be loved. You know, I just there was a hole in my nuclear family where my mom was busy with her business, my dad was busy with his practice, and there wasn't a lot of affection and love shown and I just was craving someone to, you know, to love me and, and all of that was proved to me I was worth loving, and that's kind of thing and, and so, you know, I would get a positive feedback from teachers, which, you know, really got me into doing well in school, you know, I flipped, I flipped in that direction, I could have easily flipped in the direction of dysfunctionality and becoming a discipline issue and acted out and all of that, which Yeah, some people do some people that's how they manage their, their needs to get attention and to get some kind of response from people is to go that direction. But luckily for me, because I was already interested in school, I went that direction for positive reinforcement that kept that cycle of focusing on school going, but I just was so desperate to be loved. And, you know, I, I ran into some not so great relationships from that I was stubborn and smart enough, I guess, to, to not go too far into some of those things, that some part of me was keeping me safe. Some part of me kept me from, from really sticking around for too long was with things that weren't running out, right. It doesn't mean that I didn't notice it at first, but at least I kind of figured it out. But it's hard, you know, because you're not trusting yourself. You want to trust someone you want to be in a relationship where you can share a lot of yourself with them. And it's just hard to know how to do that if you were never shown as a kid, you know, that's what we got to be shown how to do that by are just didn't ever see that, you know, were you having any good role models for how to have good relationships in your family?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

**Anu:**

I because I didn't even know what nothing was. I mean, I used to be asked by a lot of people and even pastor relationships and I had no idea what love work. I mean, you're what is your thing you know, that everyone goes on about? Because we didn't really communicate? I love you, you know, obviously, I'm doing it now. Because I've had a little boy and he says to me, my mind love you. And I'm just like, because it wasn't just it wasn't in our vocabulary. And you know, we just didn't say either. And we didn't express love to each other even there was no hugging, kissing, you know? And so yeah, it's a strange

upbringing, really, compared to how life is now because I feel like I have so much love everywhere all the time. Obviously. I don't know when it's like an individual health old but I do notice it around social media as a lot of love hearts around and I love that, you know, I love because there's people showing affection towards each other. And it's just the emotions as well like I you know, showing emotions to people. Wow, I was just so Cold, you know, it was like, like frozen. I remember just being frozen. And just when people came to hook me and be like, oh, yeah, what are you doing? Get off me, about me. And it's so sad anyway, I look back. And it's quite sad that you know that that's all I knew.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

You're just trying to protect yourself. You know, I think that that's what it feels, from what I'm hearing, it feels like you were trying to protect yourself, because you've been so hurt, you didn't feel like you could trust people. And for us as abuse survivors are physical bodies, we didn't have control over it, someone took control over our physical bodies. And for us, we were trying to figure out how to establish a boundary. And as an adult, you know, there's an option, it's like, No touching, you know, not even HUDs. And, and that's the thing that we learn if you know, as a child, it was, it was black and white, it was one extreme or another. And so, you know, the responses we developed was okay, that's it, there is no touching, there's, you know, and then it's like, well, but I kind of want that, you know, but no, there's no just, like, going crazy with yourself because you want something but you're afraid of it, you know, you're drawn to it, but you're trying to avoid it. And that's what I felt was just so screwed up about the situation is how do I deal with the normal human thing of wanting to be intimate and close to people, when I'm terrified of being intimate and close to people, you know, and working through that. And slowly learning that I had to find the right relationships, how to bring the right people into my life that I could trust, and, and learning that people should earn that trust. You know, when I was young, it was for some reason, I just, you know, expected to trust everybody, to me, because I want to love so desperately, I was like, Okay, I'm just going to trust people. You know, at the same time, I don't trust them, there's this weird thing, I want to trust you, I'm going to leap into it. Even if I expect it not to go, Well, I'm gonna leap into it. You know, here's this weird duality where I'm experiencing both trusting everyone and not trusting anybody, it was very strange. But I just, you know, would go into situations and totally as an adult, I learned it, you know, I have the right to say you gotta earn my trust that you have to, you know, I'm not going to make you jump through hoops, but I'm going to observe you, I'm going to watch what you do you keep your word, you show up. When you say you're going to show up, you support me, you know? Are you honest with me? Can I trust you? Have you proven that I can trust you, even if I'm not saying that to the person, it's just my head? Yeah, I slowly learned, okay, these are the people who show up on authentic and honest and true, and I'm gonna let them in my life and these other people are kind of kept on the periphery, and

developing those kinds of relationships. But still, to this day, I'm not a person that has a lot of really close friends, it's because there's still that place where I'm like, you know, you really, really need to be able to trust you with my story with my experience and what I've gone through, and can't, can I trust you to show up, because sometimes people are pretty flaky. So, you know, that that's kind of been my experiences is learning what I need to do to feel comfortable in a relationship and expecting that person to meet me halfway. And it be a healthy place for both of us.

**Anu:** Oh, I love that. It's all about, you know, what I'm hearing is, you know, your value. Now, you know, you're setting boundaries, and you're in tune with your, you know, emotions and your intuition and you're selecting who you want to be part of your life. I mean, vulnerability, right? That is a huge thing for us. And I know that I struggled with that just showing vulnerability. And obviously, that, you know, goes hand in hand with the ego, and the protective defense mechanisms that we have put up. And, and I know that, again, just trying to be vulnerable daily, you know, that's been a huge thing for me, kind of, in this podcast, it's really helped with that, because I'm opening up to keep on at the whole world, and that's being vulnerable, right?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** For sure. So when you say you try to be vulnerable every day, can you give me some examples of what that means for you to show up and be vulnerable?

**Anu:** Sure. Yeah. I mean, for me these days now, for example, if someone asked me, my friends, how you doing? I don't say Oh, yeah, I'm fine. No, I'm honest. I say, I'm having a real bad day today. You know, I feel together and I'm just honest, I because there's no point in me, you know, lying anymore because what am I going to gain I'm just going to suffer in silence. And, you know, just on a daily basis, I guess even sometimes, in on social media, if I'll put one up, put out a post of you know, how I feel Doing something, you know, which will help me to heal because I've obviously found healing in writing and expressing myself, you know, whether it's on a platform such as Facebook, or Instagram, or you know, if it's just even writing, you know, a blog, or, you know, writing another script for my podcast, it for me, that's me opening up and being vulnerable.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, it sounds really wonderful way to, to express yourself to open yourself up for more healing and, and being grown a role, you're able to help other people through your process and through what you've experienced and sharing how they can have that kind of experience to so I think that's really, really important, more people to be able to do that, you know, for me, it's, it's trying new things. Because I have a real fear of failure. Somehow that got part of my process. And my I talked about before, in our conversations about being this perfectionist, I developed this perfectionism in response to trying to gain control of my life. And so for me, there's a lot of internal pressure that I've had throughout my life to be perfect and do everything correctly. And the risk of failure goes up exponentially, when you have to be perfect, you know, and for me to say, it's okay to try something and not do it as good as you wanted



to, you know, for me that exploration happens, and doing new things within like the space of expressive arts and trying new things in photography and that sort of thing. So, places I feel pretty comfortable with and pretty stable, I can explore and out from those areas and do new things. And occasionally, my husband or I will try to go to this new place, or let's try this new thing. And, and so I'm getting gain confidence in being open to failure, and being open to enjoying it just because it's something to do, and not having to have a particular outcome out of it, you know, that's the control thing, I've got to have it be like this and, and do this and end up with this result, you know, that being open to the fact that it should be a process and explore it. And that process is enough in itself. That's where I tried to be vulnerable, and, and then it opens up to being allowing connection. If I don't have to be perfect. I'm not comparing myself to other people. You know, I'm just being able to be with people and relate to them, and be open to understanding and communicating with them. So letting go that perfectionism opens up a lot of things for me when I when I'm able to do that.

**Anu:** Yeah, yeah, I love that as well, because you're basically open to rejection and negative reinforcement. Wow, yeah, for me, definitely. And that's something I've been looking at is, you know, really, that should be your greatest motivator when somebody rejects you, right? You know, and dwindle on it, and cry and the loss, you go out there, and you say why that wasn't for me. What next? You know, what is for me? I've learned from this experience, you know,

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** Self-reflection on you know, okay, well, what happened there? What part of that was my part? You know, I want to understand what I brought to that. And, you know, did I contribute in some way? Let me evaluate that. And so a lot of times, you have to say, that had nothing to do with me that was all...

**Anu:** Exactly, yeah.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** All their stuff. And just say that's okay. I don't have to take ownership of other people's stuff, I can just say, okay, that just, and like you said, it didn't work out. That doesn't mean nothing will ever work out. Again, we don't get this tunnel vision. Now I, quote, failed at whatever X, Y and Z was relationship or, you know, new experience, and therefore I'm a failure or never succeed. Again, it's, it's hard not to go into that place. But if we can say, you know what, no matter what I'm going to learn from this, it may actually open up a door or to something I never thought of before, it may be a stepping stone along the way. And I'm not actually supposed to stay in this space, I'm supposed to step through it, learn something from it and move on to something else. But I have to go this path through that in order to get to the place I really need to be. So sometimes we don't have to think of these as like dead ends, we can just think of them as stepping stones along the way to where we're really truly headed.

**Anu:** Yeah. And I like saying that it just reminds me of my days of job interviews. You know, I've always loved job interviews. I remember the days I used to dread them, but then I started to realize that I'm actually learning so much

about myself in job interviews, because it's an hour of my life, where it's all about me, and I'm able to express myself and what I've achieved, and it's actually been an ego boost for me, you know, in the last two years or so. And I just thought, wow, you know, for some reason, you're never given an opportunity to express yourself the way that you do in a job interview. I think it's such a passion our full, you know, meeting for anybody. And that's why, you know, my advice is never refused an interview, you'll be surprised that you know what comes out, I guess you know, it's a bit like us doing this podcasting, you know, there's no point in planning it because we're just going to go with the flow and you know, wherever it takes us, it's going to be the messages that we need to communicate across to the listeners right now.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

**[Inaudible 30:28]** said about a job interview, I never thought of it that way. But it brings up a good point that, at least here in the States, culturally, you're getting a lot of messages as a kid of not bragging about yourself, and not giving too big an ego knows a lot of contain yourself, you know, and, and don't talk about yourself. And at least that's the messaging I received. When I was growing up, it was selfish to do that. And unless you were extremely popular kid that everybody loved, you know, it's like, keep it down. And we don't like spend time congratulating ourselves saying, you know what, I did a really good job there. That was really great. You know, we're, we, we look to other people to do that, for us to be able to say, Hey, nice job, Denise, that was really good. And congratulations, you should that you should stop and appreciate what you just did, whether it's being nice to someone or doing great at work. I don't know how often I do that. And that's a really interesting thing to think about is like, Can I be more of my own cheerleader? You know, in an authentic, honest way to say, Good job, keep, and keep going, keep doing that. That's a great job. And also, sometimes we need that voice from somewhere. And if we're not really getting support, externally, we can start doing that for ourselves.

**Anu:**

You have too. Yeah, and I feel you know, self-celebration is huge. And I think we need to promote that more. Because, you know, I'm seeing, we're thinking recently about the fact that, you know, we kind of live our life just waiting to get married, you know, so we can share our lives with somebody else and to, you know, grow together and compromise. When do we ever marry ourselves? I mean, shouldn't that be like the number one thing that we do before we actually marry somebody else, I mean, you know, we don't even know who we are at the age of like, 20 or so. And people are already in relationships, which is great, I understand, really, you know, you learn about yourself, and you grow a lot in relationships. But then I think, as you marry somebody so young, when you haven't even figured out who you are, as you know, as a being, I feel that there's more to be done around that. And I think the world is changing, and there's a lot more people becoming self-aware from a very young age, and I'm seeing some 20 year olds on YouTube, and, well, I'm thinking they are mature, you know, that they've got it, they have a

good life ahead of them, because they're just so wise and so self-aware. So many times, they're really changing, you know, then people aren't as unaware of themselves as probably we were when we were younger.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

Yeah, and I think there's a lot more messaging out there that supports people exploring themselves and understanding themselves better and figuring out what it is that they want from life, there's a lot of different ways to do that. But you know, that's the benefit, at least from social media, that we can get that and see people who are role models, you know, beyond our limited interactions that we could have had, back in the day before all the social media now, you know, we've got a lot of good role models, if you look for them, you can find them that can inspire you, and, and lots of books to read. So it's so easy to get materials online, and we're in a really good space for people who genuinely want to do that kind of work. You know, it is amazing to me, some of these, these folks, like you said, their 20s or 30s, it's like, wow, they're learning from them, you know, twice things to say I'm like, Alright, this is really encouraging that, that people are taking the time to do that. And I love what you said about burying yourself, you know, that for me, I really had to do that I really had to step back from relationships and say, what do I want? Because if I'm just reacting and the things out of my history of trauma, and surviving, that that's not taking me where I want to go. So I spent a lot of time reading and trying to understand what I was doing and looking at my behaviors and saying, well, what do I like, what do I not like? Why am I doing this? I asked myself that a lot. Why did I just do that? You know, what am I doing that for? And what's the outcome of that? Can I can I look at the full thing from what led me to do that and what's going to be the outcome because a lot of times we just do and we don't think about the long term outcome. But if you kind of step back and look at that, that's when you see these patterns in your life and you're like, Oh my gosh, look at that. Whatever x, y and I whenever my girls my girlfriend's say, or do this, I react this way. Well, why is that? What am I afraid of? Or what do I need a lot of times, there's something that we need that comes out as anger, or other kind of emotions because we have an unmet need. And if we can start digging a little deeper into understanding that, then we can say, Oh, I don't have to react this way, I don't have to push people away or get angry, or get, you know, really terribly emotional in a way that is not helping me to heal, because I need to understand what I need. And maybe what I need is quiet time. Maybe what I need is people time, you know, what is it you really need in order to start healing and start connecting with people in a way that you want to in a healthy way, but that takes some downtime, some slow time, some me time. You know, and we have to make time like that for ourselves. And disconnect a little bit from maybe social media, like, you were saying, before the recording, I took a, you know, a laptop, holiday. Whatever it is. And but it's hard. It's hard to do that because of our busy lives. But it's a little scary to do that.

**Anu:** It is it is yeah, so yeah, that was a laptop detox to add, I just needed, I felt really burnt out by technology. And again, you know, it's all about self-care, looking after oneself. And, and this is what happens, I think, you know, when you do become self-aware, and you know, when you do become healed, then, you know, it's really important to take some time out. From the whole doing process, you know, that we're in just constantly just doing and working and going places and watching things. It's like, just sitting there in still silence, you know, the power of silence is really effective. So let's say, you know, there's obviously somebody who has been abused, and then they're entering into relationships, what would be the kind of tell-tale signs, from your own experience? Where somebody may be impacting their relationship? You know, what, when the trauma may be impacting their relationship?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, I think the way it kind of showed up for me was I wanted the intimacy. But anytime that would come, there would be a reason an excuse not to be physically intimate not to make that emotional connection. You know, I always felt myself holding back, you know, if you're feeling yourself holding back and not really wanting to be vulnerable, like we were talking about not really wanting to be honest, not really wanting to show up as yourself, if you're always having to be somebody else, or be what you think that other person wants you to be, if you can't be your authentic self and in, in that relationship, as a big flag to me that this isn't the relationship that you need, and is probably going to keep triggering, and re traumatizing you, because you're not getting what you need out of a relationship. And so I think it's it can you be fully yourself without being afraid of being rejected, you don't want to ever get in a relationship where you got to be somebody else in order to have the relationship, you know, and, and if you can get to the point where you don't even have that energy, you don't even think in that mindset, you're just yourself, you just show up as yourself. And it's not an effort to be that because you can let down your boundaries and your barriers, to what would be an ability to have a healthy relationship, obviously, healthy relationships have proper boundaries. But these are extra boundaries, that we've built brick walls to keep people out, you can let those go and just, you know, be your authentic self, I think that that's a type of relationship you want to hit into. And if you can't do that, then that's a sign, you know, that something maybe need to be looked at a little bit. So what about you, what are you thinking are some signs?

**Anu:** Well, I know, for me, it was definitely the fight or flight because, you know, I know a lot of that has to do with our cortex, you know, part of the brain, which is our stress response, right? And for me, it was always I know that that was always triggered whenever I was in a relationship. So, you know, I'd always get really stressed out and then I'd either freeze, you know, like a third if anybody came to touch me, or, you know, my way of escaping would be through drinking drugs, you know, obviously toxic forms of imbalance, which helped me to kind of, you know, let go of my fear. And that enabled me to get

physical with my partners, which, you know, was an ideal because it didn't come from a very natural and sober state. And, you know, I guess that's how I survived for many years in relationships. And it was only later on in my life when I started to realize that, you know, I can't actually get into that with anybody unless I'm high or drunk. So it's quite in that's what I knew that there was an issue. So yeah, no shame as well, that that plays a big part with us, you know, because we're constantly shameful of, you know, of ourselves. And that's toxic.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

Themselves, you know, yeah, just, for me, it was a lot of body shame that I really didn't like my body. And, and it was this twisted thing that if someone that liked me, it was almost like, well, they're liking me for the wrong reason, you know, my grandfather taught me that my body was, was a dirty thing that attracted the wrong kind of attention. And so anytime anybody was kind of paying attention to me, it's like, part of me was like, excited, because, you know, there's someone that was interested in me, and maybe could show me some love. And at the same time, there was this other part of me that was like, must be something wrong with them, because you know, you know, this kind of attraction is only going to go to hurt you. So it was a tug of war all the time, and to be able to get to the place where it's like, no, this is natural. This is not what you experienced as a child, this is part of being an adult and being natural, and, you know, sharing your love with someone, and working through that voice and getting rid of that voice of the past, so that I wasn't afraid of being touched or afraid of someone expressing their love. For me, physically, it was a big challenge to get through that. And occasionally, that's triggered, you know, even now, there might be something that comes up. And, you know, it's just something that really made me very bad. You know, when I realized kind of where it was coming from, it just, it really made me mad, and sad, also, that I had to deal with it, that this was something that I had to carry into my adulthood because of what happened to me. And you know, that I had to make the work and the extra effort to get from the place I was to where normal people live, who have, you know, sort of a more normal opinion of their bodies, I know that there's body shaming, in a lot of ways in, in our culture these days. And so people have difficulties loving themselves in their bodies because of the body shaming. So my heart goes out to these people that have that kind of experience. But, you know, this was something someone taught me at a young age. And it took me a long time to unravel that, I be able to move beyond that feeling about my body and say, you know, what, I can give pleasure to someone, they can get closer to me, we can have pleasure together. And it can be a really beautiful thing. But I have to let that happen and gain the trust that I need to make sure that I can feel safe in that situation.

**Anu:**

Yeah. Another thing is also just you know, reassessing our beliefs and negative beliefs about relationships, because, you know, it's all about trying to let go of any limiting beliefs that we might have, and just the beliefs that we're not

aware of, we have a true in essence relationship. So and again, you know, a lot of therapy and coaching can help you want to, you know, overcome these negative beliefs, because it is it's just all just your own self talk, you know, it's how you've taught yourself to believe and it is changeable. Right? Is it and myself and Denise, have both had to do this work, to turn our minds into a more positive mindset? So what other tips do you have for trauma survivors?

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

I think like we were saying at the beginning, I think learning more about this area, about attachment and about relationships and how your trauma can be impacting your current relationships, and how learning about that and maybe in getting together with someone to talk about it a mental health professional, you can work through that and take your experiences and relationships to have you know, even better level of experience for you and other people in your life. It is something that like you said, it can change, it can be something that you can improve. And I think we deserve that. I think that we deserve to give yourself that gift of living a more fully connected life than maybe we have felt comfortable or safe doing. So it's worth exploring what that is and what that would mean for you as a as a thriver me as a victor.

**Anu:**

Absolutely, yeah. And also, I just think you know, it's important to start talking, you know, sharing your story, to friends and relatives, obviously, anybody who you can trust to your therapist because it It's just by sharing a story that's gonna start your journey of healing and growth. So and it also, it's just so therapeutic, you know, when you just openly talk about it, because it's just really unleashes a lot of the negative attachment that you might have to the trauma. So definitely, you know, I think that's going to be the number one thing that you can do and just self-care, you know, look after yourself, look after your mind and your brain. And, you know, try and stay away from negative people and people that are going to bring you down, just try and surround yourself with people that will lift you and empower you and contribute towards your growth. So yes, and that's your honor to have you on again, Denise, thank you so much for sharing your, you know, views and your knowledge and expertise on trauma and its impact on relationships. And we look forward to another episode with you, because we have many more to do.

**Dr. Denise Bossarte:**

Thank you.

**Anu:**

Thank you so much. So yeah, and until our next episode, take care, everybody. Thank you very much for listening. And yeah, we will see you on our next show.

**CLOSNG:** And while this episode comes to do, you may want to check out my book on victim to Victor, now available on audio and where I have shared my journey of evolving through self-help and a determination to cast off my damaging past. My goal is to reach out to fellow survivors of abuse and provide hope and motivation in their lives. I hope that I can help victors transform their lives and achieve amelioration in the process of discovering their true self. I also have a 12 week self-development plan which is absolutely free and it aims to guide you on your journey to recovery. You

can find the link in the description below. Please like this podcast and tag or share it with somebody whom you know is going through a similar situation and may need help. I will be back with another podcast soon. Until then take care and stay empowered.

