



'Thriving After Sexual Abuse' meet Denise Bossarte - a survivor of child sexual abuse who shares her experiences for survivors to find their own journey to healing

- Anu:** Hi listeners. Welcome back to the “**Victim to Victory**” podcast. My name is Anu and I am your host and in today's podcast episode I have a very special guest Denise Bossarte. Denise Bossarte is a poet and award winning writer, photographer and an artist. She is a certified meditation facilitator and a contemplative arts teacher. She's also an information technology professional working for our large urban school district. Denise holds a BA in chemistry and MS in computer science and a PhD in developmental neuroscience. She is also a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. Denise spent her adulthood healing herself on the traumatic impact the sexual abuse have on her life. She is not a mental health professional. She is a thriver who has travelled a healing journey and is able to share a personal guided experience for readers to find and engage in their own journey to healing to become thrives of their own lives. her new book thriving after sexual abuse was a quarter finalist in the 2019 book life prize nonfiction contest self-help category, where the writing on overcoming trauma in a nonfiction work or recasting her real life experiences into award winning dark urban fantasy in four novels, including glamorous beginnings return and readings dilly's tackles a dark side of things with courage, fearlessness and compassion. A self-published book glamorous was the bronze medalist in 2019 still wishing shelf Book Awards in adult fiction and her success with glamorous and her membership into the horror Writers Association and the International thriller writers. Denise is also a member of the nonfiction authors Association and the Texas Association of authors. Denise lives in Texas with her husband, Randy and literary cat sefaira, or Safari. Welcome. Let's see the shade and he say beautiful to have you on board with us today.
- Denise Bossarte:** Oh, how wonderful to be here. Thank you so much for having me on.
- Anu:** Oh, it's an absolute pleasure. And you know, I'd initial my first I guess.
- Denise Bossarte:** I've been following your podcast and all the wonderful information you've shared really heartfelt, compassionate information. So I'm thrilled to be your first live interview.
- Anu:** That's amazing. And hopefully it's not my last. And you know, I hope we can do more of these because I just feel you've got so much to share with us, I'm

just got so much value that you can add on to all of my listeners, you know, onto their lives and on to their way of thinking because I have actually been reading Denise's book, and it is amazing listeners, the way that she's gone about her book, you know, it's a very empowering book about her journey of survival about her journey of healing. And this is why I really wanted Denise to come on the show to talk about her life and about the book itself.

**Denise Bossarte:**

Fabulous. I'm so excited that you're enjoying it and reading it, and being able to share it with your listeners. So I am a survivor of childhood incest, it by my grandfather, my mother's father, and I'm not really sure when it started. You know, I'm one of those people that many survivors have memory issues suffering from PTSD, I don't have access to or didn't form a lot of memories. What I do remember happened over a period of time. So I know it went on for several years. And it ended, it stopped when my grandfather died when I was a freshman in high school. It was something that, you know, started from a very young age, and I learned to dissociate from my body to try to deal with the situation, my brain helped me out by trying to block everything. And then when my grandfather died when I was a freshman in high school, the memories started coming. And I just didn't know what to do with that. Didn't know how to handle that at all. I was always a smart kid who enjoyed learning. So I just really put myself into scholastics and getting really good grades and focusing on that I played some sports in high school. So I put my energy into that I was in band. So it was really school focused was my therapy for a while my way of surviving and dealing with all the trauma that I had been exposed to. And it wasn't until I went to college that I actually started getting help from a friend, you encouraged me to go and get some individual therapy. And then I was able to get group therapy from there also went to nonprofit group survivors as incest anonymous, which is a wonderful organization that we have here in the States. I'm not sure if it's worldwide. It was just a group of people. It's kind of like Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Anu:**

Okay, yeah.

**Denise Bossarte:**

So it's the same idea. But it was for survivors. And when I went there, there were people of all ages, there were men and women, and one that impacted me the most was an older man who would have been the age of about my grandfather's age when I was being abused, talking about his abuse. And that really opened my eyes for the first time that I wasn't alone. It wasn't just me and her these people stories. So I continued on my healing work. And then when I was living in Florida with my husband, I learned about yoga. And initially, it's kind of funny. Initially, I decided I wanted to get into yoga, because we were thinking about having a family and I heard how great yoga was for you.

**Anu:**

Oh, yeah.

**Denise Bossarte:**

Your body is a good thing to do while you're pregnant. And I thought, well, let me try some yoga. We never ended up having kids. But the yoga experience is what really cracked me open. It was the first time that I learned to really be

present in my body, to experience those physical sensations, and to learn how to be in my body to use my body to not treat it as a machine. Could be, you know, just work to death, and ignored otherwise. But to really see my body as something that was beautiful. Something that I could learn to love and not hate. Because I had hated my body. I didn't want anything to do with it. Yeah. And so that cracked me open. And I started writing poetry. Wow. Yeah. A lot of poetry. Some of them poetry is in the book.

**Anu:**

Yeah, it is. Yeah. Some amazing. Yeah. You're highly talented.

**Denise Bossarte:**

Thank you. Yeah, and, and so you know, that's when I started writing about the experience. And I wanted to somehow share that with people because I felt that somehow sharing that experience would be helpful. But again, I didn't have the memories that I could make a timeline and put it in a story. I mean, you did a wonderful job in your book, of really giving a timeline for readers to understand what happened, and how you moved through all the different aspects of your healing journey, all your great adventures, battles and all the work that you did. So it's wonderful to see that it's wonderful that you could give that to you. Yeah. But I just didn't have that. And I thought, well, I can't write a memoir and poetry, how hard is that going to be to get out there? So I kind of put it aside. But my husband kept encouraging me, come on, you need to share what turned around the whole concept of sharing my story. For me, it was when you're in the States, the Olympic doctor for the gymnast, Dr. Larry Nasser, it came out Oh, he had been abusing gymnast for years. And my heart broke, my heart just broke for those ladies. And I was thinking, you know, I've done a lot of healing. And I've done a lot of different things that have helped me maybe I could write a book about that. Yeah, write a book about the healing, because I really felt that that was what was needed. There were books out there that were memoirs, but not many of them talked about healing. And I thought I could do that. So that's when I made my decision to write my book.

**Anu:**

Amazing. Yeah, and also you know, you've got a very supportive husband, who's really helped you as well. And.

**Denise Bossarte:**

Oh yes, oh yes, he is. You know, he knew very early when we were dating, I shared what had happened with him. Because obviously, when you're forming an intimate relationship, that's something that you need to decide how much and when you're going to share about your story. And when I felt comfortable and confident that you know, this was going to go somewhere, I you know, I shared it. He's been very, very supportive, and he's the one that's really been behind me, or just maybe whispering in my ear. This is important. You need to share this and you know, total confidence in me to be able to do it. However, I figured out how to do it, he would want me to do that. Do you think it'd be okay, if I kind of walked through how the books set up?

**Anu:**

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Yeah. But yeah, but we just want to know what was there first, how did your memory suddenly come back?

**Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, I guess it was just sort of flashbacks, flashbacks. I'm a visual person. So visual flashbacks. And at that time, I guess I also had started dating and was getting physical in a more intimate way than I had been previously when I was younger. And so there was body memory, body memory of how it felt to be touched in certain places. And that was very triggering for the flashbacks, and flashbacks of maybe of all ages.

**Anu:** Yeah, yeah absolutely. Yeah. And again, you know, these are clear signs of PTSD. So, you know, flashbacks absolutely.

**Denise Bossarte:** And this was many years ago. And so there wasn't a lot of information about all this. You know, we're really fortunate that your listeners can go online, and they can research. They've got your book, man. I've written out what all this means and how it works. And it's a different world now as far as understanding what it means and how it affects you. Because otherwise you kind of think you're going crazy.

**Anu:** Absolutely. Yeah. It's like all the best Said behaviors, which, you know, go from relationship to relationship. And, you know, there's no kind of justifying, you know, why acting the way you are, you know why finding it hard to trust. And yeah, and again, you know, I did read it in your book where, you know, whatever you what's happening in your intimate relationships, it was bringing back a lot of trouble. It was listening the memories was a it was more of you were kind of recalling some bad events from the past.

**Denise Bossarte:** Particular points in time, and particularly the body memories been touched in certain places. And it's like, you want to be sharing that loving connection with someone and then something intercedes with that. And it's, it's, it's annoying, and it's scary, and, like, what is happening, and just having that, you know, the language wasn't even there, out in the general understanding in the world about triggers, and body memories and flashbacks and all this kind of thing. You know, it was really fun that PTSD was more about people who had gone off to war. And when that's not the only group of people who are traumatized, and a lot of ways.

**Anu:** This is Yeah, absolutely. And this is why it's coming out a lot more now. And you know, I had a similar occurrence to you. And with me, it was more the smell, you know, but it was actually the smell of my partner's genitals, which was bringing back a lot of horrible memories of when I had to obviously perform such horrid acts on you know, older males who were literally forcing me to do that. And, you know, and again, these are clear signs, so but yeah, definitely, let's move on to your book.

**Denise Bossarte:** Sure. So thriving after sexual abuse is sort of part memoir, and part self-help book and part poetry book you kind of talked about. So it comes in four parts. The first part is really my story from when I first was abused up through to my healing, and just kind of a brief overview to give context for the reader to help them understand, you know, that I am a survivor, and I understand where they're coming from, I understand what they are dealing with. And I also talk a little bit about how you would want to use the book, My idea is that some

would be reading this book, and they'd have a journal by them, because I want them to be engaged in the book, I want them to engage in their healing process as they go through the book, because as I'll describe in a minute there, at the end of each chapter, there are questions I asked to help the reader getting engaged with that chapters, topics. And so I'm really envisioning that the reader is going to be reading the book, and then spending time reflecting and thinking and answering questions and maybe going a little deeper. And I'm kind of guiding you being your mentor along the way. Yeah. So the first part, again, is my story. And then I talk a little bit about if you're just beginning your healing journey, how would you find a therapist? What questions do you ask what information do you need to know? Because I didn't know any of this. You know, this is a book I wish I had when I started my healing journey, a guide to what you do. So I've talked about individual therapy, what you should expect, how to find them what questions to ask. And the thing to know is I did not find one therapist and stick with them, it took me a little while to find a therapist. At that end, you need to find someone you're comfortable with, that you can trust that can feel that relationship with. And sometimes it's not the first person you find we're really lucky these days that you're not limited to just the therapist in your area. There's telemedicine and terror therapy that you can leverage so that you might have a better chance of finding someone that really works for you. So then there's a discussion about group therapy, because that, like I said, the survivors of incest anonymous in my other groups were very powerful for me, I talked about medication, I think it's important to consider, it wasn't something that I actually used as part of my healing journey. But I don't want people to discount that. Just because that was my experience. I think it medication is not the solution, that is a help in getting you to the point where you can be stable enough to do the healing work. Yeah. And then, of course, I read a lot of whatever I could find, yeah, self-help books of all kinds that were available. And again, we have a lot more resources, but I kind of put together a little healing library, wow, we have a set of resources that and I explained certain books, why I read them and what I got out of them and how I think they'd be helpful and there's a resource appendix at the end of the book for books and YouTube sites and websites, all kinds of things for folks. That's kind of the second part and then the third part is asking about all the things that you might consider to include in your healing journey beyond just therapy. So you know, I start off like what brings you joy? Think about it. What would you say on who if I said what brings you joy? What would response.

**Anu:**

Honestly, in this day and age now, just sitting in front of my little boy and just looking into his eyes, you know, just like just being nice. Name is Joy. And whereas it's so interesting because before my healing or would have said all travelling, you know, just escaping getting away from her. And it's strange how we change as we heal, we become a lot more present and a lot more

appreciative of what's in front of us, you know, where we don't have to, like, keep running away.

**Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, you actually want to that relationship, that beautiful relationship with your son? Yeah, that you can give him all that love and support and compassion and good parenting that he maybe didn't get? Yeah, you're going up?

**Anu:** Absolutely. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, just that presence, because, you know, obviously, probably not, we're having nothing good in my parents were obviously struggling. So they were having to work hard to provide and be there. And I guess that was a priority to make sure that our futures, you know, we didn't have to struggle. And that's the sacrifice, I guess, that you have to make for your kids. You know, where we've, you know, we're fortunate in this day and age now that a lot of us don't need to struggle, you know? Yeah,

**Denise Bossarte:** People do the best they can with what they have. Yeah, just fortunate that we have more resources now that we bring together for Yes,

**Anu:** Yeah. Like you said, all this education, all these books that we have now, you know, like your book, you know, it's gonna be very valuable towards anybody on their healing journey because like you said, it's, it's having your own personal mentor at probably less than a fraction of the price that you'd normally pay for a coach or a mentor

**Denise Bossarte:** Whatever put for that, you know, and it might be something that, you know, as you're journaling through and looking at the different chapters, as you go in your healing journey, you might revisit some of those chapters and say, well, what's changed? Let me look back in my journal, what did I write before? How has that changed for me? And I think that's a great way to do it. I hadn't thought of that till just now they are an inspiration. Because think about that, what a great way to sort of document your journey. And you can often you feel like you're not making progress that you're struggling, that things are so hard in, are you ever going to feel better or ever going to be the person that you want to be? And if you can go back and have this journal where you can see Oh, my gosh, yeah, that's where it was, then. Look, yeah. Now, it's a wonderful way to be able to say, even if its small steps, yeah, progress, because that's what's important. It's not expecting a huge leap. You know, you're not going to read my book. And the next day, you're like, oh, my God, like, years to heal, but it's making to yourself. Yeah, well worth it. And that was one of the hardest things for me. And my healing journey was just to be able to admit to myself at some level, maybe not be able to say it out loud to myself, but at some level, something kept pushing me to say you're worth it. Wow, you're worth getting help. You're worth healing, you're worth moving beyond this.

**Anu:** Yeah.

**Denise Bossarte:** And that's really on like the cover of my book, what I show is a ball and chain. It's broken up into chains broken open. And through that as Kareena rose. To me, that was really important to say, I don't want my past to define who I am

today. Yeah. I don't want to be kept by my memories by my behavior by constant thinking and self-talk that I might have kicked me in the past because that voice really is the voice of the damaged little girl. And the voice of my perpetrator telling me those things are not true.

**Anu:** Victim mentality you want to want to progress from I don't we want to change that to becoming the victor.

**Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, I mean, that's what's so great about your podcast, your name and your **Victim 2 Victor**, we wanted to do that. And that's what to me, I try not to use the language to interest survivor, because that's where we start writing for all survivors. I really don't want to, to stay there, though. I want to focus on thriving. Yeah, I'll come up thriver and I think we can. And I think that that's why you know, what my book can help with? And that's why I gave it the title thriving.

**Anu:** Yeah, it's beautiful title. I love it. Yeah. And, yeah, and again, it says no empowering title for all of us, really, because I feel that, you know, when we are stuck in an abusive relationship, or when we are stuck, you know, from the traumas of the past, and it's difficult to know that there is a way out, you know, and but you I feel that your book actually explains this, you know, it goes into the four processes, and it goes into our own kind of relationships that we have with our own members of the family communicating with them, and it just explains everything in such detail and I feel that you really, I can tell you spend so much time on this book.

**Denise Bossarte:** Years I mean, I started. So I wrote my fiction book first, my glamorous and I just had an idea, I had a little dream about a character and apply a small piece of plot. And then I eventually started working on that I had a friend who was self-publishing a science fiction novel. And he really encouraged me to write it. And so I just wrote my novel glamorous, just because I had this great idea. And it was fun to write it, and probably hard work. But with that I could sit down, it was fiction, I would kind of daydream about it. And then I'd sit down and write it out. And I could schedule it, you know, every Sunday afternoon, I'm going to write a chapter or whatever, with the schedule, and I stuck to it and you know, just worked hard and got it published. And with this book, if I didn't, you know, I just laugh now, because perfectionist type A Denise saying, oh, this should be just as easy as writing. Can you imagine? Real schedule discipline person, I can do this. I even wouldn't get the cover first, because I had the idea for the cover.

**Anu:** Nice.

**Denise Bossarte:** Plan said I was going to do my schedule and really blew up? Well, I would, you know, the schedule that I was trying to push on myself was so much pressure, I got writer's block.

**Denise Bossarte:** And just you know, wanting to do it, and then translating that into confidence that I could do it. Yeah, the bravery to do it. And then I just said, you know what, to heck with the schedule, do this to yourself. This is important. You can help people. Yeah, that in mind when you're writing that write whatever you

can. And if it's a paragraph, yeah. And walk away for a week, give yourself that permission, say yes. So I had to learn how to be in a place of self-care, even when I was writing this book. And so it just I did that. And then as I relaxed that into it, I could write more than just a paragraph, I could write several paragraphs. And I could just kept going. And like I said, I'm a very organized person. So I really had the concept of the structure of the book with my story and things that you can do the questions you can ask, and then the poetry I had that sort of structure put out there for myself. So again, with my fiction, I started at the beginning, and I wrote sequentially chronologically through the book. Okay, this one, I gave myself permission to jump around by perfect. Yeah, it wasn't a memoir for me. So I could go into any area, I could talk about yoga. And then I could go in here and say, well, you know, who knew what, when, yeah, and jump back to something easier, like meditation. So it was something I just had to play with. But in the end, I wanted to be able to give people all the things that could help me I was into, as I mentioned, yoga, meditation, physical exercise, being at nature, creative arts, like photography. I know in your book, you talk about how healing it was just to go out and be in nature. Yeah. Especially all those wonderful places. You travelled internationally.

**Anu:** Yeah. Obviously, a lot of those places like, you know, Cambodia and Lao, you know, they an India or God, India was like a very life changer for me, but it wasn't the easiest places to travel. And I feel that it was just that gaining that resilience, of being in such hardship, you know, that really helped to strengthen me and to make me appreciate that, you know, life's not so bad, it could be worse. You know.

**Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, we're kind of insulated sometimes. And we feel overwhelmed, not to make light of anyone's struggle. Everyone has their own abuse story. Everyone has their own ways of coping. And we have to sometimes we don't like how those coping strategies have moved into our current lives. Yeah, we can recognize that those worked for us. The reason we had those is they did something to help us at that time. Yeah. Now, maybe we can let go and do something different. Yeah. You know, I think that's something you shared in your book is you were reflective, you were thinking about your life and you saw these things aren't working for me.

**Anu:** Yeah.

**Denise Bossarte:** They helped just through living now, but I need to change.

**Anu:** Absolutely. Yeah. Just been stuck in that vicious cycle of darkness. You know, and this is why sometimes your own healing journey what did you find the hardest part?

**Denise Bossarte:** I think it was just believing in myself believing that I deserve to heal. That was one piece of it. I think that because it's hard to give your energy to something You're you don't truly believe in, I going to get out there and go look for a therapist, am I going to be vulnerable enough to share my story with that



person? Am I going to trust that I can try something new, you know that I was very much about trying to maintain control over my life as much as possible because it was so out of control? I had no control over what happened to me as a child. So I kind of overcompensated. And separate, not OCD or obsessive compulsive in a way, but really type a needing to have control and to try something new is very challenging. Yes, I so admire you, I mean, free spirit that you just went in, was like, Oh my gosh, she's travelling to all these places, by herself and doing all this amazing stuff. And I'm like, I'm sitting at home reading a book, that's it was just.

**Anu:** Yeah. Never say, yeah, you're right, you can go either way, you could become really scared and just wanting to stay in your comfort zone. But I was the opposite. I wanted to go out and I was reckless.

**Denise Bossarte:** Being brave and self-assured and then there's being reckless. And then there's being, you know, introverted and self-contained. And there's being afraid of trying new things, you know, and everyone's on a spectrum and all of that. And what we're hoping is when we start engaging in some of these practices, and that work for you, whether it is creative arts, express yourself artistically through writing, or art, or being nature or doing yoga and all these things. Yeah, I mentioned in my book, it's a way that you start kind of tapping back into your true self.

**Anu:** Yeah.

**Denise Bossarte:** Obviously while that off, because we were told that that true self was bad, or not enough or unlovable.

**Anu:** God. Yes, not enough. Oh, my goodness. And that was one of my posts this morning on Facebook, just to remind everyone I am enough. I don't know. What else do we need? Apart from just to be ourselves?

**Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, you know, the messengers we get when we're young, or when we've been abused, whatever age is that you aren't worthy of respect, you aren't worthy of love. You deserve whatever this person does to you. And that is so wrong. It is not true at all. And that's what I hope your listeners to hear from our conversation today. I know that you are very strong in your messaging, you know, believing in yourself and that you're not to blame. And that is so true. I think survivors need to hear that victims need to hear that thrivers need to hear that.

**Anu:** **[Inaudible 27:45]** Never and also because you talk a lot about the incest and also confronting the abuser. And if you wanted to go into about you know, what exactly is incest?

**Denise Bossarte:** Sure. And I think that depends on where you've read it or heard it. But I really like the definition that survivors of incessant ominous, anonymous gifts. And they're really it to them, it can be a single event. It doesn't have to be something that's multiple times like me, it was several times but even a single event can be traumatizing, and can be considered ancestor. And it can be by anyone who is in your family. But what they call extended family, anyone

who's considered a trusted member of your community, like a priest, or a therapist, or a Boy Scout leader, you know, anybody that or a coach, you know, anyone that is in a position of trust, and is in a position of power, in the sense that they are an authority figure in your life, but also a trust figure. So I think that definition is helpful, you know, whether you call it incest or a sexual assault or childhood abuse, the language is not necessarily as important as the fact that you identify that a traumatic event happened to you. Yeah. And it wasn't your fault. And that there are behavioral, mental, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual. There's a whole gamut of effects that happen because you are exposed to that that could impact you greatly. And that that you're not alone, that it has happened to other people, and that there are resources for you to heal.

**Anu:** Yeah, absolutely. That's beautiful. Yeah. And what do you think are the triggers?

**Denise Bossarte:** I think that you've talked about that in your book and have written about it and discuss that in your podcast, but I think it's worth bringing up again, thank you. Triggers are things that kick off your response. They can be a physical response, that something that you like, for me, it was seeing someone who looked like my grandfather was that a male, but that body type and it would be fear. That was the response was just overwhelming fear and like, get away, get away from this person and you sphere, there's body sensations. There's flashbacks that come up. You know, I think you mentioned before sense of smell. I mean, it can be something you see, or hear or smell or even taste. Yeah, I think you mentioned in your book about, you know, certain foods or things can trigger that I talked about that in my book, because I think it's important that we do some self-evaluation and some self-reflection and identify what could be triggering for you. Yeah, because if you it's horrible to be blindsided by and have this triggering impact. So for me, it was what is triggering for me, what can I do to avoid that, if at all possible? Yeah. Did you patients or places like for me, I was abused, grandparents had a two story house and in the bottom stories kind of renovated area where he had a work shop and was very dark and, and sort of claustrophobic and Mayor. So those kind of places are also triggering for me. So envy, anything that was part of your experience. But if we can think about what those were, can we avoid them? Yeah, obviously, we can't avoid everything. But what you need to think about and what I encourage is, can you write out a plan? Okay, if this happens, what can I do? Can I reach out to someone? Do I need to journal about it? Do I need to practice some type of self-care that's going to help me so that is kind of what I guide you through is try to recognize what they are. And that may take some time, sometimes we're just so in this space of protecting ourselves, and being prepared for something to happen that maybe we're not aware of what it is, yeah, we need to identify as a trigger for that, if you can identify those avoid that when possible and have a plan, then you can gain some

ability to reduce the effects or, you know, to really minimize them. And I think that's really important for people to know that they have that power.

**Anu:**

And saw speech for you. Because I spend a lot with a lot of, you know, victims, in particular, as they get older, they might not even realize that they've you know, that they've actually been abused at a young age. And suddenly, things don't make sense. And they start to get flashbacks, I just think it's important for people to realize that there is a thing called flashbacks. And if you are feeling that something doesn't feel right in your current relationship, or that you've got some bad memories coming from the past, then is important to try and seek help. Definitely, you know, for your therapist, or through any other ways if you want to meditate because even meditation, you know, just be instilled and I with your mind, just, you know, not thinking a lot can come up during meditation content.

**Denise Bossarte:**

Yeah, it can definitely be challenging. I know that when I started yoga, I had the challenge that two things first was not comfortable. I with a male teacher touching my body to make adjustments. I started practicing **[Inaudible 32:59]** yoga, which is appositionally based, very focused on your body alignment and position. And that is very common for them to in a very healthy way, they would make adjustments but of course, I was sensitive. So I needed to figure out how I was going to work in that environment. And luckily, I had a wonderful teacher where I told him about my situation. He his sister had been abused. So he understood, and he, but he asked me, and if it was okay, and if I said no, that was fine. Or if I said yes, he would make adjustments. And I slowly was able to see that he was a trustworthy person. And this was a safe place. And this was something that happens with everybody. And it was okay. And then there were posters that just didn't work for me. I suppose.

**Anu:**

Which ones with **[Inaudible 33:45]**?

**Denise Bossarte:**

Baby pose? Actually, yeah. And if you don't know what that is, look up happy baby pose. Velocity. Your listeners can do that. You'll see Yeah, you're lying on your back and you feel kind of exposed with that. Yeah. So if he was leading a sequence of poses, and that was included, he knew that I was not going to do that pose. And he would not feel the need to in any way draw attention to me. He understood why I was doing it. And so and that was for me and yoga. I'm like, is everyone going to know if I don't want him to touch me? If I want to do certain poses, everyone's going to look at me and wonder what's going on? Am I going to be standing out and it was totally not that. I had a conversation, he set the space for me. And slowly I got to the point I couldn't do some of those poses that are threatening, you know. And so with meditation, there's now something called trauma while both yoga and meditation there's trauma sensitive yoga. Yeah, and trauma informed meditation. So those are things that you're your listeners can look into. And again, with our wonderful world of being online, you can find meditation teachers and yoga teachers on YouTube and websites. But with meditation, you know, like you said, There things can come up And it can be hard if you

don't have someone you trust there to help you along and mentor to help you want to talk to, and to work through that. But for me, I didn't get to meditation until after I had been doing years of yoga. So I had processed a lot of things work through a lot of things. Yeah, meditation was still beneficial to me, and I practice it now regularly. But initially, it was beneficial, because it helped me stop focusing on the past session, you'd want to be present. And I didn't have to focus on the past, I could let that go. And I did have that anxiety of worrying about the future because as a, as a survivor, trying to be a thriver one, and that was very, it's still somewhat challenging for me is not being afraid of what's coming. Yeah. You know, like, there's stuff coming that you know, the world is kind of a scary place, especially in the pandemic. And so, you know, I just said, there's some part of me that's always on watch, always prepared. When is that bad person going to show up? When is that situation going to show up or I'm going to feel powerless again?

**Anu:** Oh, God okay.

**Denise Bossarte:** That's future looking. Yeah. Dissipating. So meditation can set you in the middle. So you're safe here. You're present here. Your only job is to Marie. Yeah. So I know that you are definitely a yogini yoga. Yeah. Yoga instructor and a meditator. What is that for you with your healing journey?

**Anu:** Wow, interesting. So obviously, you said that you started off doing yoga first. But I started off meditating, just being it was going on retreats. Again, it was all an excuse to escape from my realities of life, you know, just going off on retreats, you know, in Thailand, and India. And just yet sitting still, I mean, I struggled at first because my monkey mind or you know, what I always wanted to be achieving always wanted to be striving for the next, the next thing, the next thing, just I was in the perfect meditator. That's a great way to analyze it, thank you. But I think mine was a bit more came more from a dark place, because I just wasn't happy with myself, you know, I hated myself. And God, yeah, it took me years of, you know, grasping, meditation, you know, trying to stay still, for longer every time, you know, started off probably for two minutes meditating. And then finally, you know, I can meditate for like, an hour. And then, you know, I started my yoga training as well. And that really helps. And with me, as well, I couldn't just go to classes, I had to really understand a lot of the techniques. So that's why I always learned about them. I always went on these courses. And, you know, I've developed my knowledge and because, again, maybe it's from a science background, you know, I always had the why, you know, why is this a sign of good for you, you know, why if meditation Good for you, and if anybody understanding it better by developing your knowledge on, you know, on these techniques that's read, that really helped me progress further in my practices, because, again, you know, when it comes to therapy, and healing, I obviously I learned a lot about Reiki healing and emotional freedom therapy. Again, you know, these all played a huge part in my healing process as well. And hypnotherapy. You know, this kind of in terms of your own therapy styles, because you talk a lot

about the individual in group therapy, how both of those impact on you do you feel that, you know, with my listeners as well, do you? Would you recommend both forms of therapy?

**Denise Bossarte:**

If possible, I think they each have a unique power to bring to your healing journey. So individual therapy, I did talk therapy, I don't know what particular School of Psychology these people were in, you know, they weren't specifically [inaudible 37:20] or anything like that. But then we just sat and had conversations. And to me, it was helpful, because sometimes it was hard to know, what is the healthy way to do things, you know, you develop these behaviors, is this healthy? It doesn't seem to be because it doesn't seem to be working all the time. Right? Yeah. And so just to have someone who understood a neutral person, for one for me, that was very important, because I didn't tell my parents or my family for a very long time, when First off, I didn't know what was going on. Right. I didn't have you know, the language or memories to express it, my brain was blocking it till he died. And then I was just too overwhelmed and too ashamed to say anything. I did connect with a cousin who had been abused as well, that supported me, but, but I needed someone that I could talk to, who wouldn't try to fix me in a way that they thought I needed to be fixed in a inexperienced way. And I didn't want to, I felt that if I told my parents it might ruin their relationship. I just didn't know what was going to happen. And I just didn't want to be responsible. I could barely be responsible for my own emotional state. I did not want to take that out beyond it. So to me having a neutral person experienced, trained person and then it was talking about how I was living my life, what I wanted to change and getting feedback from them on what to try and try and affirmations, I've been posting all these positive affirmations on my mirror so that I could read them every day, how to self-talk, whatever it was, I needed someone who could give me advice, give me some structure, give me a plan. And then when I came back, if I was having difficulties with relationships or anything, that I could talk to them. And that's actually how I kind of figured out the first therapist I went to in college was not for me. I was dating two guys at the same time. Smart situations premium. You know, craving love, you know? Yeah, that space. And the first therapist that I went to was very judgmental, wow, judgmental about that. And, and she made me feel like a bad person for 92 people. And I was like this, I already felt bad. I don't need to judge. So I went to found another person. This was through the counselling Centre at college, I found another person and she was like, Okay, so let's, let's talk about this. How is this working for you? Wow. Okay, is this helping you? Is it causing more stress? You know, think about the other people? Is it fair to them? Is it fair to you? And it's totally non-judgmental, but really just let's think about this? Is this really a good thing to be doing for you, not from a moral perspective or anything, but, and so having someone who's neutral who's can give you guidance, and there are many people who

specialize in therapy for trauma therapy for abuse? So I strongly advise finding someone who has that experience, because it is a different situation that they need to talk to you about and support you in. So yeah, that's kind of hopefully that makes sense that the therapist could do that in group therapy, for me was my place to find out there were other people. Wow, Oh, my gosh, there's other people, and I can talk to them. Now I can hear their experiences. And I can see where they are in their journey. You know, the groups I was in, people were in all kinds of places just beginning really, really far along. And to know her wasn't alone to hear their stories, and to see what they were doing to talk to them and say, Okay, what do you do when you feel x? Yeah, you know, talking to a therapist can give you a certain level of information about that question. But talking to someone who actually experiences it is another level. Wow. Absolutely. Yeah.

**Anu:**

**Denise Bossarte:** If you can, if you can find them. And I give you the resources in the book on how you can start doing that.

**Anu:** Fantastic, that's great. So I guess yeah, we're nearing the end now. And I just want to know, what do you want the listeners to know yourself?

**Denise Bossarte:** Yeah, I think that everyone should really know deep in their hearts, that they are not to blame for what happened to them, that they are worthy of healing, they're worthy of love. They're worthy of being their true self, that we've got great resources, victim to Victor and my book thriving after sexual abuse. And I want them to know that they can do it, it's hard, but they're so worth investing in themselves, believing in themselves investing themselves and committing to giving themselves opportunity to move into a space where they are not afraid to be themselves and to live their lives fully. And I'm hoping to be a mentor that you can work through my book and find a way. And to me, I'm not trying to tell you, there's a set way to do it. I'm not trying to tell you, there's seven steps or 30 days. My book is helping you to explore what you can do explore some of the hard questions that you may have to answer for yourself of who you want your life from not to confront or not, where do you go from here, but you have a chance to give yourself something that maybe no one else gave you at any other point in time in your life, but you can give that to yourself, and you deserve it.

**Anu:** It's beautiful. And where can our beautiful listeners find you?

**Denise Bossarte:** I am out on the web. For sure, if you just search for my name Denise sponsor, I am on Amazon. So you can find my book on Amazon. And it will be Barnes and Noble and other places, but Amazon you can buy the paperback or you can buy the Kindle version of that or the e-book version of that. And I'm on Twitter, candles and thriving and then you can find me on Facebook. And I have several different Facebook pages because once for the book and then once for my art work and photography, beautiful.

**Anu:** Multitalented.

**Denise Bossarte:** There's thriving after sexual abuse book calm is the main website for the book. You can go there as well.

**Anu:** Perfect, and what I will do also is I will add the links in the description so everybody can find more information about Denise on the description and also via her social media channels. So please do pay a visit and also please to do download her book, which is available now on Amazon and an absolute honor to have you on the show Denise.

**Denise Bossarte:** It's been lovely talking with you. It's so great to have another survivor to share inspiration and healing opportunities with your audience. So thank you so much.

**Anu:** Thank you. It's been an absolute pleasure. And I hope you did enjoy this show everybody. Please do get in touch. If you do have any further questions about your own healing journey, or about myself or Denise, if you had any questions to ask us and please do get in touch. And so on that note, we will say goodbye to everybody. And, again, thank you, Denise. We'll be back again with another episode soon. Thank you. Take care everyone.

