



"We are out here Surviving & Thriving" Harness the Power of Your Own Internal GPS and 'Armour Up' in a world which may have harmed you - with Trauma Healer, Laurie Smith.

Anu: Hello listeners and welcome back to the **"Victim 2 Victor"** podcast. My name is Anu and I am your host. In today's podcast episode I have trauma Healer Laurie Smith on my show. Laurie Smith has been practicing social work for 18 years and is well versed in multiple modalities, theories and evidence based practices. Her work has continuously evolved working with marginalized populations, and many of which she herself has been a member of. Her passion is working with trauma survivors, individuals, Providers and Systems, through offering self-guided self-paced journeys that point towards harnessing the power of our own internal GPS. We tend to live our lives without fully understanding why we may be acting or behaving in various ways. A lot of who we are today stems from what we have experienced as a child, we have all experienced trauma to a certain degree, it the level of trauma, which is what determines how it affects us mentally, emotionally or physically. We are out here surviving thriving, or less than up to be taken on a journey towards harnessing your innate wellness and to armor up in a world which may have harmed you. Hi, Laurie. It's so lovely to have you on my show. How are you beautiful being?

Laurie Smith: Hi there. Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited about today. Oh, my God, my favorite topic.

Anu: I know me too, right. I mean, so me and Laurie have just been having a discussion about you know, the importance of trauma. Because Laurie, as you all know from my introduction, she is a trauma therapist, and many, many more things. So Laurie, please, head it away. Let us know about you who is Laurie.

Laurie Smith: Laurie was a professional for many years, and she did not step outside of that box. And after 20 years on my own realization of my own complex trauma from childhood and on. I've now decided to move into coaching, to talk more about my own experience, because I think that professionals, at least for me, I privileged myself out of also being a survivor of trauma, because I was always so busy helping others.

Anu: Okay, that's interesting, tender. Where did your interest with trauma originate from?

Laurie Smith: Well, I knew I wanted to be a social worker pretty early on in my 20s. I've worked with many marginalized populations. The populations that I learned the most from were the ones who had been the most traumatized generationally, I'm talking about Native Alaskans, African Americans, native Americans. And so I started to really get a good

grasp for like, just really how deep this stuff goes. And I've always worked with different sort of mental health diagnoses. But more and more, it's really occurring to me that there is just honestly one human condition. And that is suffering, which we now call trauma, and almost everybody feels it to different degrees.

Anu: I do but and also a lot of people they get so scared when we mentioned trauma.

Laurie Smith: Yes. Yeah. And so that's my mission to is, just to really make it relevant. Because it's not it's not a, it's no longer a question of if you have had trauma. It is we if we don't recognize that we have had trauma, how are we going to heal because the band aids aren't working anymore?

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. And I know that you know, again, in our discussions, we were talking about talking therapy, because for many years, I've been the trauma that I endured, you know, I had no idea it was trauma. And every time I was going to the doctor telling them about my suicidal thoughts, or my depression, they were just referring me on to a cognitive behavioral therapist, and I was attending a session thinking, this isn't even doing anything for me, you know, my condition is so much worse than what we're talking about right here. And it was so difficult, I just needed someone to get to the root of my condition.

Laurie Smith: I absolutely agree with you. I've had those depressive thoughts and suicidal thoughts. And I think that the mental health profession and over here in the in America, the addiction professions have really had it easy, because they have followed method over effectiveness. And so you just it's assumed that you go there, you're going to get you know, CBT DVD, all those alphabet soup things. Yeah, but nobody is really getting to the root of it. And more importantly, well, I don't care what country you're living in. We're told we're broken from a very young age. And our whole systems rely on Okay, what's the problem with quotes? Yeah, and then we then we just Leave people hanging for solutions. And that is not the way I want to practice because there are solutions within us. And I love how you said, you know, sitting in front of a room and talking to people wasn't helping me. That is you knowing your mechanics, and that is the most important thing we could know because you are the expert in your own life.

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. And it all comes down to self-awareness.

Laurie Smith: Yeah, and we don't that is not a skill that we learn.

Anu: No, it's not how do we create self-awareness?

Laurie Smith: You know, honestly, I do a lot of mind body work. And my one of my favorite techniques is to bring people into the present it through some grounding techniques. But more importantly, we don't understand our brain mechanics in terms of like survival brain and rational brain, I love to help people interrupt that. Because we walk around in autopilot all damn day. And that's useful, because we can't possibly filter out all of the stuff happening. However, nobody teaches us how to switch gears in our brain. And so a very easy thing that I start all of my clients with is deep breathing. No, that's it. That's it. That is the goal. That's the outcome. That's it. The only reason that's important is because it interrupts your autopilot. And then invites a new thought, or feeling to come in that you don't have to figure out.

Anu: Wow, okay. That's interesting. I never thought of it like that. Yeah, it's funny. No, because I was laughing because I've just had a drive from Cambridge and my journey autopilot, right?

Laurie Smith: Yeah, 80 miles an hour on that. Yeah. And then you wake up, and you're like, how did I get here?

Anu: Wow. So I'm intrigued to hear about, you know, what role you played before you became a trauma therapist, working at Disney. So expand on that, please.

Laurie Smith: I have always existed to help other people, I swear to God, I came out of the womb that way, and it wasn't conscious. But I worked at Disney World because I wanted new experiences. You know, my childhood was pretty unstable. And, and, you know, that's great. It's a fantasy world. But people don't live in a fantasy world. They spend their money to go there for a week to feel the feelings that I can teach them cheaper and more practical. And I've always wanted to help I was I, I mean, I've got Master's. I'm a certified diabetes educator certified in trauma, addictions, anxiety, you name it, honestly, what I'm certified in and surviving my freaking life as you are. That's the most relevant certification. And we all neglect to acknowledge that in our own lives, I feel.

Anu: So yeah, so interesting. We said about Disney. And just the fact that, you know, we go on holidays, and we go to these amazing places just for like, a temporary feeling of excitement of fulfilment, and then you go back home, and it's back to boring work. But why can't every day be a holiday, right?

Laurie Smith: Yes. And that, honestly, because then we so innocently self-select out of those opportunities? Through, you know, well, I can only feel good if I go on holiday. You know what, close your eyes for three seconds and open them again? Yeah, you get to think you get to think about anything in those three seconds. You can take them any vacation, you can remember the smell of a cookie, you know, chocolate chip cookie from Grandma, or whatever. Yeah. Now, you can also go into the nightmares of the trauma. But as we teach your system, how to pull up these resources, the trauma becomes less and less invasive, and that is really the root of empowerment.

Anu: Okay. Yeah, I can I can definitely sense that. It's like in your trauma counselling. Do you do a lot of post-traumatic stress disorder as well?

Laurie Smith: If there's anybody in this pandemic, who has not had trauma at this point, I've yet to work with them. So honestly, I feel like I do that every day with every client. There's something from their past. That's tripping them up now. And it's an innocent miscalculation in terms of it's not just the mind it is the body too. Yeah. Yeah, it is. Yeah. And so once we start learning our mechanics and being able to manipulate our own mechanics, all bets are off.

Anu: You know, because I'm doing a lot of trauma training at the moment and dealing a lot with veterans, and just see the some of the horrific incidences that have occurred in their lives and how it's impacted them. And just for so many years, I've just been holding it in and they've just numb to the pain, you know, and it's weird because a lot of them don't even realize that there is pain and it's only by it and then it comes out in different ways, like within their relationships or, you know, the fact that they can't

probably get a job, which fulfills them, or they're probably just Uber depressed, you know, and they're just watching TV to just obviously just, you know, distracting themselves continuously. And how do people actually realize that they are undergoing a lot of trauma and they do have PTSD? What would you say is the first steps to awareness?

Laurie Smith: I think that for the many reasons that you just discussed, nobody wants to talk about trauma, nobody, we don't want to directly go into our pain, okay? No, I don't know, a human that does want to do that. What I really try to do each and every day is reduce the perceived threat of the world. Now, that's so innocently an outcome of not being safe at some point in our history. But, you know, similar to those veterans, I honestly consider myself a veteran. In my own life, I have survived many things that I just thought were my fault. And so if it's my fault, that I must be broken, and there's no hope for me, unless somebody else can teach me how and that's just bullshit. Yeah, we give medications, I had my own detour into addictions with substances because I was just not recognizing my own pain. And I think that speaks to the universality of trauma and that we don't, we're so accustomed to survival mode that we don't really talk in a language that allows us to make room for that trauma. Okay, the only way that I could start to heal, I could not, I could not avoid it. I could not rule it out. I could not say, just pull up your bootstraps, you'll be okay. That was my strategy. This isn't how this gets healed. This gets healed through self-compassion and establishing safety again.

Anu: Okay. Yeah. Yeah, we mentioned about some safety techniques and stabilization, because I know you do a lot with somatic and Mind Body techniques. So yes, yeah. I'd be great if you could talk through some of them, and to help my listeners.

Laurie Smith: Yeah, I mean, I think that again, I just, I'm pretty practical about it. But making an effort to check in with the environment once a day, you know, identifying something in your awareness and then making a connection to it. So, for instance, oh, there's a picture that my friend painted for me. Yeah. All that does is cues you in to your experience, which, for trauma survivors, we have such disconnect between mind and body. The breathing technique that interrupts you know, anything you can do to calm the nervous system. There's a reason over here in America that bet what is it called bath and Body works? They have all these smelly lotions, they that strategic good smells? A soft lotion that is that, that is self-care. Self-Care is not getting a pedicure or, I mean, it could be but it's not, it's not that I need to go get a facial. That's \$150. So here is how am I checking in with myself today? I have a lot of thoughts that feel like I'm held hostage by Well, I have a lot of thought, sort of reframing techniques. But first, we have to teach that body to calm down and feel safe again.

Anu: Okay, interesting. Yeah. And obviously, the breathing works for that as well. And I was gonna say things like exercising, go for a walk in nature and even just running barefoot on grass or not these good grounding techniques.

Laurie Smith: It's so good that you brought that up, because if I don't get my nature in a week or two, right now, I will start to get what I call itchy again. Okay, the breathing, the prescription that I give is, it's I don't even count the breaths anymore. I just say, you know, take four or five deep breaths in a row, hold it, you know, breathe in, hold one

out lot of candle, but do that repetition at least three times a day, for at least two weeks. Because then that muscle memory can be called. I'll be in Walmart. We have Walmart over here. I'll be in Walmart standing in line that's 30 minutes long, and I'll just be huffing to myself now. Because it's about transitioning that energy and not eating it in anymore.

Anu: Okay, I like that. Yeah, and it's the power of just communicating. And again, you know, going back to the veteran examples, what are they taught? Are they taught to talk about? What's going on?

Laurie Smith: Oh, well, I don't have a lot of experience with our military. I have a lot of external experience, but here's what I know. I see I believe they get a quote unquote debrief. And then they get put into the veteran system, which gives the medication and does the mind stuff that we're talking about. But if your body has not felt safe, and nobody's teaching your body how to feel safe again, then we're setting people up to fail. And that really pisses me off.

Anu: Yeah, I can see. Yeah, and I guess it's the same for someone who has been sexually abused or raped or you engage.

Laurie Smith: Absolutely. And I just think that we're so quick to like, no, you're okay. You're okay. Because I don't want to be uncomfortable dealing with your pain, right? Like, I just don't want to know about it. So take care of it yourself. And if you can't take care of it, then you're somehow messing your life up. I can't tell you how many people are success stories when they come into my office. I get to show them that. Wow, we are fighting a war but it is inside

Anu: Yeah, it is. What's the best technique? Obviously, you know, you discuss some already but what it is then because I know visualizations very important when it comes to trauma training, trauma healing.

Laurie Smith: There so there are so many different techniques. I just like to point people toward I mean, we get into it in my sessions, but anything you could do to calm that nervous system, I don't think mantras, you know, exercise nutrition, but the physical tools. So there's one technique that I use with clients, that it's called Haven, and I don't want to get too complicated, but it's basically giving yourself a hug. Well, there's a reason, because you're stimulating both sides of that, that nervous system. Okay, if you focus on how to let your body know you're safe. Yeah, that is the most efficient strategy. Now, it's not going to feel safe in the outside world, which is why you know, you need a trauma, sort of Sherpa, if you will. Yeah. Because I like to call it getting curious. And getting interested instead of Oh, my God, this is so scary. I don't know if I can survive. That's what your brain says. Right? We don't need we don't need to debate the survival because you've just survived 100% of your life. Okay. So that that's it. That's a no discussion. You are survivor. Hmm. Let's now you what you've been doing has gotten you here. And that's great. Let's just switch directions get a little interested and curious about why you're doing the same things over and over? What is the benefit of it? And then, you know, every night my ritual is to crawl under a warm, fuzzy blanket on the couch with no lights, and to chill out to reach that, that those are so simple. But yet, if you build that routine, you get to shut the world out eventually in a different way than you had been before.

Anu: Okay, absolutely. So, self-care, self-love from getting from that, and obviously to feel in a safe place.

Laurie Smith: And yes, and self-care and the most utilitarian definition I can find. This is not, you know, foofy this isn't the foofy bath and Body works. But those things are in the world. What makes you feel safe? Does it make you feel safe to smell Warm Vanilla cinnamon, when you come in your house? Buy a candle? Because that is good for your mental health?

Anu: Oh, interesting. Yeah, because Oh my god, the amount of candles that were sold during lockdown, right? 10 candles?

Laurie Smith: Well, in the amount of liquor two, and they're both self-care strategies. One's a little bit more harmful than the other. And that's kind of what we want to do. We just kind of want to reduce the harm. It's not that you're doing anything wrong in your life. You're doing the best you can. You're doing what it takes to survive. Let's work smarter, not harder.

Anu: Absolutely. I like that. It's just such a thing that you're fascinating that you've had so much experience in many different professions and just, you know, obviously what you've been through, and I think Alcoholics Anonymous? Yeah, so tell us about that. Because there's a lot to be said about that. The 12 steps and its effectiveness. And I know, I know, there's a lot of controversial opinions about it

Laurie Smith: In indeed. So I am going to be a little bit controversial, but I am going to do it because I wanted to save life. Yeah, there's value in a, okay, it's a great program. It was started for, you know, good intentions. It has a very solid 12 step path for how to live your life. That's great. And now we've sort of bastard that concept because in this country, I don't know about in UK, okay. When you get mandated by court to go or when the sexual offenders are going and put in with the trauma survivors. That does not make a good mix. And so I thought for years I was failing to address my addictions. Oh, God, you know, I'm flawed. I have to go to this meeting. I was mandated ago. I was in coerced treatment, but I couldn't understandable I just kept fucking up. Yeah, here's what nobody was telling me a, there was nothing about me that was fucking up, I was doing exactly what I needed to do to self-regulate the problem is when you go into a meeting, and they're just as fearful about living without a drink than they were, and was the original source of the need for drinking. I don't want to be around angry people, I don't really want what you have if you're yelling at me and telling me to feel shame and guilt, because what I didn't realize was happening was they are based very deeply into powerlessness, which is from the moral model of addiction and from the, you know, puritanical roots of our country. And they've really dictated how that treatment goes. But all I want people to know, there are so many ways to skin this cat. Whatever works for you? I was a diabetes educator for 10 years. There's not a person I would ever say, you're not having a brownie ever again in your life. And nobody told me for 10 years, I was doing what was called harm reduction. So why would you tell somebody who's drinking? Because it works? Don't do that. That's wrong. Okay, but where are my skill sets? What else can I do instead? For trauma survivors specifically, they need empowerment based methods. Annie grace

Hollywood occur. Stanton Peale practical recovery, Dr. Tom Horvath smart recovery meetings. So again, it's that we need individualized based on what's best for us, we cannot mandate how somebody heals, we might want to stop putting band aids on shit and actually start dealing with the trauma that's causing them.

Anu: Absolutely, yeah. So what would you recommend for someone who has been abused from a young age? And who is now hitting the bottle every night? You know, this, obviously drowning this sorrows? Or you know, just using alcohol as a painkiller? I guess you know, probably wouldn't be the first and foremost solution for them.

Laurie Smith: Unfortunately, it's the first stop, because that's mostly what we know in terms of, well, if you have this problem, you go here. And I know that I know that drinks flow pretty heavily in your countries over there in the UK. But yeah, this is not a matter of the substance being evil. No, this is a matter of the world is so abrasive to me right now that I need to tune out. Okay, so, to reduce your use, Annie Grace has a great program. It's called the alcohol experiment. It's free. Smart recovery has some great tool sets. But what you want to do with a trauma survivor is they really need to be in control of their situation. And the more opportunity you give them to be successful, the better outcomes you're going to get because they're invested. And so be nice, be kind to yourself. And that's something we don't know how to do. Naltrexone is a great medication that reduces cravings. They call it the Sinclair method in Europe over here, they give it every day, which you don't even need. It's also good for food by the way it curbs your hunger and your cravings. But I just think that there's so many opportunities for us to feel a sense of greater control in our lives. And trauma survivors specifically tries to control the outside world, which is again setting us up to fail so innocent.

Anu: We have to look deep within Yeah, we have to heal ourselves, and stop looking externally. Goodness, yeah.

Laurie Smith: Yeah. What did you find most helpful in your recovery?

Anu: So while my healing began, when I started to look within Yeah, when I had a lot of therapy, so I had a lot of emotional freedom therapy really helped me, Reiki healing, wonderful. So everything which was very spiritual, which really helps to unblock my chakras and to connect with my soul essence, you know, and, and that was what I needed. I did try a lot of talking therapy, you know, but it just, it wasn't resonating with me at that time. It did have a place for me, but it was only Yep, I had sorted out my internal self, you know, and then it was fine. Yeah. And then it was all about trying to structure everything and trying to all the negative things that had happened to me try to think of like a more positive outcome. And, you know, what, less lessons I learned from each of those or read experiences and, and that's when CBT did help me, you know, but even now, you know, I'm still having therapy because I just feel that like, as a, you know, someone who has endured trauma from the age of three, I never healed, right? And trauma is going to keep coming out in different ways in our lives and whether it's your professional life relationship, and I just think it's so important to keep maintaining a bit of therapy, you know, keep obviously developing yourself, keep growing and just trying to become the best version that you can give yourself.

Laurie Smith: You're saying that and I'm thinking gods, there's so many clients that I have worked with that would have been so overwhelmed by that agenda. Right?

Anu: Wow.

Laurie Smith: Oh, well, this is something I got to work on forever. No. And yes, you do you want your body to live until it's 90, then you've got to do some maintenance. So this is this is simply a matter like of getting oil changes, making sure your fluids, you know, your gas tanks, all that really like it is just not have to be a scary thing. It's slow and go. Its ebb and flow. You're going to try this. And you're going to be angry that that doesn't work, and you're going to switch directions. But here's the beauty. Only you know what the formula is? And I love it.

Anu: Wow. Yeah, it's so bespoke obviously, what works for me won't work for you what works for you won't work. Yeah. That's what I mean. This is why self-awareness is so important. You have to do understand yourself, understand your brain understand what makes you angry, what makes you upset, what makes you happy? What keeps you fulfilled, and it's a lifelong journey. Because we're changing every seven years, our cells are rejuvenated. We're not the same person that we were.

Laurie Smith: When in so you speak you know, this is going to be with us forever. Well, I like the both and analogy. Well, yes, it's going to be with us forever. And neuroplasticity is a field that's just phenomenal. But it's subtle. It doesn't have to be like, Oh my God, I've got to you know, try this and this and this. And this. It's slow and go. It's at your own pace. It is being curious. Oh, isn't it interesting? I got angry and road rage today. Oh, isn't it interesting that I'm really interested my partner today for not mowing the lawn? Oh, I'm resentful. Oh, wait, who may react him or me because I if I wanted the lawn mower, then I should have asked for my needs to be met. Like, it's just, I would use those things as a weapon against myself. Oh, there you go getting irritable. Again, you must have been doing something wrong? No, that's a natural human reaction. What do I want to do about it?

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. This is it. And again, you know, I mentioned about having I've been a support group as well, absolutely good friends, that you can really talk through these issues and non-judge friends would help as well, because I know that was one of my weaknesses are growing up with, like being surrounded by judgment. Like, you know, not gonna mention anyone. But it's awful. You know.

Laurie Smith: And I think that's such a good point. Because you know, that I think there's a quote that says about how you go through life is determined 90 to 95% are about the people that you surround yourself with. And so I didn't have supportive people in much of my life. Most importantly, I wasn't supporting myself by what you're going to see that in the world. If you're, you know, judged and abandoned and neglected, you're going to see that if you're doing that to yourself so innocently, once you start addressing that, from the inside out, your mind is going to start seeing like, oh, love is coming from a new coworker. And, you know, oh, well, these people aren't really my tribe, but they offer me this. And so that's a, you know, good way to get my needs met, even though, you know, my family of origin is a shit show.

Anu: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Yeah, yeah, and plus you know, talking about, like a support group, might actually do the podcasts for domestic use to women about, you know,

just having that support network. And, obviously, you know, your former social worker background. So think in terms of support, you've obviously experienced a lot already and so...

Laurie Smith: It is so isolating, and we feel like we're alone, people are harmed through relationships. But the relationships are the only way we can honestly truly heal. Because we heal through connection and vibrating with something bigger like nature or a support group, or somebody of like mine, like that is the healing.

Anu: And your time as a social worker, then I know you're doing some coaching around that now.

Laurie Smith: Yeah, I'm jumping into coaching because I wasn't really sharing my personal experience as a professional. I think they innocently you get set up to look like the expert and I am pretty educated. But I can tell you that I relate to your feeling of helpless hopelessness and powerlessness, way more than whatever method I'm going to use to address that.

Anu: Why? Okay, interesting. And so from a personal or professional life, but I think we've spoken about your personal traumas. Yeah,

Laurie Smith: No we haven't, you know, make me cry.

Anu: Oh, no, we don't need.

Laurie Smith: No, no, no. No, I think that for me, the deepest trauma was related to courses. Treatment and systemic inability to see trauma. And I've seen that so much like people just are not getting their needs met. And that's been the story of my life since I came out of the womb. I mean, you know, so many of us, the world can't meet all of our needs. It's just not set up to do that? Yet. We're taught to look out there for them.

Anu: Yeah, it's interesting, because obviously, Tony Robin mentioned, I don't know, there's a lot of different theories about you're, you know, emotional needs physical needs. And you know, we talk about connection variety. There's a lot of needs in there that yeah, that we need to get that from one partner. No, that's not gonna happen.

Laurie Smith: I agree, I agree. It's just not sadly, we're just going to be let down. Yeah. But why that hurts so much is because we've innocently been letting ourselves down. And, and so make room for yourself. You know, I'm moving into coaching because I want this practical tool set. To be in a greater audience. It's ridiculous that people in pain, have to find transportation appointment times, take out a word pay a copay over here that pay copay, but like, to go to a therapist, and you it's the hit or miss. We need to stop hiding and be more effective.

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, and these needs to just be part of like work. Yeah. Like, like revolution. Yeah. Therapy time, you know, Why are people so scared of it still, and they think it's just such a, you know, it's such an embarrassing thing to be doing so many people still hiding behind it. And it's like me on lumber just mentioned, the word depression is how people get so scared of like, weird. No majority of people are depressed, you know, own it.

Laurie Smith: Come on, and the only way you can cure. And once you like, I particularly use something called the three principles. It's also known as health realization, psychology of the mind. But once you understand that, what the function of is the shame and the guilt for going to therapy, the depression, what purpose that serves the anxiety, what

benefits are you getting from that? No, really? I'm serious. Once you understand, Oh, right. This is the world showing me who I am or who I am not and there's disconnect.

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. And so how about in terms of like mental health and all the medical services available? Do you think there's enough being done out there at the moment?

Laurie Smith: Oh, hell, no, no, I mean, we just went through a pandemic worldwide. And, you know, we're ready to get back to living except for, this is a opportune time to really look at how we were living, what we want to keep what we want to shift directions in. And I think, too, in the US, specifically, we're dealing with this, I'm gonna put it in quotes opiate epidemic, okay, but that is, stop blaming people for addiction. Addiction is an outcome of trauma most of the time, but more importantly, if you're not dealing with somebody is trauma, that doctor is going to be dealing with their back pain in 15 years, their high blood pressure and 20 their diabetes and 30 their dementia and 40. And so, we really don't have a healthcare system in my country that sets us up to win. And that's precisely how it was designed and so this is the age old issue.

Anu: Yeah, and it's funny, because whenever I go through the states, you know, you just put on the TV, and they're advertising all of the different pharmaceutical drugs. Like side effects, Jeff side of, you know, all these awful side effects. I mean, you just think, come on, who buys this stuff you know, this, this hour to kill you.

Laurie Smith: And it's so interesting, because you know, Children's Cancer medications, I think they've got like, three, they're old as dirt and they're very toxic. But we don't really have an incentive to make people healthy. Because if you're not busy surviving, then you become a threat and you become enlightened, and you raise up to self-actualization. And you actually start to make change in the world and the systems in the world aren't set up to welcome.

Anu: Hey, listen, I know, right? It's like the vaccines now. You know, how about where's all the advice about living a healthy life boosting up your vitamin C and alkalizing greens having more of them? Yeah, yeah. Just where's all that advice?

Laurie Smith: It's in the diet industry who's also making money, but I'm getting into my politics now. Right, like, working with native Alaskans for five years taught me that look, there's not much else that we've created. Nature can do so much to heal us in terms of the tundra greens and the food from the ocean and all That stuff and the farther away you get from the basics. Myself, I like to complicate things, but it's really pretty simple once you get back to. And that's kind of I just really want to simplify this process demystify it, make it practical, user friendly, and fucking, like a little bit more strategic with effective outcomes.

Anu: Yeah, it is. Absolutely you know, we need to see some change. And that's why the likes of me and you are out there, you know, spreading our knowledge.

Laurie Smith: Oh, excited.

Anu: Inspire with us and help others. Yeah, nice to see you doing so much more as well with your life here, which I'm interested to find out about.

Laurie Smith: Honestly, I just feel like I earned my right to exist and take up space. Yeah, no, all of this internal work zones, we have earned the right to just exist not just our value isn't determined by our here. Our behavior serves a purpose. But I just I don't know this is just so universal. And it just really is not talked about now. There are a couple big

players in the field. Rene brown Gabor Ma Tei um, I'm missing somebody but you know, we're starting to explore No, no, really like attachment is an issue and trauma and substance use is not just somebody has a moral character defect or the opiate is addictive. Well, any Escape is addictive when you're overstimulated. 24 seven. Yeah, yeah, exactly. So how are we? Yeah, how do you I love to teach people how to turn the volume down.

Anu: Really? Wow. Teach us?

Laurie Smith: Oh, there's also there's like, I call them mind Jedi tricks. But like I, you know, that's where the cognitive behavioral therapy can come in. And, you know, like, I one of my one of my favorite mantras is I don't need to have this all figured out right now.

Anu: That's good.

Laurie Smith: I don't need to know how this turns out. Yeah, like I can't let I'm just gonna hands off on that. Another mantra that I like, is real it and Laurie relevant because here's what I do. And I don't know if you do this. I go fishing and my details. Yeah, yeah, I do in the future, and like, worst case scenario, and like, Oh, my God, and then there's all this anxiety. Stop going fishing reel, that fishing line in here. Let's ground ourselves in the present, because that's really all we have. You will be okay. Wow. Yeah. Power the present. That's all I have to know. Yeah. Yeah. I will be okay. And that's, that's what our body is screaming every day is that we're not okay.

Anu: We're not okay. Now. I mean, obviously, you know, with trauma, PTSD, you know, we live in the past or we live in the future. We're hardly ever present. Yes. Yes. It's just like, you know, and your voice or just having these safety techniques to teach clients. I just think that that's gonna be the first stage to healing. Yeah, just stay present.

Laurie Smith: Yeah, and I think that this should be honestly taught in every kindergarten class across the world, like just no self-regulation skills, like how do you turn the volume down when that anxiety is ruminating and obsessive? Like, come back to the present? Because that's where the pieces. Now, that's controversial, because I know that I have to have been assault survivor. I wasn't present during that. But you know, what, I was just associated, just like alcohol does, just like going on vacation does. And so. But I also know sexual assault survivors who picked one thing in the room to focus on while it was happening. Are you familiar with that?

Anu: Oh, yes.

Laurie Smith: Right, and that got you through?

Anu: Oh, my goodness, it did. Wow.

Laurie Smith: And so is that you made yourself safe? Yeah. Without even knowing it? Because that's what your focus was.

Anu: Yeah. For me, it was survival, you know? Yes. As long as I can just survive. I just picture in being alive. Yeah. That got me through. Through all my abusive episodes. In fact, you know, when I was, you know, nearly about to die on a few occasions. I just focused on surviving, right.

Laurie Smith: Yep. And you get real concrete and clear when you're in survival mode. Yeah, but let's, you know, our brain isn't just a warzone. It can be used for good too, right? Like, it's got a lot of capacity and let's just tap into it because it's amazingly free. And you're doing so much more than you already realize you're doing.

Anu: Plus trauma. How is it transformative tell us?

Laurie Smith: This. Oh my god, I love it. I love it. And I don't start out my conversations that way with people. Like I don't say that a sexual assault was the best thing that happened to you like.

Anu: Oh, my goodness, yeah.

Laurie Smith: What I do say is we get to decide the meaning of that and the role it plays in our life.

Anu: Right?

Laurie Smith: That is our power. Because the world has taken power from us over and over and over again, in a million different micro aggressions. You get to decide what you want to do with that, I can't do that for you. That's an inside job. You get to notice when you're trigger, you get to practice very safely new, different techniques, you get to take many vacations during the day, close your eyes five times a day and just imagine a beach. And that will help your body learn what, because I didn't know what that calm state was, did you?

Anu: No not at all.

Laurie Smith: It was so aversive to me that I would not spend time by myself because I didn't there's too much stuff going on in my head.

Anu: I know about oh my god. Yeah, I was on about this the other day, the fact that I used to always have music blasting the TV blast. Yeah. You know, and radio, whatever. And now I'm in complete silence. I'm like the opposite.

Laurie Smith: Isn't it so amazing.

Anu: Blissful, blissful.

Laurie Smith: So **[Inaudible 41:24]** that is your natural power source. And I'm not, I'm not big on saying you must do meditation. But what I am big on is, let's introduce you to that feeling. And let's figure out how to get more of it. Because that essentially is telling you that you're safe.

Anu: Yeah. And you mentioned about travelling as well, which you linked that to, obviously, alcohol abuse as well. And, and I get that because I was running away. I kept travelling, I kept going. I was going on six vacations a year. Just escape.

Laurie Smith: Yes, yes.

Anu: Yeah. And it was just me not wanting to be present or to stay on my name, you know.

Laurie Smith: You know, I was in this coerced treatment. And, and although I asked for my needs to be met, they were neglected. That's a different story. But okay. They, you know, you get into these program, and they say, just don't do that. Just don't do that. You know, that that's, you're doing something wrong. If you do that, I got to tell you, alcohol was how I survived for at least five years of my life. I mean, I would not have survived, had I not had that buffer. It just so happens, though, that there's more than that as a buffer. And that's what I get excited to show people.

Anu: And you now you have some principles, which you're currently launching into an online course. And are you going to be teaching all of this?

Laurie Smith: I cannot wait, I'm going live. And in a month, the first one is going to be survival skills for safety. That's the basic techniques. I have remapping. Recovery is going to be a curriculum, the post pandemic possibilities. I have the life hacks, where it talks about how I actually started using these techniques and the three principles and what that

did. So, but one of the things I do want to do is start working with providers who are burned out.

Anu: Okay

Laurie Smith: Yes, because if we don't, they're sort of like, the unofficial leaders of the mental health movement. What if their issues if their shit is leading on to their clients? Who's that helping?

Anu: Absolutely, yeah. Wow. How did you plan on reaching out to them?

Laurie Smith: Wanting to talk about burnout with them, I think and then I'm going to teach them I think one of the classes I got in production is anatomy of a miracle. And talk about what it takes to really start seeing miracles and love your job again. Yeah. I love that. That's brilliant. And that's, I want to say something about for trauma survivors. It's very, very relevant and useful to use gratitude. Okay, and the reason why is because our mind and body are interpreting threats all that's its job. Its job is to keep us safe. Yeah. Plot with that tunnel vision. We don't get to see other possibilities. And so when you train those neurons again to pick up on what's right, then that alone offers more possibilities.

Anu: Wow. Okay, but yeah, I gratitude. Yeah. A lot something that I wake up practicing because it just how wonderful yeah, it really does. It's transformative for me and I just thank the universe and God within the justice for the ability to see you know, the ability to even eat, talk, the ability to listen, just the basics, you know, and just having a roof over my head and yes, things which we just forget about, right. We just take for granted.

Laurie Smith: And I think that's the autopilot. We're just really not keyed into what is so well. I my prayer for many years was just helped me helped me I don't know how to get out of this. I don't know how to stop feeling pain. And I think where we really sort of do a disservice to ourselves is trying to predict what that's going to look like. Because, you know, we were like, well, if I don't have love for my partner, then you know, my I'm not okay. Well, maybe your partner is going to give some of your needs, and he's gonna be able to meet some of your needs. But maybe you need some needs met some other places, too. And that's still okay.

Anu: Okay, yeah. Yeah, and I think you're right. I think sometimes we do we put so much pressure on ourselves and on our partners and yeah, expectations, you know, and again, one of the Tony Robbins quotes, as you can see, I love him. He says, turn your expectations to appreciation and see the world change instantly.

Laurie Smith: That is a simple thought technique. And it's free. And it's underutilized. And nobody talks about these very, very simple tools that can really improve the quality of life.

Anu: Really? Yeah. Wow.

Laurie Smith: Those tools are available. Once you get that rational brain online. First, you have to interrupt the survival brain.

Anu: Yes, you do. You do, because you're right. I think two years ago, the phones, what does it well, probably about a decade ago and have been on what does it mean? Yeah, what does it mean? What am I expecting? I'm expecting?

Laurie Smith: Well, and personally, I was like, because it's so it's so full of shit. That's too simple. It's too easy. Yeah, it is. It is. Try it. Just, you've taken so many risks in your life, start betting on yourself.

Anu: I know right, yeah. But you're right is kind of just trying to get rid of those barriers within yourself and uncovering, you know, what's underneath that Saarland. And that's why trauma therapy is vital. You know, this is why.

Laurie Smith: It is you know, my dream is that we start taking mental health as seriously as physical health. If you had a broken leg, the leg isn't broken forever. But you're not gonna sort of quote unquote, fix it with a Band-Aid. No, you have to rest, you have to recoup you have to rejuvenate. You have to actually maybe give it some support. It's always going to have that sort of scar tissue. But it's going to function again. And you can even have it functioning much more optimally, if you do the right treatment.

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And so now you're doing a lot of group coaching. You've got your female entrepreneur network. Guide, you're doing a lot, girl.

Laurie Smith: You know, I hit for most of my life. Yeah. And I feel like I'm coming out. One of the things that's so exciting is the female entrepreneur network. Have you heard of Rachael Rogers?

Anu: Yeah.

Laurie Smith: You have, we should all be millionaires.

Anu: Yes. Facebook and yeah, again, yeah, I see quite a lot of material. But are you going to be doing stuff with her or not?

Laurie Smith: And that Well, hopefully, but I love that she gives us a call to action as women to wield our economic power and find a way to gain economic power because she, she's just like me, she wants more effective strategies and her lane of whatever she's doing, but when we make money, we give it back. To our community absolutely, women, you know that caregiving. And so I'm really excited to build a connection with my peers, and really just start that sort of organic support network for women who are struggling with the same types of things and imposter syndrome. You know, self-doubt, shame and guilt and all that bullshit. It's time it's time for different strategies.

Anu: I think so you know why and the amount of things that hold holding us back from all aspects of our life is a shame and guilt. It's so funny because all of these what you've just said that it's been coming up this week, and I've been working on a lot of this with my coach. Imposter syndrome. Confident. Yeah, come on, man. You know, what we do in?

Laurie Smith: It just makes me so mad. Like, where did you ever get that message? What you had to say wasn't valuable.

Anu: Who said I'm not good enough? How dare they?

Laurie Smith: Exactly. Oh, wait, it's me. Oh, I might want to be a little nicer to myself.

Anu: Yeah.

Laurie Smith: I am my own worst enemy. I'll readily admit that.

Anu: Yes, a thing. But it's really interesting, isn't it? Because you just think well, no one's actually said that, to me. It's just the way that I feel about myself.

Laurie Smith: But that's, and I love poking holes in those solid truths that we have you because here's this unspoken assumption that, you know, I'm going to fuck up my life. Excuse

my language. Oh, okay, but that really isn't what's been happening. You've been very successful in a lot of ways. Let me show you. And by the way, if nobody else is your cheerleader, it's okay to be your own. You should be your own. Because I need to learn from you.

Anu: Wow, that's beautiful. And this is where the coaching comes into the whole therapeutic modality. Because it's so important, you know, yeah, you have to heal from the past. And then you also need to move on and to live your life with absolute joy and fulfilment, and to try and minimize negative thoughts about yourself.

Laurie Smith: I swear to God, the antidote to trauma is self-compassion. Yes. And that's hard work

Anu: is hard work, how to tell a story. Laurie, where can people find you?

Laurie Smith: I'm so excited on your podcast for one which I'm going to share with my world. I love it. It's been such an honor, you just are doing great work. And I'm so excited to get in this arena with people like you. I just started website cloudedcompass.com, but I'll be rolling out my program here soon. I'm also at resilience Coach llc.com, that's my therapy business. But I'm gonna I'm gonna start rolling out some classes here in the next month or so about the safety skills, survival skills for safety. I'm developing a group membership that specifically talks about a different trauma topic every month. And so I've got a lot of ideas, but it's incredibly intimidating. And I've done so much harder in my world than this. At the same time. You know what I'm saying? Like, you and I have fought battles?

Anu: Yes, we have I know we've overcome...

Laurie Smith: **[Inaudible 51:51]** the podcast, right?

Anu: This is fun, you know, I enjoy this because I'm just thinking of the end going on going on thinking about the person who is listening to this, who's actually just taken away that one key message which is going to transform their lives.

Laurie Smith: The best part of my job is that I don't get to know what that is. Oh, I love it. I love it. I love it. Because it just really reminds me that it's not it's so not about what's coming out of my mouth, it's that you are at the right time to hear the right words that have been used through you or me or somebody to show you who you are or who you are not.

Anu: Exactly, exactly.

Laurie Smith: Such a passive calm process.

Anu: Yeah, and we see it on social media, you know, just people who are putting out posts and yeah, you know, a lot of the good post, they might not get that many likes, but the likes that they are getting the comments that they are getting, you know, the few people that they may be impacting, isn't that worth it, you know, so don't shy away from putting out some amazing stuff, you've got them in your head, just get it out, go and help that one person if you can.

Laurie Smith: So you know, I like my claws into things. I don't know if you're familiar with that feeling. But one of my sort of barriers is like creating the social media audience, and I'm just getting lost in the details, the details of how to do life is not that you have to do it prescribed. It's that if that doesn't work for you, then there's so many other things that might, you know, maybe, maybe you do a podcast every two weeks because your life demands it. Or maybe you do two a week because you have

something important to say like you said, how do I know if I don't tell if I don't share this with the world? How do I know? That's not gonna impact somebody?

Anu: I know how dare, we just hold information in our heads which needs to be released because we've had a calling

Laurie Smith: You know, Britney Spears? I gotta say something I don't know if you've been reading the news lately, but she's just come out about her conservatorship and her Demi Lovato all of these young women who are saying no more. Stop hurting me. I cannot live like this way anymore. And I know that my heroes, they said things that I needed to hear at great risk to themselves. Okay. I owe them nothing less. Yeah, to carry on their essence and there, you know, vision for the world. They helped me by risking speaking up. I can do no less. That's what I'm here for. What else am I here for?

Anu: Yeah, exactly. But your book as well. Tell us about your book.

Laurie Smith: Oh my gosh, you just hit them all. That's wonderful. Yeah. So I wrote a book and I didn't plan on it. But honestly, I started blogging. And I was like, oh, I've got enough. Let me throw these into a book. And it's purposely not edited very well, because I'm not an editor, but it was important for me to get out something in the world that was imperfect. Okay. But it talks about the three principles and how those have changed my life and how to tap into these things that we've these very natural things like breathing and self-soothing and, you know, interrupting your survival brain and very practical, passive free internal self-regulating techniques.

Anu: Wow. That's like a fascinating read and something again, which will benefit from, I guess any trauma survivor, right?

Laurie Smith: Anybody? Anybody in the world, honestly, but yes, specifically trauma survivors, but I was just thinking like, I have purposely not spoke about my own issues and I don't know how you felt when you first started doing your podcast. But when I started realizing, like, what the sort of what the core issue was, I felt like I needed to just scream it to the world. You're not alone.

Anu: Yeah, yeah absolutely. Yeah, I did. And so I have yeah, carry on.

Laurie Smith: And I just, there's, I have such a sense of urgency to get this, this this information out. That's, that's practical, that people really aren't pointed to.

Anu: Okay. Yeah, I was the same. I mean you know, when I first started sharing, I was pretty banged on about the actual facts that, you know, that were going on, and I wanted to really hit the wall bonus of my story, and just, yeah, there was an urgency for me to get it out there. You know, why rapists rape, you know, why do abusers abuse and, you know, what's getting into the pedophiles mind? You know, these are really like, you know, difficult topics, but apparently I've normalized it all.

Laurie Smith: I love that. When I was 13, I was reading about Charles Manson. I wanted to know what makes up that person. Right? Like, what? If somebody hurt me, I need to figure it out. Yeah, yeah, I need to make sense of this, then that's part of meaning making, like you, you took what was threatening? You translate it into a meaning that became more empowering for you?

Anu: Yes, it did.

Laurie Smith: And in that way, you take away their power.

Anu: Yeah, absolutely.

Laurie Smith: And now I have nothing but compassion for these people. You know, isn't that amazing? That is trauma healing. And I say, don't punch me, you know, I like because nobody wants to hear that. But I am not going to tell you that up front. But that's where we're going. We are all we're all innocent. And we're all perpetrators.

Anu: Yeah. Oh, wow. I love that. Yeah it is, and you know, and for someone to be so mean, you know, to really affect someone one in a negative manner, like a lot of abusers do and manipulation. And it's really sad that they're in that dark place, you know, and you have to feel sorry for them.

Laurie Smith: I do. And I started feeling sorry for myself, because I innocently participated in that. Because I thought that it was my fault, and that I was wrong. And that I was that they were hurting me. And they were but had I known some of my skill set. Now, I would have known how to say, well, let me I want to be very cautious about this. I would have said no in different ways. Yeah. Yeah. That's not to say that the abuse would have stopped, but we don't ask for what we need. Because the world has taught us it's not okay to do so. But the worst enemy I've ever met is myself. Wow. Because I don't care what they could have done to me physically. It was paling in comparison to the daily harm. I was causing myself internally by the self-hate and the shame and you don't deserve to exist, and you're not good enough. And the world would be better off without you. And it's so self-protective.

Anu: Yeah. You're your own perpetrator.

Laurie Smith: Yeah, yeah,

Anu: Absolutely. So what I know, is...

Laurie Smith: Heavy, heavy. Yeah.

Anu: So what is one key message you would like to share with the world as we close today?

Laurie Smith: It's so funny because I usually ask my clients, okay, what's your key takeaways? What are your next steps? I don't really like to define that. But I do like to give homework. The homework would be, let's, you know, let's do some breathing with ourselves. You know, just reel in, blowing it out. And do that four to five times, three times a day. And then just notice, that's it. Nice and easy. Exponential. You don't have to shift your whole worldview. You're just interrupting that survival brain and inviting new thoughts to come in.

Anu: Beautiful. Yeah, and something that I learned and I couldn't believe the training was about putting your hand on your stomach, right? And then just expanding that as you inhale to make sure you're doing your breathing the right way, right rather than using your chest.

Laurie Smith: See, I don't like to complicate things now that I've spent most of my life complicating things I like to simplify now. But one of the things like it doesn't even have to be that hard. Just blow out a candle. You know, imagine your lungs filling up and then expelling, like, it's whatever works for you blow up bubbles, you know, pretend you're blowing out, multicolored bubble. This is your rodeo. That's why I love it's so user friendly. Oh, yes. And you mentioned about your GPS, right? Yes. And I think that, that we just the clouded compass concept is that we have this innate survival strategy, we have resilience. It just gets clouded over by these experiences in life and then our compass is going fucking every which way, we can't figure out which way is north. And

we don't trust north even when we tap into it. So this is just about you know, they're just clouds. Yeah, these experiences are just clouds. And the less we dig into them, the easier they're going to flow through, but let them flow through to that breathing to expel do some dancing, go out in nature, get your support, you know, take your mini vacations, let that shit translate in your body.

Anu: Okay, I like that. And what is one of your favorite quotes?

Laurie Smith: Emma Goldman was my first hero. She's an anarchist. And she was before the labor movement and she would say two things. The most violent element in society is ignorance. And I would say, for today's time, the most violent element in society is fear. Okay, but also, she would say, if I can't dance, I don't want to join your revolution.

Anu: Okay, wow, I like.

Laurie Smith: Have fun. It's okay to have fun in life.

Anu: Yes, it is. Oh, I love that. Wow, thank you so much, Lori, you've been an honor, I've absolutely loved.

Laurie Smith: Thank you for being gentle. This is my first one. And I'm honored and I can't wait to hear it and share it and work with you in the future. And, you know, this is the hard work. It's, it doesn't have to be hard. It's labor intensive. But it also doesn't have to be hard. It can be strategic, and efficient and effective once you know where your north is.

Anu: Yeah. So your email, I will add it in the description at resiliencecoachllc.com, and for sure, obviously, all of your details I will add in your in the profile as well. And she's been an absolute...

Laurie Smith: Yeah. It's incredible once you start to reclaim your life again, what you say?

Anu: Yeah, absolutely. Reclaim your life listeners. I think that's our takeaway.

Laurie Smith: Reclaim your life. Love. The world owes you nothing less.

Anu: Wow. Thank you. Thank you.

Laurie Smith: Thanks so much.

Anu: I know and I hope to have you back on.

Laurie Smith: Oh my gosh, I'd love that I could talk about this for days. My favorite topic.

Anu: I'm sure that my listeners will appreciate that too. Because you've just been very valuable. So very valuable. Yeah.

Laurie Smith: I hope so. I do like to know what resonates. But yeah, I'll be tuning into your podcast and information is just so powerful. You know.

Anu: It is, I know and that's why we're blessed to be able to deliver through these platforms like Apple, Spotify & iHeart Radio, right. And you know, and it's all for free. You know, we're not expecting anything in return. And that's the beauty of it. This is a last one into help people.

Laurie Smith: When I just a call to action to connect.

Anu: Yeah, I like that. Wow. Thank you so much again.

Laurie Smith: Thank you.

Anu: Been an honor. And yeah, we will see you back again soon I hope.

Laurie Smith: Oh, sounds good. I'm gonna be paying attention who's on your guests next, you know.

Anu: And I will find out and let you know.

Laurie Smith: Okay. That's how I my life goes. I take care. I'll talk to you later so you can have a stay.
Anu: Okay, Namaste.

CLOSING: And while this episode comes to an end, do you may want to check out my book “**Victim 2 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 path. 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 melioration 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 who 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.

