

Trauma Chat Episode 2

Disclaimer: This is a verbatim transcript which may contain spelling errors.

[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** [00:00:00] Trauma chat episode 2.

[00:00:06] Hi everyone. Welcome back to Trauma Chat. I'm so glad you're here. Today, I'm going to talk about one of the most basic questions that underpins this whole podcast. A very simple question, with a very complex answer. What is trauma?

[00:00:28] So, I'm going to start off by telling you a little bit about why I chose the logo that I did for this podcast.

[00:00:42] And I guess I'm telling you this, because what I say might resonate with you in a way that just feels right, or you can sense what I'm talking about. And that might be a little bit different from the linear way that we often [00:01:00] talk about these educational topics. So, I wanted to give you a little story about the show artwork.

[00:01:14] So the logo for the show, it has kind of like a light pink-ish shell colored background, and then the words, uh, Trauma Chat in the middle with a kind of a circle shape around it. And then sort of wrapped around the circle, are these dots. And there are two things about that that made me choose that logo.

[00:01:52] One is the circle shape reminds me of [00:02:00] the Enso symbol in Zen Buddhism, which is, it's a circle with a brush stroke and it's not a completely closed circle. And I'm no student of Zen Buddhism, but I've been told that the meaning of this is that it represents that the journey toward enlightenment is never complete.

[00:02:25] And, um, you know, a circle also represents community to me, and a sense of containment, meaning, being held safely that you can feel comfortable, that you can trust. That's something that I want to be felt in this podcast because I'm deliberately making these episodes very short because I want to be sure that they're not overwhelming.

[00:03:00] [00:03:00] As a trauma therapist, I do sit with people and talk with them about their trauma day after day. And for me talking about trauma is my job. That's what I do all day long. And it's because I'm so passionate about this subject. I, myself, am a trauma survivor and so many people I love and so many people in my life and all of my clients are trauma survivors. So, this is a subject that I deeply care about. But I want this podcast to feel contained and not overwhelm you. And hopefully not activate trauma reactions within you, though. I know that we can have our trauma symptoms get activated by almost anything that reminds us in some way of that experience. I'm hoping to keep this to [00:04:00] feeling manageable and that's why the episodes are going to be so short.

[00:04:05] So the other piece about the logo, the dots that are wrapped around the circle to me, reminds me of the feeling of disorientation, or not really being completely present that comes along with when our trauma gets activated and we're slightly to completely dissociative. It can feel like you're here, but not here or it can look like you're here, but you aren't.

[00:04:41] So, I felt like that was an image that sort of reminded me of that.

[00:04:54] So, now I'm going to go back to my explanation of what trauma [00:05:00] is. When we hear the word trauma, typically we picture things like a car crash, plane wreck, combat, house fire, things like that, abuse. And it's true that all of those experiences I just mentioned can be considered potentially traumatic.

[00:05:31] In addition to those examples, though, many of us know that violent incidents like being robbed, shot, or raped can be traumatic experiences as well.

[00:05:50] Trauma is identified in the circles that I am in, as any [00:06:00] experience that's characterized by feeling of helplessness and overwhelms your ability to cope. What's surprising to so many of us, is that there are many things that happen during childhood, which can leave us feeling helpless and causing our capacity to cope, to be completely overwhelmed.

[00:06:23] And that's because children have very little power. They're dependent upon adults to help them survive. To learn more about childhood trauma, I will be talking about it in a few future episodes of trauma chat, but if you want to learn more about it right now, you can go to episode 19 of Therapy Chat, my other podcast.

[00:06:48] So Therapy Chat, my other podcast, goes into more depth on the subjects and the conversations are kind of at a level [00:07:00] of two professionals talking. So there could be a lot more of, um, clinical language that you might not be familiar with. But in episode 19, it was just me talking, and I was talking about the epidemic of childhood trauma. So I'll put a link to that in the resources for this episode.

[00:07:25] So I'm going to list some experiences that could be considered potentially traumatic. And the reason I say they could be considered potentially traumatic is not everyone has a long-term trauma response after potentially traumatic experiences. So you may have experienced something like this, and you did not identify a trauma reaction in yourself from that.

[00:07:58] Um, the sneaky thing [00:08:00] about trauma though, is that it can really be very insidious and show up in a lot of ways in these repeating patterns in our lives from childhood, throughout our lives. And the more awareness we can have about the way that we may be impacted by trauma, then the more we can realize how we're impacted and take action to break those patterns that are related to those past traumatic experiences, you know, you can't change something that you're not even aware is happening and trauma does do that. It kind of makes us feel disconnected. So, we don't necessarily see what might be obvious if it were someone else, but in ourselves we just don't realize. So, when I use the word trauma, when I say I work with people who have trauma, that's a shorter way to [00:09:00] say that I work with people who have been through something traumatic and they're having trauma symptoms.

[00:09:07] The ways trauma can make us feel is a whole other thing which I will go into in our next episode. But the variety of ways that trauma can show up in our lives is astounding. We'll be coming back to that. So, for now, I'm just going to list some things that can be

traumatic experiences. So, if you have been through any of these things, which are very common experiences for so many of us, then it could be possible that you're affected by trauma.

[00:09:52] And if you're listening to this and you're wondering if trauma may be impacting you and you hear some of your experiences mentioned [00:10:00] on the things I'm going to list, then. It's possible that maybe the way you feel is related to that. Of course, I don't know each of you, and I'm not attempting to provide therapy on this podcast, but this is education about what types of experiences could be considered traumatic.

[00:10:23] So I'll go into all of these in more depth in future episodes. And I also want to say that this is not a comprehensive list of every type of thing that can happen that could be traumatic. So, if you have been through something that is not mentioned in what I'm about to say, that doesn't mean that your experience was not traumatic.

[00:10:50] If you feel like it was a traumatic experience, you're probably right. You know yourself best. And if you're [00:11:00] having trauma symptoms and you have one of these types of experiences that may explain why you're having the trauma reaction. So here is a partial list. So, during childhood, um, physical abuse, which is being hit, spanked, being hit with objects, emotional abuse, which is being put down, called names, controlling, authoritarian, parenting, physical neglect, when your physical needs were not taken care of. And neglect is a hard word because it sounds intentional, but sometimes not having enough food through no fault of the parents, the children don't [00:12:00] have their physical needs being met. And then there's emotional neglect, which is when maybe your physical needs are met, but the attachment development needs that all children have were not met enough at home.

[00:12:25] For example, emotions being dismissed or discouraged, being told not to cry. Um, growing up in a family where people don't talk about things. These are some examples of, um, how emotional neglect could show up. And sexual abuse and emotional incest. And when I say sexual abuse in childhood, I mean, when a child is [00:13:00] molested or sexually assaulted by someone with more power than them. It doesn't have to be a family member, but it could be a family member, or it could be another adult or a child who's much older than them.

[00:13:14] Experiencing community violence, living in a community where there's a lot of violence and it just doesn't feel like it's safe to go from one place to another. You won't know if you can get there safely. Maybe you've witnessed other people being harmed in your community, whether it's, um, physical violence with vis or guns, or you live in a war zone.

[00:13:47] Being a member of a group that's marginalized, for example, black, indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ. [00:14:00] Other things that are common in childhood, which can impact us, parents getting divorced, witnessing your parents physically fighting or just yelling at each other, having surgeries or other scary medical procedures during childhood. And any of the things I just mentioned happening in adulthood can also be traumatic. But when they happen in childhood, they are more formative on our sense of who we are

[00:14:42] Being born in itself can be traumatic. Sometimes things happen during delivery that are traumatic to the infant and things can happen to the mother during delivery, which are traumatic to the mother and the infant. [00:15:00] Those are the types of things that we would never say, 'I'm a trauma survivor,' because I had a traumatic birth, unless we knew that there was a major injury to us at birth.

[00:15:11] We normally wouldn't even know how our birth was. Being bullied, having a parent who's ill for an extended period of time, or losing a parent during childhood, or young adulthood. Um, having a parent or close family member be incarcerated, living through a natural disaster, hurricane tsunami, earthquake wildfires, there's so many natural disasters. Terrorism, living in a place where a terrorist attack has occurred. Mass shootings when they take place where you live, even if you weren't there, that's traumatic for many of us. And if [00:16:00] you were there and you were not injured, that can be extremely traumatic. And of course, if you were there and you were severely injured, that could be very traumatic. And if you were there and you lost someone you cared about, that could be extremely traumatic. Poverty, famine, deprivation, being a refugee, torture survivors, and I mentioned combat trauma earlier. And that is one thing that can be very traumatic. But I also sort of mentioned living in a war zone. If you live in a place where there's war and there's [00:17:00] soldiers in the streets all the time, even if your home was spared, and you were technically safer, you were able to escape. It's still traumatic to be in that environment.

[00:17:21] So there are a lot of traumatic experiences that are really hard to name like witnessing family violence, dysfunctional family dynamics. So that's just a small list of some of the experiences that people go through that can be traumatic.

[00:17:41] Oh, and there's one that I didn't mention, but it's really important is if you have known someone who's died by suicide, that's traumatic. And oftentimes when we're not necessarily very close to the person, we may think, well, that wasn't traumatic. I mean, we [00:18:00] weren't that close, but if you're in high school and someone who's appeared, dies by suicide, that impacts us, even if we're not close with the person and so, those are just a few examples of things that can be traumatic

[00:18:25] So I want to invite you to, um, go to Instagram and find the Trauma Chat Instagram page, which is @traumachatpod.

[00:18:40] And, let me know if you have a question, I would love to answer a question for you on Trauma Chat. I'm also going to be putting the Speak Pipe app [00:19:00] on the Instagram page so that you can leave me a voice message, asking a question or leaving a comment if you like, and I may include your question or comment in a future episode.

[00:19:19] So for today, I just want to wrap up our episode by reminding you that if you feel like you have trauma symptoms and maybe you don't even know what that means, but we'll get into that in the future. If you feel like you're having trauma symptoms and you've had any of the experiences that I mentioned or things that are kind of similar to those experiences, um, you may be feeling the way you are because of trauma.

[00:20:00] [00:20:00] And if you go listen to Therapy Chat episode 19, it talks about how common childhood trauma is in the U.S it's estimated that at least 64% of adults experienced some childhood traumatic experience. One at least, but many of us have experienced far more than one. And, you know, having a parent who's incarcerated is not really a one-time event.

[00:20:34] I mean, there's the day they were arrested, there's the day they went to court, there's the day they were sentenced, there's, you know, the day they left and didn't come back when you thought they were going to, and then they may have been incarcerated for say three years. So for that child every day, their parent was incarcerated. It's not a one-time event. And that [00:21:00] type of experience can impact a child throughout the lifespan, even though it's a common experience for so many.

[00:21:15] So that's just one example of how childhood trauma can be more of a chronic type of trauma that impacts us repeatedly. So I'm going to put a couple, um, resources in today's show notes. One is a book called The Trauma Map, by Dr. Karol Darsa. And the other is a book called Journey Through Trauma: A Trail Guide to the 5- Phase Cycle [00:22:00] of Healing Repeated Trauma by Dr. Gretchen Schmelzer. The author of The Trauma Map has been my guest on Therapy Chat, so, um, you can listen to that. That is episode 280 of Therapy Chat, and you can listen to every episode of Therapy Chat right now, they are all on www.therapychatpodcast.com. I'll also have a link to the specific episodes I mentioned in today's show notes and soon all of the episodes of Trauma Chat and Therapy Chat will be hopefully by the time you're listening to this, they will all be available on traumatherapistnetwork.com

[00:23:00] [00:23:00] So, traumatherapistnetwork.com is this resource for listening to both podcasts, connecting with the resources I mentioned in each episode, there'll be transcripts of each episode and summary blog posts. So, I hope that it will be a way to get the information that you're looking for. And in addition to that, there is a resource page on Trauma Therapist Network that lists the resources that I mentioned in every episode and Gretchen Schmelzer was also on Therapy Chat in an episode that was recently rereleased, and it is number 246.

[00:23:50] All right, that is it for now, thank you for listening.