

# Therapy Chat Episode 282

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

[00:00:00] **Announcer:** [00:00:00] This is the Therapy Chat podcast with Laura Reagan LCSW-C. The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional. And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:00:32] **Laura Reagan:** [00:00:32] Do you feel stuck when working with clients who are numb and disconnected, who have trouble accessing emotion and exploring their inner experience? Learn a comprehensive approach to conceptualize your client's concerns. Sensorimotor Psychotherapy uniquely includes the body in therapy as both a source of information and a target for intervention, because words are not enough.

[00:00:55] Go beyond theories and gain practical ways to open a new dimension for effective [00:01:00] therapy. Visit Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute online at [sensorimotor.org](http://sensorimotor.org).

[00:01:09] Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan and today I am very excited to be speaking with Irene Lyon, who is a nervous system expert and somatic practitioner. Irene, thank you so much for being my guests on Therapy Chat today.

[00:01:25] **Irene Lyon:** [00:01:25] Hey Laura. It is great to be here. Thank you for asking.

[00:01:28] **Laura Reagan:** [00:01:28] Yes, I'm so glad that this worked out because just in chatting before we started recording, it's already been very interesting so I can't wait to raise conversation to our audience.

[00:01:41] **Irene Lyon:** [00:01:41] Yeah.

[00:01:42] **Laura Reagan:** [00:01:42] So let's just start off if we can, by you telling the audience a little bit about who you are and what you do.

[00:01:49] **Irene Lyon:** [00:01:49] Yeah. Well, I am technically, I, like you said, I call myself a nervous system expert, somatic practitioner, all those things at the current moment, I am quite [00:02:00] engaged in the online world, helping people all around the world with my online programs, teaching them about their nervous systems, what trauma is, educating, but also teaching them exercises, practical tools to what we would call, regulate their nervous system. And that's something we can get into.

[00:02:18] So nervous system regulation that's kind of the name of my game in a sense. And people come into my world for all sorts of reasons: chronic illness, mental illness, relational troubles, ADD, poor sleep problems, digestive problems, basically just not being well and looking and looking they've been looking for so long, for solutions to their pains and their sufferings and all these things.

[00:02:44] And many of them have tried healing for 12, some even 30 years, you know, some of our, our students are in their seventies, even we have some people in their eighties.

And so, um, the online platform I currently manage and work with was born out of [00:03:00] me being in private practice, working in those fields and I'll name them, um, that somatic experiencing, which is the work of Peter Levine, which some people are starting to get to know more. The Feldon Christ method, which is a very sophisticated mind- body movement methodology that really teaches people how to move, and act, and be. And then another form of work called somatic practice, which is less known but that is touch and somatic- based body work, working with what we call the stress organs.

[00:03:31] The parts of the body that go on to high alert when there's a lot of danger, a lot of unsafety, and so I was in private practice doing kind of that, you know, mismatch of all these things, um, with my people, um, here I'm in Vancouver, British Columbia. And I had a very busy private practice, I was getting a lot of good results, but was realizing that it wasn't enough just to see someone for one hour a week, if someone even had the fortune to see me once a week. Cause [00:04:00] here everything's out of pocket, right? And even one hour a week for some clients I had seen for two, three years. They still needed more. And so I'm like, well, we need to figure this out. And so I was starting to create homework assignments for them, like video trainings, articles. I would write about the nervous system and what trauma is and all these things I would create audio lessons where I would guide them kind of like a meditation, but very different into their bodies, into their somatic cells, into how they connect with the environment, so that they can do a little bit every day, as opposed to just one concentrated session a week. And it started to just really catch on and then over the course of a year or two, and I really should've documented this in some ways now that I think about it, I massed this library of content, and I'm finding this, like, you need to put this into a course. And this is when the online world and learning was starting to come up. This was 2011, I think 2010. [00:05:00] And it just one thing led to another. And now we have two online programs and they have been used in 90 different countries.

[00:05:08] You know, people from 90 countries in the world. Um, and so that's sort of what the last 10 years of my life had been. Prior to that I was in exercise science, so I was a fitness trainer. I was applied human nutrition. I did a research degree in biomedical science doing intervention studies. So I was, I've always been in the health feeling science world. And then take that one step even further, I grew up with two parents who were both veterinarians. So I literally grew up in an animal hospital, like learning small surgeries, learning how to use microscopes, develop x-rays take blood, you know, do the things that you would do in a small animal veterinary practice.

[00:05:47] So I just kind of have been in this world of biology, physiology, biochemistry, hormones, health, disease, from pretty much in utero. You know, my mom was working as a [00:06:00] vet when I was in her belly, so that's my world. Um, and that's why we're here because we're in the same line of work.

[00:06:06] **Laura Reagan:** [00:06:06] Yeah. And, and what you're describing is such a multifaceted exposure.

[00:06:14] **Irene Lyon:** [00:06:14] Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Like I would say that one of the things that became very clear when I started to see the results of people learning for themselves,

the deep theory. And it's so interesting. I'll never forget. I was in a business conference of all things like learning, how to build a business in San Diego.

[00:06:33] I'll never forget the day I was at a conference and I met someone else who was interested in the nervous system and they were interested in the vagus nerve, which is like this hot topic. And I said, well, do you teach your students, your clients what that is and all the different branches and I just threw in like a technical term, I was kind of being a bit of a nuisance I was testing them to see if they really knew what the vagus nerve was and that it's not just a nerve that [00:07:00] goes to one spot. Anyway he kind of deflected and was like, "oh, well, no, they don't need to know that because that's not important. They just need to get results. And that's all that matters."

[00:07:09] And I just kind of went like, okay, kind of nodded. And I gently got up from the table, excused myself, and found somewhere else to sit. Because it just had this ego to it that I'm like, well, why wouldn't you want to teach your, your, your customers, your students, your clients, about their body? If they're always having to rely on this thing that you're doing with them, then you're not giving them the power to take care of themselves and I've just never understood that. Right?

[00:07:35] **Laura Reagan:** [00:07:35] Yeah. It's like that power over kind of you know, um, doing something to someone instead of letting their body innately heal itself through guidance and understanding. Yeah, because it is relational too.

[00:07:51] **Irene Lyon:** [00:07:51] Oh, for sure. For sure. Like, if the traumas that had occurred to these two people said client we're relational and usually they [00:08:00] are in some way, shape or form. Um, there needs to be that understanding of trust, and safety, and even in an online format, even though I'm not sitting with my, my students one-on-one, there's a way to formulate that relational interaction, believe it or not, through how you email people, how you engage, how you show up for the group calls.

[00:08:21] Will it work for everyone? No, but most people, if they're keen and self interested and have a little bit of self-starting, um, they're there for a reason. Right. And so they pick it up and they run with it which is super cool.

[00:08:36] **Laura Reagan:** [00:08:36] Yeah. I think there's, there's a really important aspect of the presence of the person and you know, when we were talking before you were talking about how you've learned these methods and, but part of what you're learning is how to use your intuition. And you didn't say that, but this is what I'm interpreting, so I could be wrong. Yeah. You know how to use your [00:09:00] intuition in the work to help the person maybe engage with their own intuition with their body.

[00:09:05] **Irene Lyon:** [00:09:05] A hundred percent, you know, intuition is a word that I think is sometimes misunderstood and people can think that it's kind of like woo-woo.

[00:09:14] **Laura Reagan:** [00:09:14] Magic, or something

[00:09:16] **Irene Lyon:** [00:09:16] And that's true too, but there is a biological, physiological, intuitive, sixth sense. We might call it. That is actually very cellular. You know, if you think

about single cell organisms, if they're put into a situation that is toxic, they will retract, they will recoil. Like they're not thinking, oh, I'm in a toxic Petri dish though, like something will happen in that organism to recoil or die or whatever. And our intuition, as I have learned, and have seen is deeply embedded in our body. It's deeply embedded in our gut instinct. Like we say, gut instinct, not just cause that's a cool way to say it. Like it is literally in our viscera, in our organs, in our [00:10:00] tissues that intuition, you know, and when that gets thrown off, do to these things that happened to us when we're young or old, or whatever, get thrown out of our body because it's too hard to be in the body because we don't know how to process the intensity that we're feeling.

[00:10:17] So we flip up into our mind or into our brain, whatever we want to call it. And then if that's too much, we dissociate. So then we're not even in our thinking brain and we're just kind of floating in a sense, you know, over, you know, we would call it under-coupled, like things are all over the place and we're just not a cohesive organism anymore that's connected to ourselves and the world around us. So, intuition is such an interesting one for me because when we are not healthy in our nervous system, in our physiology, our intuition will be off, or it'll just not be there. And this is a classic thing, and you've probably seen this in your clients where someone will keep getting into the same dangerous [00:11:00] situation over and over.

[00:11:02] Like the metaphoric dark alley that they walked down is real- literally, and metaphoric. And they don't even know they're walking down that dark alley until they trip and fall, or they're attacked, or they self sabotage themselves again. But there's something in our, in our physiology and our Tom-tology world called neuroception or if you've come across that term, uh, Stephen Porges, who kind of coined the Polyvagal Theory and coined neuroception. It's the perception of danger, or the perception of safety. And if we're living in a cellular soup in our body that is essentially not safe and doesn't trust the world, and this is a binary thing, you either are safe or you're not safe. There is no okay, well, I kind of feel safe when I'm wrapped in my blankets under the covers, and no one is home and all the doors are locked, like that is finding ways to resource ourselves, to feel a bit more, okay, but that isn't true cellular safety. And so I'm kind of jumping a lot [00:12:00] around here, but intuition is, is on and is solid, when we have really good internal safety and we're connected to our physiology, and we're alert kind of like an animal in the wild to the environment all around us.

[00:12:15] You add in the human brain, which is powerful, and has a lot of bells and whistles that we still don't understand and then you have kind of this super-organism, which is human, you know, and so you have, and you have intuition on board, and you're in cellular safety, and you've got that higher brain. I think us as a species, as a collective, we still have no clue how powerful we are. But as we were talking about before we started, this trauma stuff is so essential because it's keeping us stuck in survival, globally, literally.

[00:12:47] **Laura Reagan:** [00:12:47] Yes. As we destroy the environment on one hand, we are stuck in survival mode on the other hand.

[00:12:55] **Irene Lyon:** [00:12:55] Yeah. Yeah. So I hope that makes sense. Kind of went a little [00:13:00] rogue there on different topics.

[00:13:01] **Laura Reagan:** [00:13:01] Yeah, I felt like it made sense. And, uh, neuroception is something that our listeners have definitely heard about before recently, Deb Dana was on the show and she's so gifted at explaining polyvagal theory in a way that people can, that I can easily understand that we can, we can easily understand.

[00:13:22] Something that you said when we were talking before we started recording is coming to mind and I'd like for you to go into it a little more, if you can, when you talked about our physiology and being alert to the environment, just now, before you were telling me that you have sort of a, a way of seeing different aspects of our, our well being, I guess and how connected we are, the way I understood what you were saying, if I remember, I didn't jot it down. But it was like, you know, sort of a connection within, within ourselves and relationally, but also our environment. Can you talk about that sort of framework that you were [00:14:00] mentioning?

[00:14:00] **Irene Lyon:** [00:14:00] Yeah. Yeah. Well, it's interesting because I'm not going to get the quote right. I think it was in Bessel Van Der Kolk's book, The Body Keeps the Score.

[00:14:11] He said something along the lines of trauma is anything that takes us out of the here and now. And Peter Levine would say it. And I don't even think you could coin it to one person. We now know in what's called the new Traumatology world. I don't know if you've heard that saying, but like Deb Dana, myself, Peter Levine, Rob Stair, Bob Scare, Bessel, Gabor Mate that were kind of in this new Traumatology world, which is seeing that trauma is not something in the events, necessarily. It is within the physiology and it's not even just the brain. The brain is still from my world of learning the, an end organ, like the digestion, like the hormonal systems, like the cardiovascular system, whereas the nervous system, specifically the autonomic nervous [00:15:00] system, fight, flight, freeze, which is survival based, but also helps us calm and slow down and connect.

[00:15:06] You know, even though people are probably just listening to this, we're on the video and I can see you. So if I was to start making funny faces, I'm sticking my tongue out at you, like already, you're starting to smile. Right? So that's, that's part of our...

[00:15:19] **Laura Reagan:** [00:15:19] I can't even help myself, I just started laughing.

[00:15:22] **Irene Lyon:** [00:15:22] I'm like right now and making funny faces to you Laura and it's just, you know, you got a little redness in your face, pumping us up a little bit. That is part of our autonomic nervous system. Right? It's what humans have to engage with others, but also the world outside of us. So I'm getting to that, that piece. When we have been put in a situation that is scary, harmful, adverse, abusive, um, accidents, surgical traumas, like all the things that happen to humans that throw us off, we can, and I'm generalizing here. But there's a, there's a selection of responses. One of them is we [00:16:00] disconnect from our body, right, we stop feeling it because it's too intense to feel what's happening. We disconnect from our mind, or our thoughts, or our heads. We still really don't know where the mind lives. Right. It's like something there. And, we disconnect from the environment because that big, scary thing, whether it was a car that hit us, whether it was a parent that hit us, whether it was something that came to us and hurt us, harmed us. It's coming from the environment. It's coming from outside of us. And so the physiology, the cellular

response, records that as outside world, bad, outside world, not to be trusted, I cannot trust anything. Therefore I'm either going to, and there's one of two things become hypervigilant to the external, or I'm going to disconnect and dissociate and be tunnel vision, and only look at what's right in front of me.

[00:16:56] And that sets us up in a bit of a situation, because if we're [00:17:00] hypervigilant all the time, not only are we living in that fight, fright, freeze like that fight flight I should say when fight flight, this is like classic ADHD in people they're looking, looking, looking, it's not because they're bored necessarily with what's happening.

[00:17:14] They literally have a stress survival response that is looking for the next danger and they can't stay present, feeling their butt on the chair with feet, they can't engage with the thing their learning, the person to talking to them cause they're literally waiting for that thing to come hit them or, you know, take them off their feet, metaphorically, literally.

[00:17:33] So hypervigilance is a problem because it puts us into that sympathetic arousal. But then the other one, like I said, is we disconnect from the environment and that's a problem too, because you know, if we're not connected to our environment, it's a lot easier to literally step out onto the street and get hit by a car, or pull out into traffic and not see the car coming or see the person that we're about to hit, or see the piece of furniture that has always been [00:18:00] there in our house and you run into it. So that awareness of the world

[00:18:03] **Laura Reagan:** [00:18:03] Or keep walking into that alley, that you used the metaphor earlier.

[00:18:07] **Irene Lyon:** [00:18:07] Exactly, we're just, we're lost in our own internal, not here and now. So to go back to that thing from Bessel and Peter was like trauma is when we're basically taken out of the here and now and can't be in the present moment.

[00:18:21] And then I would take that one step further to say, and it's not being able to integrate being in the body, being in our thoughts, and being in the environment at the same time, in a regulated smooth, within that window of tolerance kind of situation, where we're not over-activated or totally shut down and disconnected.

[00:18:42] And so when you ask the question like this contextual connections between the world and inside, you know, you'd be surprised how hard at the beginning it is for people, even people who've done tons of meditation, tons of yoga, tons of [00:19:00] therapy. And they come in and I say, well, what would it be like to feel your connection with the chair that you're sitting on?

[00:19:06] Like, yeah, I can feel that. Okay. Okay. Now what would it be like to orient and look around you? Look, I can do that. And then I say, are you still connected to the ground under you? Oh no you didn't tell me to keep that connection. And it's not their fault, it's just that I call this multitasking awareness.

[00:19:21] If you were an animal in the wild, or someone really adept in the outdoor world, you are listening to the sounds. You're listening to the wind. You're smelling the sense. You

know, if you hunt, you're feeling the ground under you, there's a, multi-dimensional rich in the moment experience to do what you're doing, to stay safe and stay on task. In our very industrial box world, where we're not having to feel the breeze and listen for animals coming and we're not walking on uneven surfaces, usually in our home. Um, some of us don't even have stairs in homes so we're not even [00:20:00] navigating that kind of thing. We, we lose that texture, that multidimensionality, if you will, with the world and we kind of get dull, right? And so when you're asking someone to multitask these pieces of very basic awareness, it can be very frustrating for them, but it gives you a sense, like a barometer and a sense of, okay, this is where this person is at, they cannot hold somatic awareness of themselves along with connecting with the environment. And then if we add in the next thing, can you also notice your breath? Because the breath is an indication of the system going into tension or fight flight or shut down. So I'm kind of throwing these little pieces out there, but essentially, you know, I'm simplifying it in an overly simplistic way and it's complex, but really when we can connect with the body, the environment, notice our breath, and I had one more thing Laura, all the sensations and emotions and thoughts, you have enough to work on for a lifetime, right? Cause a lot of people [00:21:00] don't get that optimal upbringing, that kind of rich textured infancy and childhood and teenagehood.

[00:21:07] It just, hasn't been part of our lexicon of raising humans in the Western world is this, this richness. You know, I've found that children and people who have lots of outdoor experience growing up, I think this is why getting kids outside is so important and not just on the soccer pitch, playing sports, but like climbing mountains, and being by rivers, and wet rocks, and talking to people as you're walking, and hiking, and having food outside, like there's something, when you have those multi - pieces going on, you're training a little person, a little human to experience multiple sensations, multiple experiences in connection with others, if that makes sense.

[00:21:50] There's like a, there's like a holographic rituals. It's so good right now. So many, a lot of therapies are great, but they're still very, um, medical. They're very [00:22:00] linear. Right. And, um, so that's kind of, kind of, I've kind of gone in a bit of a circle there, but that's sort of what we're trying to work with.

[00:22:08] When I work with my people is my students, my clients, I call them students really not clients, but not working with them one-on-one is.. we're trying to bring them back to that richness of texture and seeing the 3D world, but even the parts that you can't see, the parts that you feel, that you don't understand, because you didn't have the skills or the teaching from a regulated parent, for example, to help you be with your tantrums.

[00:22:34] To be with, you know, the discomfort of falling off your bike when you were five and not knowing what to do, like all these little things that teach us how to be self-regulated human vessels. I'll stop talking. I'll let you see if you've got anything else from, from that that you want to ask.

[00:22:50] **Laura Reagan:** [00:22:50] Yeah, well, that was really interesting. Everything you were sharing, I was just all the way to like falling off your bike when you're five, when I fell off my bike. But, um,

[00:23:01] **Irene Lyon:** [00:23:01] [00:23:00] You know what I have done entire videos just on that topic because how we're treated when we fall off our bike the first time, cause that's usually like around five years old. Typically, maybe, I mean, the bikes are weird these days. Cause they're not the way you and I would have maybe rode a bike when we were little, you know, but you fall and you scrape your knee. It hurts. You know, that might be the first time you experience real pain as a human and how you're interacting with your primary caregiver will greatly determine the wiring for how you deal with pain and adversity going on.

[00:23:36] And if someone says, it's not that bad. Just get up. Get back on that bike. Someone might say, well, that's going to teach resilience. And I say well, it's going to teach overriding body sensation.

[00:23:46] **Laura Reagan:** [00:23:46] Right.

[00:23:46] **Irene Lyon:** [00:23:46] Right. It's not going to allow that little one to know that it's okay to cry when they feel pain. And that, that that's okay to cry, and that's part of the process. And then you get up on the bike after you've processed that stress.

[00:23:59] **Laura Reagan:** [00:23:59] Yeah. And [00:24:00] you might feel afraid to get on the bike too, and that, that needs to be addressed as well.

[00:24:05] **Irene Lyon:** [00:24:05] Exactly. And so, you know, that can be a very powerful image for people who know that they were never allowed to process their hurt, their pain, their fear. And it's it's, you know, whose fault is it? I have a saying it's everyone's fault and it's no one's fault. Right. Cause there's kind of this, we just haven't accepted that it's okay to feel these deep things. We don't have to cover it up, you know? And if anything, by feeling it, you're going to help that little person be more, be stronger.

[00:24:34] **Laura Reagan:** [00:24:34] Yeah. Yeah. Well, I think in the Western world, it is very focused on escaping from pain and fear and who's responsible, blaming someone, someone's got to pay for this, retribution. You know, it seems like for thousands and thousands of years, that's just been our way of, but it's like, you know, I think about it sometimes it might sound silly, [00:25:00] but when I look at my pets, so I have a dog and a cat and we in our yard, they have a lot of trees, so they can really kind of meet some animals out there.

[00:25:09] There's deer, there's foxes, and raccoons. I mean, I don't want them to have too close encounters, but it just made me think about when they go out there if they were to see a raccoon that hissed at them, or growled at them, they wouldn't feel like, how could you do this to me? It would just be what, you know, oh, there's a threat and I need to get away from it, you know?

[00:25:32] Um, so we had described this, you know, blame and anger.

[00:25:37] **Irene Lyon:** [00:25:37] Oh, totally. Well, you just made me think of something because you're right. And the difference between those animals and us. And of course there's always exceptions, but animals, even domestic cats and dogs, granted, they have a safe place, they birth their babies and other kittens and puppies.



[00:25:55] And the way that a mama cat raises her kittens is the same here in [00:26:00] Canada as it would be in your state, in America, same as France, or Russia, or China. Like there is an, this goes back to that intuitions. Beautiful. Right? There's an innate knowing of how to raise the Cubs, the kittens, the puppies, the baby raccoons I'm sure are really cute actually now that I think about it, but there's like, there is an innate biological knowing. The conundrum with us humans is we don't have that. We don't have it anymore, I should say. And because of that, some people got a little bit of that goodness and safety from there, their mama bear, so to speak, they were held, they were soothed, they were allowed to cry when they fell off their bike. They weren't forced fed when they didn't want to eat like all these or they were, you know, the way that we mess with little ones. So when we get that good enough, we're less likely to look for blame in the world. Whereas if we were really harmed and [00:27:00] we didn't get that yummy, good attachment, secure ventral, vagal, poly, you know, like that, that social engagement, secure attachment, really good attunements, you know, when we were hungry, we were fed. When we cried, we were, we were held, all those things. Um, if we didn't get that, there is a deep from what I've seen a deep, distrust of the world and a deep you owe me something cause I didn't get it. And that's really hard because most of the folks that I work with who are chronically sick, didn't get that. And they probably didn't get it because their parents didn't.

[00:27:34] **Laura Reagan:** [00:27:34] Right, exactly. Because if they did, their parents would've just done the same because they would have known to do that.

[00:27:40] **Irene Lyon:** [00:27:40] Yeah. And so this is where there's this interesting situation, like you mentioned when you said like everyone's trying to, um, blame and point. And the thing is, is actually yeah your parents are to blame and I even have in one of my courses of video that is Vagus Nerve 101, I talk all about the vagus nerve and [00:28:00] how it's wired and all the subtitle, Laura, is why you can blame your parents and I put that parents in quotes for all your shortcomings, because I try to bring some humor into it right? And it's tongue and cheek, but it's true. The vagus nerve is wired based on how we interact with our primary caregiver, their vagus nerve, and their ventral, and how they self regulate and have empathy is wired based on how their mother or caregiver or nanny did it and so on and so on.

[00:28:25] And so we're at a point where I believe there almost needs to be rules. I know people don't people don't like rules, but it's like, this is what we have to do to raise humans. There's no questions. There's like get rid of all the books and just have one book based on this polyvagal work, the neuroscience safety, how do mama bears do this in the wild?

[00:28:48] What are the things that a human needs? We kind of know. But at this point, no one has been brave enough to put that stake in the ground and say, this is how it has to be done. But if we had that, we would have a lot of humans running around [00:29:00] who have security, who have high self-esteem, who know how to be with their sensations, and emotions, and people.

[00:29:06] And then there would be less of the, the victim identification. That's the word I'm looking for, which we know and you would know from your therapy work. People who are

hurt, hurt people. You know, the things that occur in the world that are atrocious and you can't believe happened. That's not by accident.

[00:29:24] And I know in your country, a lot of that occurs with shooting, mass shootings and all of that. It's like, that's not happening because that person just felt like doing that one day. You know, they're deeply troubled, there's deep pain in there. And so we, we, I'm kind of going a bit more existential here, but there's a, there's a need, I think, to come back to some of the basics that we've gotten so far away from ever since we domesticated plants and animals like 10,000 years ago, then we have the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, the wars, the tech, the disconnection with that natural world, because you have to remember, we're nature as well. Right, [00:30:00] we're organic. And people forget that.

[00:30:02] **Laura Reagan:** [00:30:02] I know, we think that we are here to use this planet and the animals and other beings in it for our own purposes but that's not...we're part of it,

[00:30:15] **Irene Lyon:** [00:30:15] We're connected to it. And just like animals in the wild, there is a hierarchy, you know? Um, I think that's what I was mentioning. The people that I meet, who tend to find their footing faster, have had more experience in nature.

[00:30:31] You know, whether they were outdoorsmen, sportsmen, gardeners. You know, they had that natural upbringing. There's a little bit more of a spark in them that goes, oh yeah, you're right. We're nature. Right. There's this flow, that nature has that we have. But because of that conditioning, the way in which we don't allow our kiddos to cry, you know, you would never ask a cloud, don't let go of your rain.

[00:30:57] Like right. The moment it gets enough moisture and it [00:31:00] gets black, we know that storms coming, you know, it's going to, and yet here we are asking us humans. And a lot of people listening to this will probably know that they will hold in tears. It's like a cloud would never hold in the rain, so why would we hold in those emotions. And that, you know, is one way of saying this really honor is there, and that opens up the flow in the system.

[00:31:21] **Laura Reagan:** [00:31:21] Yeah. Well, I think what you're saying, it makes sense to me in my head, but it feels like very resonant in my body. And, you know, as I was listening to you talking. And earlier when you were talking too about the connection with the earth and cause I brought up intuition, it's like, um, I don't know. There's something. I can feel it. I know what it is, but I don't know how to describe it, but it's, it's like earthiness. Like, you know...

[00:31:50] **Irene Lyon:** [00:31:50] I think we're maybe of a similar generation maybe. I mean, I grew up with Star Wars.

[00:31:54] **Laura Reagan:** [00:31:54] I'm 49.

[00:31:57] **Irene Lyon:** [00:31:57] I'm 45 this last year. So even [00:32:00] what you just said is like, there's a force all around us. You can't see it, you can't touch it, but you can feel it. Right. And an interesting thing, I even just saw a comment come through somewhere

yesterday, or two days ago, someone who's been working with me and doing this work and they said, it's so fascinating because you don't talk about spirituality in your work.

[00:32:20] It's very biological, very tactical, very, uh, practical the work I do, but they say I feel more spiritual now that I have my biology on board and I'm not even trying. And there's so many who seek spirit and there's nothing wrong with this, but they're looking for the spiritual to find the healing in their body.

[00:32:40] And yet I've seen the reverse. I've seen you heal the biology. I think we're, again, we're like animals, but we're not, we're still, humans are different. And we do have, I believe this soul piece, I think we have a connection to animals and to the trees, but we're also, we have this other thing. And [00:33:00] when we get the biology on board and we get the organic part on board, that higher level, you can call it [inaudible], you can call it four D, five D, whatever you want to call it. It just sort of turns on effortlessly. And so that I think is an interesting driving innate force that is there, but it will not come to fruition if we're stuck in survival stress, if we have unhealed trauma in our body. We might get glimmers of it, but it's really hard to be on that, that path, if we're still constantly thinking that we're going to be attacked and that there's danger internally or externally.

[00:33:37] **Laura Reagan:** [00:33:37] Yeah. That, that really feels true to me as well. And that like, it may be available, but we can't access it if we're in this state of, you know, just trying to either be protected or, you know, looking out for danger at all times what you said before about being in your room under the blanket, curled up a certain way as long as all the doors are [00:34:00] locked and no one else is there. Uh, a colleague, I respect a lot told me, there's a difference between protection and safety and felt like, sort of what you're talking about like I'm very protected, all alone, wrapped up in my blanket in my house where the doors are locked and no one can come in versus being safe where I'm just safe, where I am, wherever I am.

[00:34:21] **Irene Lyon:** [00:34:21] Yeah. Yeah. And that's, that's the interesting part is that when we have got unresolved traumatic stress, so those fight- flight- freeze responses are running the front of our bus so to speak as one of my teachers would say, when we have that as our primary way of seeing the world are, our survival responses, when there is real danger, they're not going to be as attuned right? So it's like the system is already at max, cause it's internally freaked out because of the past stuff. And then it's that dark alley scenario we've been talking about, we will not pick up that real dangers [00:35:00] coming. And then that's how people get sideswiped, you know, again, literally, but metaphorically, energetically.

[00:35:05] And so, you know, often a thing that you'll say to someone or when I was in private practice, if you were to ask someone, so can you tell me the last, the last time you felt safe or something like that? It's a trick question in a way, because what it does is if someone has to sit there and think, you know, that they don't know what safety is, cause they would say, well, here in my body now, like this is safe.

[00:35:29] But if they have to say, well, I remember that time when I was four or that's too young when I was 21 and I was at the beach with all my girlfriends and the sun was warm. I

felt so safe then. If someone has to go back in their memory banks that far, to pull up that internal feeling of safety that isn't, that's that's like, okay, that's a good memory, but that doesn't mean that you're safe now.

[00:35:52] **Laura Reagan:** [00:35:52] Yeah.

[00:35:52] **Irene Lyon:** [00:35:52] And that's the part that that can be a bit sticky and tricky. Cause it's like, well then how do you heal that? It's like, well, you [00:36:00] got to do all those things I mentioned: connecting to the here and now, the environment, um, working with the stress organs which is something that we teach.

[00:36:07] Um, and it takes time. Right. Because the system has been, so, I mean, I'll say the, the clear words, been damaged. It hasn't had that vibrancy, that, that trust of the world and people, and you got to build that back up just like you can't get the rescue dog from a shelter that's been abused and expected to crawl in bed with you on the first day and cuddle you.

[00:36:28] You know, you're going to have to take time to work with that dog and gain his trust. And that can take a long time.

[00:36:35] **Laura Reagan:** [00:36:35] Right and if you think gaining its trust means to force it to be obedient. Which is what we do to children, not going to get there ever and the dog's gonna be plotting something against you

[00:36:49] **Irene Lyon:** [00:36:49] You know, I mean, that's kind of, I use those examples because growing up in that animal hospital, like you knew the animals that were staying overnight, that you will not put your hand into the kennel, because you could [00:37:00] just tell it's like the moment you walk in, they, they flinch or they look at you with this look in their eyes, whereas you walk in and then there's like the wagging tail like, hello. Hello. And then you know, that one's safe. Right? And you, I think that's probably one of the reasons why I've had the skill of tuning into this is I grew up literally as a toddler, the animal hospital was in my house, beginning feeling all these animals that were either with, they were either safe, they were with owners that were regulated because that influences the pets as well. And I could, I could just, I got that, that tuning super young, um, to know safe, not safe. Don't go near that.

[00:37:39] Or if you do, you're going to have to be very reserved in your body and make yourself almost invisible so that they don't feel your energy getting into their energy field if that makes sense.

[00:37:50] **Laura Reagan:** [00:37:50] Yeah, that's such a sensing thing. You know, that if you can learn, I was, I feel with animals, I feel like I have a connection with animals, but when I was [00:38:00] little, I remember I checked out a book from the library, like probably in like second or third grade, that was about cat body language. How to, It was like, your cat can talk to you, how to understand and speak to your cat. And I was like, oh, I want to learn that. And then it was all about understanding their body language. And I was like, you know, so I read the book, I understood their body language, and then you can apply that to everything.

[00:38:24] But yeah, but we, we sense, we know when we're standing near someone where we feel comfortable with them or we don't feel comfortable. It's not, it's not clear, like linear, like. This means this, but it's telling you something it's information that your body's giving you.

[00:38:40] **Irene Lyon:** [00:38:40] Exactly. And I would say I'll add to that, if one is fairly regulated, they get those cues, that intuition, but if the person is dysregulated and has all that traumatic stress, they might not get those cues. The cue might be completely shifted or flipped, I should say. And that's where that dark alley comes in. [00:39:00] Right. Uh, and so that's where working with this stuff actively, in my opinion, is super important so that people don't put themselves in more risks at more risk it's about health and of course all the healing that we need within the internal systems. But it's also just street-smarts. Right. And one of the common, um, symptoms of say PTSD or chronic adversity is agoraphobia, not wanting to leave the house, not wanting, you know, being introverted. Um, I have a very strong feeling that, that, that deep, deep introversion is not necessarily what it's talked as, but it's a fear of going out. And I don't mean like to big parties, but for a person who doesn't know how to read the world, there'll be terrified to go out into the world because they don't know how to interact with it. And so that that's, to me an interesting one, because it's like tuning, like we have to, how can we improve the tuning fork, so to speak within our system to read the situation accurately and [00:40:00] we can, we can relearn it if we didn't get it when we were young, it just takes, it takes practice, obviously.

[00:40:05] **Laura Reagan:** [00:40:05] Yeah. Well, there's two things that are coming to mind, and I know it's time for us to wrap up, but one is, you know, I can't remember who said it, but someone said when everything is a threat, nothing is a threat. So like you can't detect threat accurately if your threat meter is so broken, that it's always going off, right?

[00:40:26] **Irene Lyon:** [00:40:26] Yep. Yep. I'm sorry to interrupt you, but that goes back to that hypervigilance thing, right? It's either everything is a threat or you're so not hypervigilant. You're like you're hypovigilant.

[00:40:38] **Laura Reagan:** [00:40:38] You're so scared that you shut down and you can't even check up on what's what's a threat and what's not, which, you know, the metaphor is the dark alley, but in reality, it's like those unhealthy relationship patterns that, just so we can't break out of, and we have no idea why. Um, and we just walk right into things that are the same. And we don't [00:41:00] know because we're not really attuned to the present moment. We're in the past experience where everything was unsafe. So it's just the same way.

[00:41:08] **Irene Lyon:** [00:41:08] A hundred percent. And then the other thing that people need to understand is as they do this work is they gain little drips and drops of safety, their system will, and Peter Ravine uses this word or this saying, he'll say people will flee from health when they start to get more safety on board, it is so darn foreign to them that it actually feels disorienting, maybe even gross and disgusting, and like the wrong thing. And that is something to be very aware of because this is why people tend to, and I'm being general here, but they will then sabotage themselves because the newness is so different that it's just, it's like they're having , a bad psychedelic trip. And so there's also an

importance to titrating the healing so that the system doesn't break [00:42:00] open, so much, so quickly, that they don't know what to do with this new foreign land that they've just been popped into. Right.

[00:42:07] **Laura Reagan:** [00:42:07] Yeah. Yeah. And of course, when we're trying to work on trauma, we feel this urgency to do it like fast.

[00:42:16] **Irene Lyon:** [00:42:16] And rightfully so. You know, it sucks when someone comes across this work in as an adult, older in their lives and they realize, oh my God, I've just spent 40 years trapped in something that I now know was because of this.

[00:42:31] And I hear that in my students. Like, I wish I'd found this work when I was in my twenties or gosh, I wish I found this work in my fifties, you know, those that are in their sixties, and you have to grieve that loss. And that's tough too, you know, but I would like to say, if you can get a little bit more safety, a little bit more regulation on board, you then make better peace with that loss because you know how to process it as opposed to, you know, identify as a victim forever and you know hate [00:43:00] it, be completely consumed by the grief of it. So there's these ways in which the biological work will actually help us be with, and process, and integrate that loss at the biological level and not just on the psyche, which can be overwhelming.

[00:43:14] **Laura Reagan:** [00:43:14] Mm. Yeah. Yeah. That's so important what you just said. And I think that is, it sounds like your program offers a way to, within a regulated state, do this healing is what I'm hearing you say. Cause it's like titrated, it's little bits and pieces and it's repetitive instead of one big chunk, but only once a week and you need more.

[00:43:40] **Irene Lyon:** [00:43:40] Yeah, no, we've definitely in the few things we've created, set it up and of course the person has to follow our lead and trust what we're suggesting, but yeah, it's little drops. We would call it in our little titration like little drops of stuff, of learning, of practice, of integrating with your normal [00:44:00] world.

[00:44:00] So that we're essentially, I like to often use the analogy, it's like, you're learning a second language as an adult. You know, if you were to try to learn second language as an adult, you're not going to become fluent if you just work on that an hour a week, you know, you do have to immerse in it, but you also have to immerse it in a way that your body and brain can handle it.

[00:44:19] But you start with your basic words. Your basic ABC, you learn how to count, you learn how to pronounce, you learn how to string together, words and sentences. And eventually you start to hear it differently, then it slowly builds. So in some ways, the online pieces that we've created, it's like we're trying to teach and we're teaching people how to get the language, not only of their nervous system back on board, but the language of regulation of the autonomic nervous system through these somatic practices the connecting with the body, the environment, the theory, because theory and education is super important. And then of course we prompt people to, how can [00:45:00] you notice this when they're out in the world? Because if all we do is study this stuff in a very contained unit, you know, sitting on top of that mountain meditating, but you can't do that when

you're in traffic or in a busy grocery store, or when your little kid's having a meltdown, then it's not being, we need to apply the work.

[00:45:17] So we're kind of hitting it at all the different angles within the pieces that we've created. And is it for everyone? No. Some people do need that one-on-one work and that's fine. But I've also found when there has been a lot of early trauma and developmental trauma, um, humans have a tendency to override your comfort.

[00:45:37] It's like that kid falling off the bike. If that was the default was to not feel, we can actually put ourselves into therapeutic situations and this isn't always the case. And it depends on the therapist. But if, if there isn't a contract at the beginning that says, if I feel overwhelmed, we need to pause or we need to quit the session.

[00:45:56] That's really hard in our current paradigm where you see someone for an hour, you [00:46:00] pay them 200 bucks. You want to get your money's worth. There's a tendency for sometimes the client to override or desire to say I've had enough. Most won't say that. And so the thing with the online world that is interesting is if you had enough, you can literally shut the computer screen and walk away.

[00:46:17] Like I've had enough, like this is enough stimulation for today, and now I'm going to go for a walk or I'm going to have a bath and then take a nap, have some food. And so there is that, um, flexibility, if you will. So a person can direct their, how much they can take in and at the beginning, Laura, like people will not trust it, cause our school system has taught us, you start the lesson, you finish the lesson, right.

[00:46:41] **Laura Reagan:** [00:46:41] Don't be a quitter.

[00:46:42] **Irene Lyon:** [00:46:42] Don't be a quitter. Like you've got to do it. And so that in itself I found is one of the biggest blocks that people, when they can get over that and really trust that impulse of I've had enough for today.

[00:46:53] That can be [inaudible] for some people, because they've been conditioned, if I don't finish this, I won't get love. I won't get [00:47:00] that candy bar. I won't get what I want. I'll be ridiculed in front of my classmates. And so we're, we're pulling apart really interesting conditioning patterns, by giving people the opportunity to learn something that I believe, and I mean, I'm biased, but I think every human being, living in the Western world, living in some kind of box, like we are, needs this. Because we're just so far from anything that resembles flow with the natural world and with our very intelligent human brain and our physiology, that is essentially mammalian.

[00:47:34] And so that's kind of my shtick if you will for the online world. And some people need, like I said, I'm all for private work. Now I still see an osteopath to work on my old injuries and all those things. So you got to take what you need for your unique situation, but I haven't seen anyone go through this work who's interested and eager, not get benefit.

[00:47:59] **Laura Reagan:** [00:47:59] That's awesome. [00:48:00] I'm so glad that I've learned so much more about it today. And I think that a lot of people who are listening are going to be interested too. And you know, the way I'm seeing it as being a therapist, of course, some

people can just do a program like that. Some people can just do therapy and some people do therapy and a program like that, you know, and learn some because there's like, I don't know that. I can do very good work with my clients, but I don't know that work, your work. So people who I'm working with find it and find it helpful, I would love for them to, you know, be doing as much as they can in a way that doesn't feel overwhelming to their nervous system. Yeah. So where can people find what you have to offer, your programs?

[00:48:52] **Irene Lyon:** [00:48:52] It's super simple. It's just my name, irenelyon.com. And when you go there, it's a pretty comprehensive site that you've got my, you know, [00:49:00] my full bio, all of my credentials are there. And then our two main online programs are pretty easily navigatable. One of them we're in. I mean, I'm dating this, we're talking in March, end of March. We're in the 2021 session for my longer 12 week programs, Smart Body Smart Mind, we run that once a year. So that's closed for this year. Um, we'll reopen again in February, next year. Um, but what we've done because obviously people find us and this work all throughout the year, we've curated a smaller, self- study course. Called the 21 Day Nervous System Tune Up, and so that's been part of the SBSM Smart Body Smart Mind, course has been taken and put into that smaller one with a few added bells and whistles to make it a complete, you know, 21 day online thing. Um, so that can be started at any time. And in addition to that, I have an entire page on my site, all free resources.

[00:49:58] There's like, I think there's like [00:50:00] six e-books and three audio samplers that you can download and listen for free to these guided exercises that I teach. And then the one resource that is free and complimentary that I would recommend everyone start with is it's called the Healing Trauma Series. It's a three-part video series called Healing Trauma, and that will get into the deeper science, some really powerful analogies describing what the nervous system is and trauma and how it gets stuck. I talk a little bit about, more about my journey, and then we get into the poly vagal, we get into the ACE study, which is a very important piece of research. And then we get into what I call neuroplastic healing sequencing, which is a fancy word for a couple of words, for making sure we do the nervous system healing work in a sequential way so that we're not overloading the system. We're rewiring from the ground up so that a person gets that foundation before they do more advanced [00:51:00] work. So that Healing Trauma Series is what I always recommend people start with. And then if they're feeling pulled to do more practical than get into the 21 days, and then when we do Smart Body Smart Mind in the next year to check that out.

[00:51:13] **Laura Reagan:** [00:51:13] Fantastic. This will be, you know, people will be hearing this in December, January, February of 2021. And there'll be like, oh, I can sign up now.

[00:51:23] **Irene Lyon:** [00:51:23] And then theres also my YouTube channel, which has hundreds of videos that are apparently binge worthy. So that's another way that you can keep up with all this stuff.

[00:51:33] **Laura Reagan:** [00:51:33] So your YouTube channel, I'll link to that as well as your website. And just to ask you, it sounds like I know the answer, but the 21 Day Nervous System Tune Up, does it have to be done in 21 days?



[00:51:44] **Irene Lyon:** [00:51:44] No. Good question. Yeah, it's really, even though it's 21 days, you know, for marketing purposes, you need to put a name to it, so it is 21 emails. It's a website that people get access to, but they can do one a day or one a week.

[00:51:59] You [00:52:00] know, you could take 21 weeks to go through this. We had one woman who it took her six months to get to day six. I got to share her story. It's so powerful. She, um, it took her six months to get through the sixth day. But within that six month period, she was applying the work to her life.

[00:52:16] At that six months period, she for the first time ever rode a bike with her daughter that was 13 years old. She had never had the courage. I don't know her history, but she just couldn't get on a bike. Clearly she knew how to ride a bike, but she finally had the resiliency and the "oomph" if you will, and she sent a picture of her and her daughter out on a bike in the country and it was just like, she was so happy because her daughter had never experienced mom outdoors doing something physical.

[00:52:47] **Laura Reagan:** [00:52:47] Wow.

[00:52:48] **Irene Lyon:** [00:52:48] So you think how that ripples out, not only is that relationship getting stronger, her fitness is getting better because now she's not afraid. So she, you know, she's challenging her balance, her [00:53:00] cardiovascular, she's out in nature, which is super important for our microbiome and all these things.

[00:53:04] So that one course, the first six days it took her six months. As simple as the program is it, it kind of influences and impacts all these things. Cause you're working at that core fight flight nervous system level. And so that's just a great, I love that story. It's just such a great example of how it trickles out into all aspects.

[00:53:27] **Laura Reagan:** [00:53:27] Yeah, that's beautiful. Thank you for sharing that.

[00:53:30] **Irene Lyon:** [00:53:30] I actually wrote an article about it. I can share that with you and you can post that. She shared the picture, like she gave us permission to share it on block. So I'll send that to you.

[00:53:43] **Laura Reagan:** [00:53:43] Well, Irene, it's been so great talking to you. I'm really glad that we got to meet today and that you were willing to be my guest on Therapy Chat, thank you so much.

[00:53:52] **Irene Lyon:** [00:53:52] You're welcome so much. It was a fun chat. I hope we get to meet in person someday.

[00:53:56] **Laura Reagan:** [00:53:56] I hope so too. Let's make that happen.

[00:54:02] [00:54:00] Hey therapists, do you feel stuck working with clients who can't access their emotions or name their inner experience? Do you find it difficult to work with people who are disconnected from their own emotions and they may be disconnected within the therapeutic relationship as well? Learn a comprehensive approach to conceptualize your client's concerns. Sensorimotor Psychotherapy uniquely includes the body in therapy as both a source of information and a target for intervention, because words are not enough.

[00:54:31] We all know that talk therapy is limited. You've heard it discussed on this podcast multiple, multiple, multiple times. And if you've been listening to this podcast for a while, you also know that I am a huge fan of Sensorimotor Psychotherapy.

[00:54:47] I've completed levels one and two, and plan to pursue the certification level, level three. And the reason why I love it so much is because I've experienced shifts within myself through [00:55:00] the experiential training process and huge shifts in my work with clients through the training that I've received with Sensorimotor Psychotherapy Institute.

[00:55:08] I highly recommend that you check out their website, [sensorimotor.org](http://sensorimotor.org) to learn about their trainings. In fact, they have trainings coming up this summer and to view their webinars, learn more about what Sensorimotor Psychotherapy is. It's a beautiful, powerful method that I can't recommend highly enough. So, check them out at [sensorimotor.org](http://sensorimotor.org).

[00:55:33] **Announcer:** [00:55:33] Thank you for listening to Therapy Chat with your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C. For more information, please visit [therapychatpodcast.com](http://therapychatpodcast.com).