

Therapy Chat Episode 298



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy Chat Podcast Episode 298.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** 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.

[00:00:34] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you to Sunset Lake CBD for sponsoring this week's episode. Use promo code: "CHAT," for 20% off your entire order at sunsetlakecbd.com. Sunset Lake CBD is a farmer owned, small business that shifts crafts CBD products directly from their farm outside of Burlington, Vermont to your door. Sunset lake CBD has something for everyone.

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[00:01:13] Remember, use promo code: "CHAT," to get 20% off your entire order at sunsetlakecbd.com.

[00:01:23] Hey everyone. It's me, Laura Reagan. Just wanted to make sure that you know about what I've got going on this summer. I don't think I've really talked about it much here, which is silly, but in case you didn't hear, I did start a second podcast called Trauma Chat, which is really for anyone who wants to understand what trauma is and how it shows up in our lives.

[00:01:49] As you've heard me say, if you've listened to this show, I've mentioned a million times that people tend to think that trauma is something that happens [00:02:00] to someone else, something horrific and unthinkable, unspeakable. And that is true, trauma is that, but it's also experiences that are very commonly shared among many of us. Most of us.

[00:02:14] On Trauma Chat, I break down what trauma is in hopefully understandable language that's not stigmatizing. I know I couldn't have possibly captured every thought there is about trauma and every aspect of trauma and how it shows up, but I hope that Trauma Chat will be helpful to people who really don't understand what trauma is.

[00:02:37] And maybe wondering, do I have trauma, you know, or wanting to better understand what someone they care about is going through. And most importantly, how to get help if you have experienced trauma, what to look for, how to describe your experiences or how to find the words that name, what you've been through so that you can then connect with [00:03:00] whatever type of resource support, whether it's therapy or a podcast that you'd like to listen to, to learn more about it, or an article or another website. This is my hope in creating Trauma Chat.

[00:03:13] And the second part of that is the new Trauma Therapist Network Community that I'm creating. It's unbelievable to say this because I've been laboring behind the scenes to bring this to you for a long time, starting in around 2018 is when I first had the idea.

[00:03:32] And then the process of getting from there to here has been slow and with many twists and turns, but I'm creating a community for people who have experienced trauma to find help, for trauma therapists, to find other trauma therapists to network with and refer to, and gather and collaborate and share ideas and hopefully come together in person in, [00:04:00] in gatherings that I don't know if there'll be able to happen in 2021, but maybe by 2022, we can have in-person gatherings of trauma therapists to provide support to one another and combat the isolation of trauma work. Even if you work in a large agency or group practice, trauma work is so isolating. It's just part of the nature of it and connecting with other people who get it is so valuable. The participants in my trauma therapists consult groups share how useful they find them to be because we're in our offices doing our work, and then we go home, and it can be really hard to receive the same kind of support that you give to your clients.

[00:04:43] So I hope that Trauma Therapist Network will be a useful resource for you, whether you are trying to find more information about trauma, or if you are a trauma therapist yourself.

[00:04:55] To learn more, please go to www.traumatherapistnetwork.com. The [00:05:00] website is not live yet as of June 28th when I'm recording this, but it will be live by August 1st, if all goes well.

[00:05:09] And hopefully there may be even a soft launch before. A beta version. So please go to www.traumatherapistnetwork.com where you can find a free download and sign up to be notified as soon as it officially goes live, whether you are a therapist or just someone who wants to learn more about trauma, there's a download there for you, different ones for each group.

[00:05:33] And I hope that this resource that I've really created from the heart will bring healing to more people. I really want people who have experienced trauma to be able to

find the right kind of support. And that's why I created the Trauma Therapist Network. I hope you will join me there. Like I said, you can get more information by going to www.traumatherapistnetwork.com where you [00:06:00] can sign up to be notified as soon as the official website goes live which will be in August of 2021. If you're hearing this after August 2021, go there and hopefully you will find the site and you'll see everything that it has to offer. I cannot wait. This is such a labor of love, something that I've really poured my heart into. And I'm just so excited for you to see it.

[00:06:23] Thank you so much for your support.

[00:06:30] Hi, Welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. Today I'm so happy to be speaking again with a guest who has been on Therapy Chat before talking about grief and brainspotting, Thad Frye. Thad Frye, LCSW owns a counseling practice in Boulder, Colorado. He's practiced in the counseling field for over 18 years and he's certified in brainspotting.

[00:06:54] He's also a brainspotting consultant and certification mentor, a beginner and advanced level [00:07:00] brainspotting training assistant, and a proud board member of the Rocky Mountain Brainspotting Institute. An organization founded by lead U.S brainspotting trainer. Dr. [inaudible]. Thad has utilized the sub-cortical healing modality of brainspotting to support professional and collegiate athletes weekend warriors, artists, and musicians to further their creativity and improve their performance. And that's what we were talking about on this week's episode. I thought it was an interesting conversation. We were considering some of the ways that trauma can interfere with performance and how that has shown up recently in some high-profile athletes sharing their own experiences.

[00:07:40] So Thad talked about how he uses brainspotting with athletes and others for performance. And I thought it was a fascinating conversation. I hope you'll enjoy it as well. Before we get into our episode, I wanted to say thank you to the two newest members of the Trauma Therapist Network [00:08:00] family, Julia Flora Knach who's in Towson, Maryland, and who has a strong background in child abuse and is accepting new clients there in Towson.

[00:08:12] Also my friend Carlada Razmus, who is in Pasadena, Maryland is one of our new members. Carlada owns Turning Stone Counseling in Pasadena, and they do so much wonderful work there. So, thank you both for joining the Trauma Therapist Network. And for any of you who are listening, if you work with trauma survivors and you have competency in that area, please consider joining the network.

[00:08:37] We will be having monthly calls as a community to support one another. And ourselves during this very challenging time to be a therapist, especially a therapist who specializes in trauma, and I'd love for you to join us for our first community call, which will be happening in October date TBD. But if [00:09:00] you're a member of Trauma Therapist Network, look out for an email giving you the information about that.

[00:09:05] All right. Let's dive right into my conversation with Thad Frye. And also just want to remind you real quick that I would love for you to use the SpeakPipe button on the website to send a message for me to play on episode 300, which is coming up in a couple of weeks. If you can't figure out how to send a message, feel free to send me an email at laura@traumatherapistnetwork.com and I will help you troubleshoot that. Thanks so much for listening to Therapy Chat, and I'll be talking to you soon.

[00:09:43] Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I'm so excited to be speaking again with a previous guest Thad Frye. Thad, thanks so much for coming back to Therapy Chat today.

[00:09:56] **Thad Frye:** Laura, thanks for having me. It's great to be back.

[00:09:58] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, I'm so [00:10:00] happy. And we've been sort of trying to make this happen basically all summer. Summer's not quite over yet, so it's happening, but I'm excited to talk with you. You're such a knowledgeable person about brainspotting and like brainspotting consultant and you're even on the board of the Rocky Mountain Brainspotting institute. So, I'm interested to learn more about the way you use brainspotting with sports performance.

[00:10:26] **Thad Frye:** Awesome. Well, again, thank you for having me and thanks for being able to, let me talk about kind of a secondary love. We last time we talked a lot about grief and loss, uh, and I've worked in hospice for 18 years. I think I told you last time I've been in private practice now for about six, seven. So I definitely worked a lot with trauma loss, anxiety.

[00:10:47] But I've been doing a lot, I would say over the last six, six months to a year, I've been doing a lot more performance work and really kind of falling in love with it. And it's a nice balance between that. I'm also a [00:11:00] brainspotting consultant. So being able to teach people who want to become certified in brainspotting, kind of one-on-one so it's really nice mix.

[00:11:07] So, yeah, I'm here in Boulder, Colorado. I'm in, like I said, private practice, part of the board of the rocky mountain brainspotting Institute, which raises money for folks who can't afford brainspotting therapy. So, uh, we also have a wonderful directory of local and national brainspotting therapists. I think you're a part of that as well.

[00:11:27] So yes. Yes. Very good. So yeah, just wanted to be able to talk to you about something that I would start with the overall general idea that, uh, with COVID going on and with a lot of, uh, high athletes that are higher up in their sport are talking more about mental health which is awesome. I love it. So, you know, we had Simone Biles here lately and we had a Naomi Osaka both talk about, Hey, I need to take a break or I need to [00:12:00] work with my mental health.

[00:12:01] And I love that. I think I just read an article where Tom Brady came out and spoke about kind of backing them up and saying what a great thing that they were doing. So again, just having more people out there talking about the importance of mental health in athletes, because I think we tend to hold the athletes up as superhuman.

[00:12:21] And although they have certain strengths that are, they're humans. And so they have nervous systems, they have limbic brains, they have traumas just like the rest of us. And so, and I should say again about the COVID piece I've noticed in working with some folks that we all took a break there from one another.

[00:12:40] Uh, and so you had a lot of Collegiate who weren't in their sport. So they got out of their performance. So there was a lot of anxiety about, am I any good anymore? And that, that time in our lives is about being in community, being with our peers. And a lot of them were in isolation. So I just wanted to speak to that general [00:13:00] tone of mental health and, uh, sports, uh, just to say how great it is that there's a bigger spotlight there right now.

[00:13:07] **Laura Reagan:** Definitely. And you know, I was thinking also about Michael Phelps, who's talked in the past about how after the Olympics, he was suicidal and, you know, after all those achievements and everyone's like, I don't get it. Yeah. And, and when you talk about Simone Biles in particular, I'm thinking about the sexual abuse as well.

[00:13:26] So it's kind of interesting that both Michael Phelps and not that I don't know exactly what his trauma history is, but he has indicated that he had a tough childhood and, you know, Simone Biles, we know she has that trauma history. I don't know what all other, her personal life and experiences are, but you know, it's, even though athletes may have, you could say abnormal gifts.

[00:13:47] **Thad Frye:** Yup.

[00:13:48] **Laura Reagan:** You know, the people who are competing at that high level in the Olympics and, you know, professional athletes, but they're humans who go through the same range of experiences as all humans. And I love this too, [00:14:00] because to me, there's a lot of, kind of objectification in professional sports where we sort of treat people as if they're like these performing machines and then as soon as they don't perform anymore, kind of toss them aside, you know, like, oh, well, washed up has been, you know, and that really bothers me too. I know that's not exactly what we're talking about, but you know, just sort of humanizing athletics.

[00:14:22] **Thad Frye:** Well, I, I love what you said and, and, uh, I knew I'm working with somebody that works with the folks in the NHL, and then after they retire that they also have that for the NFL. I'm sure they do for the other, uh, other national leagues as well. But I love it that there is more resources. There are more therapists that are working with people to help them make that transition.

[00:14:45] Because like you said, I don't know what that's like to be in front of, you know, thousands of eyes or millions of eyes. And then all of a sudden, kind of be like, oh, you know, the kind of discarded often, unless you're one of the top 2% of [00:15:00] that group. So for sure, I love that again, like you said, not, not objectifying people in that way, so yeah.

[00:15:06] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And the other part I'm curious about, and I'll ask you as we go through this conversation is about like the CTE, you know, And they talk about it in football, but I mean, we know that concussions are common in all contact sports.

[00:15:20] **Thad Frye:** For sure. For sure happens, I think it's much like anything else. I think the, you know, the movie that came out, obviously call it concussion, brought it to the, brought it to the larger masses but these things have been happening forever and we didn't know how to deal with them.

[00:15:35] And now we're dealing with them in different ways. So for sure I think concussions are a big part of this. Yeah.

[00:15:41] **Laura Reagan:** Okay. So, well, I know when, you know, as you know, I've only done level one so far of brainspotting, I'm doing level two in October.

[00:15:49] **Thad Frye:** Awesome.

[00:15:49] **Laura Reagan:** But one of the things we learned in level one is about how David Grand in what helped him identify the brainspotting method was his work [00:16:00] on performance with a young high level athlete.

[00:16:03] **Thad Frye:** You got it. Yep. So, uh, how he, how he kinda came upon brainspotting was he was an EMDR therapist and trainer as well. Uh, he wrote a book and he slowed down the process and he was working with the skater that he'd worked with for, I believe over a year, done 90 minute sessions done, really good work, doing EMDR with her. But he said that he was going across her field of vision going back and forth, like often EMDR therapists will do. And he said, he's noticed her eyes twitch really quickly. So he felt like something kind of grabbed his arm and just made him stay in that position.

[00:16:40] So a fixed eye position, which is what we use in brainspotting. And he said for about a half hour, she just started coming out with all this trauma, all this, uh, things between her parents that she'd never talked about, even though he'd worked with her for these 90 minute sessions and she had struggled with this triple loop and she would practice.

[00:16:59] And I [00:17:00] mean, my gosh to be a skater at that level, you're practicing all the time. And then you're up there for what, three to five minutes to do your routine. And she would just struggle, struggle, struggle. And so went through this whole thing of about 30 minutes of just processing all this information called him up the next day,

[00:17:16] oh, my gosh. I was able to do the triple loop. It never had an issue. So that's why I love it. Brainspotting was, was almost, was founded in doing sports performance work in a way. Right. So it helped with the performance, but it also helped with the person. So that, that's what we're looking at when we're looking at sports performance, working with the whole person.

[00:17:36] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And you know, before, when we were talking, before we started recording, I, you made me aware that there's, there's a connection and of course there is. It totally makes sense that, you know, our experiences, it's not just about sports and the performance, you know, but what affects our performance relates to our whole story as a human.

[00:17:57] You got it,

[00:17:58] **Thad Frye:** You got it. And that brings me [00:18:00] to kind of what brings people often in to talk to somebody like myself would be there's a common term called the "Yips," which is a sudden and unexplained loss of ability. So you have a there's many examples, but like a pitcher, all of a sudden who's, you know, if they're in college or in the pros they've been pitching, you know, thousands, millions of times probably.

[00:18:24] And all of a sudden, a simple pitch that movement forward the, they start throwing it into the ground or they throw it over people, and you know, at first it can be embarrassing, obviously. Uh, it can be like what the heck's wrong with me. And oftentimes people, both coaches in themselves at that level, they will just try harder.

[00:18:44] They'll white knuckle it, they'll say, surely, maybe I need to change the grip, uh, of the ball. Right. I need to do something different. So that's very cognitive. And in sometimes those things can change. I don't want to take that away either, but the way that we work with [00:19:00] people like we've talked about with brainspotting and you had a guest on the other day talking about bottom up processing.

[00:19:06] So we're doing bottom-up processing. So we're working with the body and the limbic brain to say, what is there that we need to work with that might help you get back to your performance like you were before. So as I often tell people, We didn't start- that that performance issue is not where, you know, it didn't just come out of nowhere.

[00:19:28] And, and so that's not really, that's not usually the triggering event. Yes. We might see it and go what the heck's going on with that person. But there is a litany of things that we work with. And so I'll dive in and tell you, like, Yeah. Uh, so when we work with athletes, we, of course are going to find out more of their family background and just some basic assessment like we would do with anybody.

[00:19:50] But we really are looking for injury history, illnesses, trauma history. Uh, and then I'll tell you about some of the other ones, but I have them write that out. [00:20:00] And

some people are willing to jump in there and say, sure, I'll tell you all about it. And then I have plenty of, uh, athletes that go, yeah, nothing really happened to me.

[00:20:10] I'm good. You know, it, because often they were taught. That's what you do. You rub some dirt in it. The coach, the parent, the whomever says, you know, shake it off. It'll be okay. Just, you know, keep on going and. That's not true of what our nervous system takes in. And so I want, you know, when I eventually say, Hey, what, what, you know, tell me a little bit more.

[00:20:32] Come on, there must've been something you've been playing for 10 years and they'll go, oh, you know, I got a concussion twice or I blew out my knee or I, you know, I got cut from my team when I was in fifth grade and I thought it was the end of my world, or I got really embarrassed by a coach or, you know, they start coming out with these things that again, build up what is going on for them in the present tense. So then we take [00:21:00] those things and I always work with, uh, you know, as good social workers, we start where the client is. Right. And, and so I say, what do you want to work on today? What, what is here that you want to address? And I work with them and they'll say, I don't know, uh, when I got hit in the nose with a baseball You know, when I was 12.

[00:21:20] **Laura Reagan:** That sounds terrible.

[00:21:21] **Thad Frye:** Yes, exactly. I mean, and, and, and so, so then we'll have them go back and we're not trying to re-traumatize them, so they don't have to go into great length obviously about it. We're just touching on it. Sometimes I'll have them be if they want to be quiet, but some want to talk about it because in athletics, a lot of times they're not allowed to talk about it.

[00:21:41] You said before they were, they were just supposed to be quiet. Just keep on going. And disassociate, right. Get away from your feelings in your body, your emotions. And so, although again, not wanting to retraumatize, if they want to talk more during this process, I tend to have that happen more often than maybe somebody that I'm working with [00:22:00] with other traumas in their lives.

[00:22:02] **Laura Reagan:** That makes sense, because they haven't had a space to express about it. So just giving that, you know, holding that space is very therapeutic in itself.

[00:22:13] **Thad Frye:** Yup. Yup. And it might've said this last time, but I tend to tell people just to normalize it about a third of people I work with are going to chat it up the whole time, even while we're looking at the pointer and they're noticing what's going on in their body.

[00:22:26] **Laura Reagan:** That's how I am.

[00:22:28] **Thad Frye:** Okay. Yeah. Very good. Well, I'm on the other extreme, so we have that and then we have the people in the middle that will feel we'll be really attuned and,

and well, and not that the other people aren't, but there'll be really attuned. And then they'll, they'll tell me when they notice a semantic change. Oh my gosh.

[00:22:45] That feeling in my stomach is now in my chest or my, my arms are tingling or whatnot. And then they kind of go back to being quiet and then we have the people that are just quiet the whole time. And I always tell them, Hey, I'm, I'm okay with silence and I'm okay with you being, silent. But [00:23:00] I will check in from time to time, not very often, but just what are you noticing in your body?

[00:23:05] And when I do my own work, that's me, I'm usually over in that side. And so with this, I tell them that too, so that they can do whatever feels right for them. So again, we use what we call in our work inside window or outside window. It's always from the client's perspective inside window is them having them really notice that feeling.

[00:23:26] So when you got hit with the baseball in your nose, where are you noticing that feeling in your body? Obviously, some people might feel that in their nose, but other people might actually go like, oh, I have anxiety my stomach right now. Right. And that's where we find that fixed eye position and we help them.

[00:23:43] We would go across their field of vision. And if they can tell us when to stop and they know I'm feeling it more right there, we just have them process. So again, be quiet or talk and notice that feeling and then have that work through their nervous system. Or if they're usually at the beginning [00:24:00] and maybe they're not as body aware, then I'll go across their field of vision and look for reflexes, right? So that's, that's that outside window. So that's, we work with a lot of that and I love it because we can do so much work. Sometimes people will have like a litany of things that they, and all of a sudden, they say it's like a movie screen. I went through like 10 different examples of being really embarrassed, where I lost the game or, you know, that I got injured and I was scared that I was going to get re-injured and they'll just roll through it.

[00:24:31] And it's wonderful when that comes. And sometimes it goes slowly too. And we have to keep on going back to a triggering event like that.

[00:24:39] **Laura Reagan:** It's so cool. I just have to say the way brainspotting works is so amazing. I've definitely seen what you said where, you know, let's say the person says, I know this isn't about performance, anxiety, what I'm saying, but when the person's like, I want to work on this anger, I feel about something.

[00:24:55] And then, you know, they think about that and then we're doing it and then [00:25:00] they just- it's like, I think of it like a Rolodex it's like flip, flip, flip, flip, flip, all these experiences. But, but it's not, I haven't seen anyone get flooded, you know, or feel overwhelmed, which is amazing. That's exactly what I love about it.

[00:25:14] **Thad Frye:** And I love that too. Right. Because. That's what we that's the last thing we want to do is flood them and then make them go I'm never going back to that

person again, that was way too much for my nervous system. Right. And if you decided, like you said, you're going to use some more trainings. There's some interventions that are wonderful that actually even bring it down if you run into those circumstances.

[00:25:36] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, I'm doing all the trainings.

[00:25:38] **Thad Frye:** So I use that. There you go. There you go. Very wonderful. So I don't know if I talked about muscle guarding yet, so that's one of those terms. Okay. So I, uh, muscle guarding is where the muscles, uh, basically get into a half way tensed up a situation. So they they're like not fully [00:26:00] firing, but they're, they're ready to go.

[00:26:02] And so the more, um, uh, you know, adaptive way that that looks would be at the beginning of a, a road race, and you have a bunch of people getting ready to go on a run. And so right before the, they, you know, they, they shoot off the gun to say, Hey, here we go. Everybody's kind of bracing there. They're ready to go.

[00:26:20] And then they, they go, right. And so it has a lot of positives, like when you were getting ready, that's very functional. But if your muscle guarding all the time, because you've had some traumatic event, whether again, it's been an embarrassment, you've been yelled at, you've been humiliated. You injured yourself.

[00:26:38] So you're guarding that area that happens all the time. Even if you, if you injure your ankle. And then all of a sudden, you know, it heals, but your body is saying, oh, I don't want to reinjure that. So you kind of baby it a little bit. You, so you'll hold that without even knowing it often you're holding that. And so the, the bad part [00:27:00] about that is that if you do that for long periods of time, then your muscles get tired, obviously, and you have a much better chance of reinjuring yourself because they're always firing in that. They never relax. So they stay in that. So, so that's another reason that we do this is to let that part of their body go, oh, I don't need to be ready to do something again, I don't need to be ready, uh, to guard against this happening again. So, so think, I think of muscle guarding, be that body part, the body piece of it often, not always, but also like we're talking the limbic brain that fight flight or freeze. Where people are, you know, either hypo or hyper, hyper aroused.

[00:27:43] I think of muscle guarding as hyper aroused or they're always ready. Oh gosh. So in the limbic brain, we're saying, oh, what if this happens again? What if I re-injured myself? What if I get embarrassed again? What if whatever, you know? And so they're always in that state, so is our body. So we're trying to work [00:28:00] with these past events that are you know, the sub-cortical brain is holding onto. And we're trying to allow it to note that yes, that happened, but it's not happening now. And that's what we're working with to get somebody back to their, you know, performance levels that they were at before.

[00:28:21] **Laura Reagan:** Hey everybody.

[00:28:22] I wanted to take a quick minute to tell you about my experience with Sunset Lake CBD. I first tried CBD when my integrative doctor recommended it for chronic neck pain and tension that tends to wake me up at night. I really like Sunset Lake CBDs product. The full spectrum CBD tincture is mild tasting compared to others I've tried. And I find it works quickly. It doesn't feel sedating, but it does have a pleasant calming effect. And I also like the CBD gummies, they taste good, and they work well. So, if you're looking for a craft CBD product that comes directly from a farm outside of Burlington, Vermont, that's a producer for Ben and Jerry's ice cream, you're going to want to check out [00:29:00] Sunset Lake CBD. And remember, Therapy Chat listeners get 20% off using the promo code: "CHAT." So go to [sunsetlakecbd.com](https://www.sunsetlakecbd.com) and use the promo code, "CHAT."

[00:29:15] That's so interesting. I'm curious, you know, and I think you've sort of, you talked about it a little, but how, so you gave the example of the "Yips" before.

[00:29:24] **Thad Frye:** Yep.

[00:29:24] **Laura Reagan:** So how does working with, how does learning about their history of emotional trauma, physical injury, illness, how does that unfreeze the, or what is it doing that makes it make the problem of the "Yips," which comes on seemingly without warning for an unknown reason? How does it make that change?

[00:29:47] **Thad Frye:** Right. So with, with, uh, you know, Somatic experiencing, with brain spotting, EMDR, we are working with that limbic part of the brain where [00:30:00] regulation happens. So that's why there's wonderful parts about cognitive behavioral therapy and other therapies that we would say would be a top-down model.

[00:30:08] Right. We're doing a lot of psycho-education, the way your thinking, let's look at changing that. That's not what we're doing. We're working with the regulating part of the brain. And so with fixed eye position and with noticing of the body, that allows us access to that part of the limbic part of the brain that is that fight flight or freeze. So we're, we're accessing, often memories allow us to access. "Oh gosh. Yeah. If I, if I talk about that time that, you know, I was supposed to catch the ball at the end of the game and I missed it and I can, I can smell what the grass smells like around me. I can hear the people, you know, "boohing" me behind me, all, all of that stuff. I can feel it in my body."

[00:30:52] So we work with them on that. And then again, fixed eye position where body awareness to let them bring that [00:31:00] into the moment. And again, let it strip away through their limbic system. Oftentimes people will have movement. Uh, you'll see people like their hand might start to shake, or they might say I'm getting a tingling sensation.

[00:31:12] As so were basically unfreezing that from the nervous system. And so you'll see that obviously in brainspotting, just working with somebody through other traumas or other life events that doesn't always have to be traumas, but it's, reregulating the brain so that we can go, oh, I don't, the amygdala doesn't have to go, I have to be always ready in that fight flight or freeze response.

[00:31:34] **Laura Reagan:** Okay so it's kind of like trauma response gets activated somehow and gets stands in the way of what, you know, used to be like a clear channel for the person.

[00:31:46] **Thad Frye:** You got it. I think about it again in that hyper vigilance. So if I'm always. You know, if I'm stepping up on the mound, I'm now all of a sudden I knew it could happen.

[00:31:57] I could throw it into the ground in front of all these [00:32:00] people. So then all of a sudden that part of that, my amygdala goes, yep, you could, right. It's trying to protect us. It's you know, people will call it the, the, uh, guard dog sometimes like it's, it's trying to do well by us, but in this way, it's going, oh gosh, this is going to happen again.

[00:32:15] This is going to happen again. You know, do something else like that, that. Flight, right. I need, I'm just going to leave. Right. Get away from it. And again, that's where our body goes into that muscle guarding and goes into, you know, contraction, which is the exact opposite of being in a flow state, which is what, you know, all these athletes are going for is to be like, Oh relaxed and, you know, time can feel different in a flow state and they can feel like, you know, I'm connected to everything, where this is being super hyper aware of oh no. Something bad is going to happen again.

[00:32:51] **Laura Reagan:** So you're really not here where you're not really on that mound. You're back when the bad throw happened and you were [00:33:00] humiliated.

[00:33:00] **Thad Frye:** You got it, completely. You know, that's why a lot of it is talked about in disassociation, right? We're not present in that time. So we're trying to do again, allow ourselves to know that yes, it happened.

[00:33:13] Whatever bad event happened. We're not taking that memory away. But we're not, we're working with it through the body, through the limbic brain to allow it to know it's not happening anymore so I can be present and yes, things can happen. I could still lose the game. This isn't going to make me other than what I already am, but it isn't going to be where all of a sudden, the ball feels like it's 10 times bigger in my, in my hand, or people will talk about like, uh, all of a sudden, you know, They, they look at the, uh, catcher and his, his Mitt is tiny.

[00:33:48] Like people have perceptual changes. Like they, they feel like I feel very slow in my body. So they'll have these disassociating pieces that happen all the time. We're just trying to [00:34:00] get them back to where they were previously and then they work on from there. So, I mean, I haven't talked as much about the injury piece, but you know, like skiers, downhill skiers, if they, if they've wiped out, or even if they've watched, this is true of any sport, if they've seen somebody else wipe out, we feel that, right. So this is where we're even watching. If you're about to go and you just watched a buddy of yours, wipe out really bad, you're taking that into your nervous system. And so oftentimes people will say, well, then they're sitting back on their skis.

[00:34:34] They're skiing, scared. And so by doing now, we can work with them to say, okay, Yes, these things can happen, injuries happen, but we're going to work with your nervous system to tell it, it doesn't need to be in that defensive posture. Basically.

[00:34:51] **Laura Reagan:** That's so interesting. So when I don't know if this really applies, but when people, what happens when people [00:35:00] have been athletes and then something like this happens and they lose, you know, they can't do it anymore. I wonder if, even if they're not going to return, let's say they have a career ending injury and they're not going to be returning to play.

[00:35:13] **Thad Frye:** Sure.

[00:35:13] **Laura Reagan:** Can this type of brainspotting help them, just with their general like sense of identity and wellbeing?

[00:35:21] **Thad Frye:** Totally. And a great question, because you know, so much of athletics at that peak performance level happens usually in the first third of our lives.

[00:35:30] Right. And so. That's a great question. So one of the things that I saw pretty early on, which I love, there's a 30 for 30, which is ESPN kind of docuseries. And there's one on Mackey Sasser. And although I'm not a, I don't baseball is definitely not my sport as much. I believe he was a pitcher for the or sorry, catcher for the Mets. I believe. And really well known, well liked came in, was strong in the league. And then all of a sudden, uh, [00:36:00] he would do a thing where he'd have to like hit the ball against his Mitt, like three times before he would throw it back to the pitcher. And so people would steal bases. They would, you know, they, people would start making fun of him.

[00:36:12] And obviously that would make it worse and worse. And it got so bad that he would have anxiety attacks before he'd start games and he, you know, just make it a living hell. So. And he, I think he saw over 50 professionals, uh, throughout his career and, and, you know, they, they, uh, if I remember right from the book, uh, that nobody really asked him about his past trauma history and he had a lot of past trauma history and, and nobody had looked at that.

[00:36:40] They just looked at, you know, how do we change the way you think about this what not. So I say that to say it, I forgot what it's called, but it's 30 for 30 Mackey Sasser and, and, uh, David Grand worked with him in that. Um, so you get to see a little bit of brainspotting in there and, and he, he is a coach, I believe at [00:37:00] like a, a local team in Alabama, a college. And he had like three sessions with David and can throw again in the way that he used to be able to throw. So, so that's a continuation of a sport, but talk about being able to be relieved, not having to feel those things, uh, at that level. And then, like you said, yeah. If somebody retired from the sport, then just being able to do any of that, the, that bottom up processing, to be able to know that if I'm, you know, just playing with my kiddo, that I don't have to worry about those things happening anymore.

[00:37:36] Plus we're going to process getting embarrassed at, at those levels. Right. And, and so what was it like to have to leave the sport that you loved, that you invested countless hours and efforts and you gave up on, gave up other parts of your life.

[00:37:51] **Laura Reagan:** Gave up so much.

[00:37:53] **Thad Frye:** Yes. Yes. And so there's, you know what we talked about grief last time, there is grief in those [00:38:00] transitions, right?

[00:38:01] To say, I'm going to dedicate 90% of who I am to this sport. And, and, and then all of a sudden the sport goes away or people think I'm a headcase or that it's, I'm not putting in the effort, but they don't understand this is all subconscious or a lot of it is subconscious. It's not as though they're not working hard.

[00:38:23] Oftentimes you'll hear about these guys and women that will be the ones that will be the first ones in the gym. They'll be trying even harder and it doesn't work. And so then of course people get embarrassed or they get feelings of shame. And so you can work with somebody after their career around shame.

[00:38:41] For sure. So, so I love I've worked with, uh, athletes afterwards. Which is definitely wonderful work. Yeah.

[00:38:48] **Laura Reagan:** It's so interesting. You know what you're just talking about, made me think about Michael Jordan and I don't know much about him, but I know there was a documentary like maybe last year and it seemed [00:39:00] from what I took away, I didn't watch the documentary, but it seemed like people were kind of talking about that it was kind of joyless. He was the best of the best of the best, but he wasn't loving it and he wasn't close with his teammates and he wasn't, you know, you would think that you would have this great happy life, if you're the best like this. And, you know, I, I just wonder not that it's about him in particular, but like, if someone's doing their work, they're trying so hard, they obviously care about something so much and they have such a gift.

[00:39:30] Like I wonder if it could be a happier process through the use of this type of work.

[00:39:37] **Thad Frye:** Yeah, there might be. I mean, I obviously wouldn't want to speak for somebody at that level of, of their career. Uh, but, but obviously I have watched it and, in the word, uh, competitive came up in a thousand different ways so that I think that is of him, uh, in, in, in so many different ways, but you're right. [00:40:00] Just going back to that idea of the love of the game. Sure. There's going to be all the work. I don't think either of us are trying to discount that at all, but when you're in the game and doing it, you would hope that there is a love. And that, that again, we get to be in the zone from time to time and you get to have that joy of being the six-year-old kid that was dreaming of becoming that NBA star.

[00:40:25] And then you get to be there. I can, again, only imagine what that looks like, but you hope that they have bits and pieces of that along the path. And, and, and this is one way to at least clear out some of those, again, embarrassments, humiliations, traumas, and, and really allow them to get back to a more regulated place.

[00:40:46] **Laura Reagan:** This has been so interesting and really, you know, sort of opening my eyes to some aspects of, I mean, not being an athlete myself, it's not, you know, something I can strongly relate to, but then I could think [00:41:00] about how just, you know, for my children with sports and small, seemingly small moments like a coach really disappoints them, or, you know, a situation happens that's just really unfair and they can't get past it. And you know, and not to say that they shouldn't be upset, but how it can really shift something that can be such a fun. I mean, it's supposed to be sports are about playing a game.

[00:41:29] **Thad Frye:** Yes. I've had several, uh, clients who have talked about that. Like, you know, like I can actually have fun again. I had one client who said they, they sang about it. They just made up a song because they had a practice where they weren't embarrassed, where they were doing, what they knew they could do. Right.

[00:41:47] It's it's that it's all of a sudden. It comes out of nowhere. It feels like, and, and all of a sudden I can't do my basic skill set, that, that the reason why I'm in college or the pros, and then, then [00:42:00] all of a sudden it's gone. And then to be able to move that through, to enable them just to go back to what they already put the work into.

[00:42:07] We're, we're, I'm not telling them how to throw the baseball or how to, you know, uh, any of that stuff. I'm just helping them work through those past, you know, injuries, traumas those things so they can get back to what they love to do.

[00:42:21] **Laura Reagan:** I just thought of one more athlete, who I've heard Abby Wambach recently talking about, like, I didn't have fun when I was playing soccer. It was mainly about like wanting my mom to be proud of me or something. And it's like, my goodness, you are at this level, the best soccer player. One of the best and you're not enjoying it. And what, you know, I think about that a lot. I think about retired athletes, a lot who are really young in their forties or thirties or something and there, and it's like, well, you know, my life's kinda the rest is, you know, I don't know. I don't want to say it's over. It's not like that, but it's [00:43:00] like who they, who they have been, who they, how they saw themselves and how the world sees them. And then, you know, it's all just not available anymore.

[00:43:07] **Thad Frye:** Totally. I mean, I think we probably do a lot of this work.

[00:43:12] Uh, you know, it's usually called life transitions. So a lot of people going into second careers, people empty nesting people, uh, retiring. Those can be really big things for them to go- what's my identity? Who am I? What did I give up in this process? Looking back on those things. So athletes are no different.

[00:43:33] It might be happening earlier in their life cycle, right. They might be retiring at age 25 or age 32, or, you know, so, so there might be more time ahead of them, but. But they also have, I don't know if burden's the right word, but they have the burden that if they're a well-known athlete, then that they're just that, that people are going to look at them and either say, oh my gosh, I loved you, you were great. Or they might say, well, [00:44:00] yeah, that's right. What, what are you doing now? And, and, and so again, that's why we could work with them afterwards to do this work around life transition. Who am I? What is my meaning making? There's plenty of places to do that and to have wonderful lives afterwards, obviously we do that all the time, but it does look different obviously if somebody is, uh, higher up in their, their sport or, you know, I've worked with, uh, musicians as well or writers, uh, in doing performance work and much the same. So, I mean, you have people that are, you know, The people I've worked with, you know, weekend warriors and people that maybe want to write that great American novel, but haven't yet.

[00:44:42] And I've also worked with people that are pretty high up in their profession and to be able to help them move through those blocks, to get to where they want to be is, is pretty inspiring. So, yeah.

[00:44:54] **Laura Reagan:** Wow. So like writer's block or like trouble with creative, [00:45:00] you know, accessing your creativity as some kind of a performing artist or fine artists.

[00:45:05] **Thad Frye:** You got it. So, I mean, it could look different and there's different. Again, you can look back and go through a trauma histories or embarrassments within their field as well. So there's definitely that. But let's say if you work with an actor or a musician. So if a musician is writing a song and has a basic narrative, but can't quite get to the other point, or if you're working with an actor and he's taking on the role of whomever, then you have them show you what they're working on. And then you say, okay, where do you feel that when you feel the, that, that the, the narrative, the narrative, uh, piece in that song, who's singing about this subject, where do you feel that in your body. Now can we, can we bring that forward? So it's called expansion work in, in, in brainspotting.

[00:45:55] So I want you to feel like you are that character, so let's [00:46:00] have you, you know, as much as you can and maybe that's a one out of 10 and sometimes that's an infinity like I can, oh, I can feel that. And we find a fixed eye position that you even feel that more. And then you can have them sing that song while they're doing it and really feel connected, or if they're an actor, you have them, you know, usually it's what we call a gaze spot, looking in the room. And so they'll look at that spot and they, they say, I feel that character in my chest. And so you have them do that again and go through it while they're looking at that fixed eye position, noticing that feeling of connection in their chest and, and nine times out of 10.

[00:46:40] There is a shift in the way that they're experiencing that. And, and it's pretty amazing to be on the other side, to be the person listening to a person engaged at that level.

[00:46:50] **Laura Reagan:** That's really cool.

[00:46:52] **Thad Frye:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's it's fun stuff.

[00:46:56] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So if someone who's [00:47:00] listening wants to work with you, first of all, can you offer brainspotting outside of your state?

[00:47:06] **Thad Frye:** So I could do, and I'm very clear about this. If I were to do a consultation work, it's just that. So if somebody has anything to do with their mental health issues, I always say you need to have somebody to work with that, but if we're just working on them, writing a play, or if we're just working on somebody, having the "Yips" I could work with somebody outside of the state, but there's a lot of, uh, athletes and musicians and everybody in Colorado as well.

[00:47:33] **Laura Reagan:** So yeah, plenty of people for you to support there. But so if, if someone's listening and they want to work with you, where can they find you and what, what could they do with you?

[00:47:45] **Thad Frye:** That'd be great. So Thad Fry Counseling, just my name T H A D F R Y E. So Thad Frye counseling and all my information is there.

[00:47:54] And, uh, probably easiest is to email me. And then we can just set up a time to [00:48:00] chat and see if I'd be a good fit. If not, there are people in the sports world. I'll just put out a couple of, cause there's really good ones that are doing brainspotting and sports. A really well known is Paige Roberts in Seattle.

[00:48:12] There's a gentlemen named Matt, Matt Moline, who works with a lot of golfers down in south of Denver. And then Mary Jane O'Rourke is wonderful. She's up in Portland. So there's many, many more, but there's a lot of people that have interest in this uh, and I've done really good work that I get to learn from as well.

[00:48:29] So I definitely wanted to put that out there.

[00:48:31] **Laura Reagan:** Awesome. And I guess you offer brainspotting consultation too, for people who want to brain spotters who want to learn that.

[00:48:39] **Thad Frye:** You got it. Thank you very much. So, so I'm a consultant, uh, and I worked with people just as you said, who want to be certified in brainspotting.

[00:48:47] So normally they'll meet with a consultant after doing many hours and whatnot, but they'll meet with us for about six times and kind of go over what they've learned. I love it. I love one-on-one teaching. So it's a thank you [00:49:00] for bringing that up. I definitely enjoy it.

[00:49:02] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you again for coming back to Therapy Chat today. I love talking with you about this.

[00:49:06] **Thad Frye:** I love talking with you too. Thank you very much.

[00:49:12] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you to Sunset Lake CBD for sponsoring this week's episode, use promo code, "CHAT," for 20% off your entire order at sunsetlakecbd.com. Sunset Lake CBD is a farmer owned, small business that shifts craft CBD products directly from their farm outside of Burlington, Vermont to your door.

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