

Therapy Chat Episode 310



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy chat podcast, episode 310.

[00:00:01] **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.

[00:00:31] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you to sunset lake CBD for sponsoring this week's up. Use promo code chat for 20% off your entire order@sunsetlakecbd.com. Sunset lake CBD is a farmer owned, small business

that ships crafts CBD products directly from their farm outside of Burlington, Vermont to your door. Sunset lake CBD has something for everyone.

[00:00:51] **Laura Reagan:** They offer tinctures edibles solves and coffee designed to help with sleep stress and sore muscles. Sunset lake CBD, customer support, regenerative agriculture that preserves the health of the land and creates meaningful employment in the community. Farm workers are paid a living wage and employees own the majority of the company.

[00:01:10] **Laura Reagan:** Remember use promo code chat to get 20% off your entire order@sunsetlakecbd.com.

[00:01:21] **Laura Reagan:** 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.

[00:01:46] **Laura Reagan:** 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 something that happens 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, on trauma chat. 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.

[00:02:34] **Laura Reagan:** 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, that name, what you've been through so that you can then connect with 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.

[00:03:05] **Laura Reagan:** An article, another website. This is my hope in creating trauma chat. And the second part of that is the new trauma therapists 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.

[00:03:30] **Laura Reagan:** 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, 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 gathering.

[00:04:05] **Laura Reagan:** 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. It's 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.

[00:04:40] **Laura Reagan:** So I hope that trauma therapists 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 to learn more, please go to trauma therapist, network.com. The 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.

[00:05:06] **Laura Reagan:** And hopefully there may be even a soft launch before. A beta version. So please go to trauma therapists, network.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.

[00:05:30] **Laura Reagan:** 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 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.

[00:06:18] **Laura Reagan:** And I'm just so excited for you to see it. Thank you so much for your support.

[00:06:27] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to therapy chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan today as the holidays are right here right now happening. I'm bringing you a replay of my interview with Sharon Martin about surviving and thriving during the holidays. Bringing together, all of the information that she shared in the previous episodes this month.

[00:06:49] **Laura Reagan:** And you might want to refer back to her December 3rd interview, where she talks about how to set boundaries, because we all need that during the holidays. So I hope you will enjoy this. I hope you're having some peaceful time off. And spending time with the people that you want to be with just a quick reminder to go ahead and sign up for the trauma therapist directory.

[00:07:13] **Laura Reagan:** If you're a therapist, serving clients, who've experienced trauma, and you want them to be able to find you in the specialized services that you offer. In with founding member pricing, \$33 a month, the price goes up February 1st, 2021. And, um, by the time you hear this, I may have already made an announcement about the changes that are coming to trauma therapists network and the additional value that therapists who subscribed to the listing will be receiving.

[00:07:41] **Laura Reagan:** So hope to see you there. Happy holidays, wishing you a peaceful restful end of the year, and talk to you soon.

[00:07:53] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to therapy chat today as promised, I'm bringing you an interview with Sharon Martin LCSW, one of a few interviews we've done. And this time we are going to be talking about surviving the holidays when you had maybe not so great of a childhood. So, Sharon, thank you so much for coming back to therapy chat today.

[00:08:17] **Sharon Martin:** I love being on therapy chat, so it's my pleasure. Thank you, Laura.

[00:08:20] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you. So let's just dive right in because we're a few days away from Christmas, which is a pretty big holiday that affects many people, but I think everything we're going to be talking about. Is relevant, whether you celebrate Christmas Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, another winter holiday festival, or throughout the year, you know, all of the holidays that come up in tail family gatherings and memories of family gatherings.

[00:08:49] **Laura Reagan:** And I think that, you know, the issues that we're talking about irrelevant, whether it's winter or summer or anywhere in between.

[00:08:55] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah, I agree. I think the holiday. They're just, they ended up feeling so loaded, I think emotionally with so many expectations. And like you had said the memories also of the past holidays, that sometimes we're aware that we're thinking about them or that there's just sort of some emotional energy that we're carrying with us in terms of our feelings, or even just how our bodies feeling that we just sort of carry that with us.

[00:09:23] **Sharon Martin:** I think year after year. And it's just sort of like, it just sort of clicks in, I think once, you know, you hit Thanksgiving time and you know the holidays are coming, you start anticipating. And I think sometimes there's sort of some anticipatory stress or grief for depression, maybe that, that we experienced just knowing that this event or events and gatherings are coming and, you know, kind of wondering how we're going to cope with it

[00:09:51] **Laura Reagan:** Very much. And I think that, like you said, um, sometimes it's really not in our conscious awareness because you know, people will start saying around November, I don't know, like right at the beginning of November.

[00:10:03] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, it's this time of year. I always feel like kind of down. I don't really know what it is. You know, and it's like, it's hard to put your finger on it, but if you really think about it and you realize that every year around this time you feel tense or you feel sad or unsettled. So it's like, there's like something going on in the back of your mind that you're not really in touch with.

[00:10:25] **Laura Reagan:** And it's keeping you a little preoccupied or distracted from, you know, what you're doing day to day. I think that can be really impactful.

[00:10:32] **Sharon Martin:** I think the other thing that. For those of us in north America is that we've also got the winter season that hits right around the holidays, which means, you know, some of us are really pretty strongly affected by the lack of sunlight and you know, the bad weather, snow, or storms or things that keep us cooped up inside.

[00:10:56] **Sharon Martin:** And sometimes that really has an impact on our mood too. And I think also, you know, you just sometimes kind of feel stuck. I think when you feel like you can't get out and enjoy the sunlight and maybe exercising and being in nature as much as you would like to.

[00:11:11] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. That's a good point. I know the dark, uh, around north America after, um, October is definitely something that people talk about because I know for me, if I might be leaving work at five 30 and I'm like, it feels like it's 9:00 PM.

[00:11:26] **Laura Reagan:** Just pitch-black.

[00:11:28] **Sharon Martin:** Yes. Yes. Very true. And yes, and many people will say they go to work when it's dark and they leave work and it's dark. And so they really haven't had a chance to get outside, you know, and how have some of that natural, you know, Energy boost and mood boosts that sometimes we get from, from sun and nature, like I had said, so, so we've kinda got that layered on there too.

[00:11:52] **Sharon Martin:** And, um, again, I think it's just helpful to be aware of how much that might be impacting you as well, because I think sometimes. You know, for me, I'm just kind of going about life being busy. And then I will, you know, sort of notice that I'm getting snappy with people. I'm getting short tempered. I'm just kinda crankier than, than usual things are bothering more me more than they might at other times.

[00:12:19] **Sharon Martin:** And that's sort of that accumulation of stressors and difficulties that are just sort of piling up and they don't necessarily have to be huge things because we tend to notice the huge, you know, disappointments and upsets and things that are going on. But often these small little stressors are just kind of piling up and then we're sort of caught off guard going.

[00:12:41] **Sharon Martin:** Okay, well, why did I have such a big reaction? To something. And it's often that both that there's things going on in our current life that we haven't been aware of that were, that were bothering us. And then there's also, you know, often it's kind of pulling us back to something that happened in the past.

[00:13:01] **Sharon Martin:** Um, you know, sort of that triggering effect where. You know, it's pulling back a memory or something that, you know, challenging that happened in the past that, you know, maybe a sort of unresolved, or it was just, you know, a difficult time. And it sort of brought back into the present without us fully being aware that we're thinking about that or that that's, you know, sort of playing into the reaction that we have today.

[00:13:24] **Sharon Martin:** And I think, you know, that's often, you know, what I experienced myself and I know that many of my clients will say that.

They're like, well, you know, you know, I'm having such a big reaction to things and it doesn't feel good to me. And it also doesn't feel good to the people that you're around because they're, they're often confused.

[00:13:42] **Sharon Martin:** Like, why are you so upset about this? Or why are you so irritable? There doesn't seem to be. You know, something going on right. In this moment that would warrant that kind of reaction.

[00:13:53] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. I know. That's definitely true when our trauma gets triggered. And a lot of times, you know, the disappointments of how things weren't for you when you were growing up, the, the expectations.

[00:14:08] **Laura Reagan:** Family closeness and festive feeling that you may have wished for around the holidays, but always felt disappointed because it never seemed to measure up or somebody would always get drunk or get loud at the family dinner. And it would seem like everything was ruined and every, everyone would be upset.

[00:14:25] **Laura Reagan:** You know, those kinds of memories. Linger with us, even if we don't have again, conscious awareness that that's there.

[00:14:33] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah. There could be a real deep pain. And I think also a real deep shame that we experience because as you were, as you were saying, I think that there's a lot of expectations. And along with those expectations, there's also a lot of comparison that we, that we experience, right.

[00:14:50] **Sharon Martin:** I mean, you really, you cannot get away. From the images of what Christmas is supposed to look like, right. It's everywhere on TV and magazines in the movies, it has giving us a very clear picture of this happy family, all together, getting along, you know, an abundance of presence. And it just looks, you know, that picturesque, you know, experience.

[00:15:15] **Sharon Martin:** And then that's not what most people experience, right. It can be so many variations of this. Um, and so many ways that it doesn't live up to that expectation that we end up feeling like, well, what is wrong with me? What is wrong with my family? That my Christmas experience. Isn't, you know what I'm seeing on TV.

[00:15:35] **Sharon Martin:** So that's that part that feels shameful. That's the, what's wrong with me. There must be a problem with me. That's sort of this unworthiness or this I'm unlovable, those kinds of really negative messages and beliefs that we have about ourselves. That again, here as adults, you know, can

sort of be unconsciously triggered for us just by looking through a magazine or something like that. That again, you may just sort of notice that there's sort of these feelings bubbling up that might be sadness. They might be anger. They might be shame that that are all sort of that accumulation of feeling like there's something wrong and that you've missed out on something.

[00:16:17] **Sharon Martin:** And I think there's also, you know, often an element of hopelessness. That comes into it to a sense that I'm never going to have that that can never be my reality. And again, with the expectation that that should be your reality because everybody else has it. Right. And that's part of where our thinking gets off track is because we're going through life assuming that, you know, I'm the only one who has a really crappy holiday who's family is really dysfunctional. Everybody gets into arguments. We never have enough money. Uncle Joe gets drunk every year, whatever, you know, the scenario is, you're just assuming that everybody else is having the picture perfect Christmas or Thanksgiving.

[00:17:00] **Sharon Martin:** And, you know, What about me, you know, there has to be something wrong here and there's sort of nothing that I can do about, I think ends up being part of that hopeless feeling, you know, which maybe we can get into, you know, talking a little bit more about that so that people can kind of get away from that.

[00:17:18] **Sharon Martin:** Because I think there, there are things that people can do. But not, not with the mindset of my goal is to create that picture perfect holiday, because it's not possible. It really isn't a reality. That's why it's on TV and in magazines, you know, it's a sales gimmick, essentially, right? It's trying to sell us an idea of what, what a holiday should be or what a family should be.

[00:17:43] **Sharon Martin:** And I think for me, what, one of the big takeaways I hope is that people will remember that, that the holiday doesn't have to be perfect. In order for it to be enjoyable or for there to be something good for you to take away for it from it, even if it's, you know, one particular piece of it that's enjoyable or relaxing or, uh, opportunity to connect with somebody it's definitely not an all or nothing.

[00:18:09] **Sharon Martin:** Like it's. Great holiday or it's just terrible, right? Like often there's some middle ground, if we can allow ourselves to look for it and to create it.

[00:18:19] **Laura Reagan:** Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, we can't change it. We, you know, someone we love has passed away and they're not going to be here. They're not here. And we were really sad about it.

[00:18:32] **Laura Reagan:** We can't change that. That doesn't mean that we still can't have a way to celebrate and feel a meaningful connection either with that person or with your self. That it does not make the reality different. Just like if you don't have enough money and you can't have the gifts that you wish you could have for Christmas, which you know, or any gift giving holiday, and everyone knows that there are many, many people, millions of people who experienced this doesn't mean that you can't find ways to really connect with what is meaningful about the holiday for you and, and amplify that, even if it's in a moment, you know?

[00:19:14] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah. You know, and I think like you were talking about, you know, if you've lost somebody that you love, you know, I think we have to, again, sort of go into these holidays. With that realistic expectation that it's going to be different this year.

[00:19:29] **Sharon Martin:** You know, it's sort of never going to be the same as it was, you know, when you would spend your Christmas with your grandma, let's just say if grandma has passed away, um, right. We can't have that anymore. And I think we're, we sort of need to look for, you know, some balance between giving ourselves. That opportunity to grieve and to be sad and, you know, remember, and maybe cry and, you know, have those feelings and then perhaps look for some ways to, you know, honor the person and sort of incorporate the person into your holidays in a different way, perhaps.

[00:20:05] **Sharon Martin:** And I think oftentimes this involves maybe creating some new traditions and doing some things different than we have done in past years. And again, this is, this is one area that I offer. You know, here, people, you know, feeling really stuck about the holiday traditions. And again, sort of the expectation feels like I need to do things the way we've always done them.

[00:20:28] **Sharon Martin:** You know, of course there are a lot of traditions around the holidays that are associated with it for most families. And I think most of them. You know, as our lives change and our families grow in different ways. Oftentimes we've sort of outgrown some of the holiday or, sorry, we've outgrown some of those traditions.

[00:20:47] **Sharon Martin:** You know, I know that I think about, you know, things that, that I did with my family, when my kids were small, they're not. That are necessarily going to be of interest for my family to do now that my kids are older, it's just sort of like things have transformed through might be some, you know, holiday traditions that we continue to do.

[00:21:06] **Sharon Martin:** And some that need to be adapted or just, you know, you know, put to the side, you know, given up for a while. Maybe we come back to them at another stage in life. But I think we need to remember that just because we've always done it doesn't mean we have to continue to do it every year. Like we can actually look at those holiday traditions and asks are and ask ourselves, is this really something that I want to do?

[00:21:31] **Sharon Martin:** Is it something that's really working for my family this year? Um, and feel like empowered to say, you know, I'm, I think I'm going to pass on that this year. You know, that really just doesn't sound fun anymore. That's not going to fill me with, you know, holiday joy instead that just feels like an obligation.

[00:21:48] **Sharon Martin:** And one more thing that I have to do. That's not the purpose of a holiday tradition, right?

[00:21:55] **Laura Reagan:** Right. It's not supposed to be like a burdensome obligation.

[00:21:58] **Sharon Martin:** Right. And I think so many of them do turn into that. You know, whether it's, I, you know, I have to get gifts for everybody or I have to bake, you know, this, all these cookies that I bake every year or send out, you know, Christmas cards or.

[00:22:13] **Sharon Martin:** You know, spend, you know, Christmas day at my parents' house, you know, those may work or may not, you know, you just have to feel like you can question some of those things and, and make the choice for yourself. I, again, I think that's one thing that's really helpful for people to remember is that you always have choices.

[00:22:32] **Sharon Martin:** Sometimes we have a hard time seeing the choices or we don't like the choices that we have, but we do have choices. And I always say this, I think is one of the, you know, the great things about being an adult is you have more choices. You really, you really have a lot of different options and it's, it's rare that you really are forced into doing something against your will.

[00:22:55] **Sharon Martin:** Um, usually you're choosing to, and then sometimes. You know, if you're choosing to do something that you don't really want to do, you end up just feeling resentful about it. And that often comes out in some other way. That's not so pretty, um, or enjoyable for people. So I think oftentimes it, you know, we're afraid of the saying no where the, you know, telling people that you want to do something different this year.

[00:23:19] **Sharon Martin:** But often when you can be direct and be kind about it, it's better than like I said, sort of going and doing it and then being in a bad mood or, you know, getting resentful about it.

[00:23:35] **Laura Reagan:** Hey everybody. 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 intention. That tends to wake me up at night. I really liked sunset lake CBD product. The full spectrum, CBD tincture is mild tasting compared to others.

[00:23:54] **Laura Reagan:** 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, Burlington, Vermont, that's a producer for Ben and Jerry's ice cream.

[00:24:12] **Laura Reagan:** You're going to wanna check out sunset lake CBD. And remember, therapy chat listeners get 20% off using the promo code chat. So go to sunset lake cbd.com and use the promo code chat.

[00:24:27] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Or feeling disempowered because you felt you had to do something, someone was making you do it when you really had the power to voice that you didn't want to, um, you know, barring an abusive situation that you were in. Yeah. Other than that, you know, you do do have free choice to what you want to do.

[00:24:47] **Laura Reagan:** Even if someone else might be disappointed, it's okay to choose. To do what you want or to meet your own needs, um, and put that as a higher priority than even the possibility that the other person may feel disappointed.

[00:24:59] **Sharon Martin:** Yes. I'm glad you brought that up is actually a, Hey, I had written myself a little note to, to talk about that.

[00:25:06] **Sharon Martin:** Cause that's often one of those big challenges that we come up against is that we don't want to disappoint people. We don't want to anger or upset people. And again, I think this can be extra strong at the holidays. We're again, with that idea. It should, we should all get along. It should be loving and close and, you know, I don't want to, you know, be upsetting, you know, my family, and I'm afraid of that sometimes too, what the reaction is going to be, or it's going to cause a big blowout, you know, right before the holiday.

[00:25:36] **Sharon Martin:** Um, that can be a really an unpleasant, um, anxiety provoking feeling, but it, it is impossible to be pleasing every. All of the time. So it, again, if we can, if we can sort of just start with the basic understanding that it is inevitable that you are going to upset or displeased or offend somebody at some point, probably, you know, within the next week of the holidays, like that's just, that's just being human.

[00:26:05] **Sharon Martin:** And sometimes we do it without realizing it without the intention of doing it. Um, and other times, It is the natural result of us being more assertive and starting to ask for what we need or what we want. Especially if you have a family that's not used to that. And you know, if you, as a person I'm not used to being more assertive.

[00:26:26] **Sharon Martin:** Um, and if you've kind of just gone with the flow, when, you know, let other people make the decisions so that if that's a new dynamic, a new behavior for you, it is going to be uncomfortable. But I assure you. It becomes more comfortable, the more that you practice it. And it also becomes easier for your family, the person on the other end to receive that as well, because they start to get used to the new dynamic as well.

[00:26:53] **Sharon Martin:** And they start to recognize. That you're going to ask for what your need, and you're going to do things a little bit differently than the way that, that we have done things, you know, for years in the past. So it's, it's challenging. I do. I do think there's, you know, in some ways, no, avoiding it, except that if you are going to just completely go along.

[00:27:14] **Sharon Martin:** With what everybody else wants and let everybody else's needs be more important than yours, but that, that has different negative consequences. So I think, you know, we, we have to really look at what our options are again, because I think sometimes people think, oh, you know, keeping the peace with the family is much preferable, but then I asked, you know, I kind of think, well, is it really?

[00:27:37] **Sharon Martin:** Because. You not asking for what you want or what you need. Again, there's often that resentment, you know, there's anxiety, there's maybe sleepless nights, you know, maybe you get sick, physically sick, you know, either, you know, you're more susceptible to colds and flus or, you know, you have the backache or the headache, your stomach's in knots.

[00:27:59] **Sharon Martin:** You know, there's a lot of, you know, ways that it shows up for us when you know, we're tense and unhappy. Um, so it's not it's, you know, there's, there's sort of no, no way of just, um, suppressing all of your needs. That's going to be a win for you. Right.

[00:28:18] **Laura Reagan:** There will be consequences.

[00:28:19] **Sharon Martin:** Right. Um, and like I was saying, I think sometimes, you know, we're so afraid of the reaction that other people are going to have when we're assertive that we make that into such a catastrophe in our mind.

[00:28:34] **Sharon Martin:** And that may or may not be the reality again, I, you know, I think, you know, everybody does know their own family, but, but even still, I think as humans, we do have a tendency to anticipate the worst in a lot of situations. And it's, I would just encourage people to consider the possibility that the reaction may not be as bad as you think it is.

[00:28:58] **Sharon Martin:** And that there are ways of delivering your assertive message that are, that are kind, you know, it doesn't need to be a shouting match and, you know, being demeaning to other people for you to, you know, kindly but directly say, Hey, this is, what's what I need this holiday, or this is what's going to work for me.

[00:29:16] **Sharon Martin:** I need to make a change. Right. You know, choosing not to do that. Yeah. There may be disappointment, but often we can recover from that.

[00:29:23] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And then it's easier to do. It's time you have to practice.

[00:29:26] **Sharon Martin:** Yes, absolutely.

[00:29:28] **Laura Reagan:** So talking about creating new traditions, I wanted to bring up the issue for people who I hear from a lot of people who talk about,

um, having quote unquote, narcissistic family members and going quote unquote, no contact.

[00:29:45] **Laura Reagan:** That's a big thing that, you know, is in our popular culture right now. And a lot of people talk about that in therapies. Should I go no contact? I'm thinking of going no contact. And I am a big proponent of setting the boundaries that feel safe, especially if you have a family where there's been abuse, but for people who are in that situation where maybe they've decided to, you know, they may not have completely cut off contact with their family, but maybe they're not going to be with them in person over the Holidays.

[00:30:17] **Laura Reagan:** What would you recommend for people who are doing that and still want to, they don't want to pretend it's not the holiday on the day. They still want to celebrate it, but they don't have anyone to be with kind of by choice.

[00:30:33] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah. That's a great question because I think that can feel really lonely. For people again, there's a huge expectation that you should be with family on, on Christmas or on any holiday and for a variety of reasons.

[00:30:45] **Sharon Martin:** Sometimes that's not possible or not something that we want to do. We recognize that that's not going to be emotionally healthy. So I would encourage people to start by thinking about what, what would feel good for them again, perhaps this is a situation where there's going to be, you know, some time during that day where there's going to be sadness and that's okay.

[00:31:08] **Sharon Martin:** And that you can make some space for that. You could also, you know, sort of think creatively about other things that you could do on the holiday that would feel fun or enjoyable, creative, exciting for you. And I think that's fairly personal about what would be an enjoyable way to spend like Christmas day by yourself.

[00:31:31] **Sharon Martin:** I know that there are some people who enjoy going to the movies. For other people that might feel even more lonely. So, so that's sort of, you know, know yourself, I think in some of this, or again, you know, if you want to go out and go for a hike and spend some time outside, that could be something that some people enjoy.

[00:31:50] **Sharon Martin:** I think often the other thing that people like to do. It's really feel like, you know, like they can kind of create their own family, like

with their friends, you know, and for some people that might be an option. And I guess I would also just encourage people, um, if you're alone, but you don't want to be like, if you would really like to be around some friends.

[00:32:12] **Sharon Martin:** Don't be afraid to say that to them. I know, you know, maybe it's not, you know, miss manners would disapprove of kind of trying to invite yourself to somebody else's Christmas. But I think for some people that, that can be okay. That again, we need to assume that if, if it's not going to work for your friends, that they will let you know that.

[00:32:32] **Sharon Martin:** But I think often how people sort of suffer in loneliness and in silence around these issues because they haven't let other people know what they need. And they're, it's quite likely that there is a family or sorry, a friend that you have that would be more than happy to welcome you to join their Christmas celebration or come for Christmas dinner or a part of the day, or maybe there's, you know, some other, um, people in your church or, you know, something, you know, another group that you're part of that would enjoy getting together and doing something.

[00:33:07] **Sharon Martin:** The other thing is like, you, you sorta think again, you're the only one who's alone on Christmas, but you're not, you know, there are many other people, the thing is that I get, I think again, there's so much shame and the short of that taboo, like, I don't want to like say anything, like just feels like such a loser thing to say.

[00:33:23] **Sharon Martin:** I have no one to spend, you know, Christmas with. But if you put it out there, I think there are going to be opportunities to connect with other people. You know, another idea that comes to my mind is maybe there's a volunteer opportunity as well. And that could feel really great again, to just be giving to other people.

[00:33:40] **Sharon Martin:** And it's often a time when you can be with other people too, in this sort of community of, of community service, um, and giving back as well. So that's kind of what comes to my mind at. If you had anything else that you were thinking, Laura?

[00:33:55] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I had a couple, um, things that I came up with too. And I love what you said.

[00:34:01] **Laura Reagan:** One of the thing about volunteering definitely is something that I've suggested, you know, it's not like, oh, make yourself appreciate what you have by going and being with someone who, you know,

and helping someone who has less, but that's sort of like what happens when you do give and be of service? It just helps you feel gratitude for your own life and being in a position to be able to help, you know, whether it's serving a meal at a homeless shelter, which is a 24 7 operation, whether it's Thanksgiving day, Christmas day, new year's day, whatever, you know, someone has to be there.

[00:34:38] **Laura Reagan:** And those. I need to be delivered or being with animals and an animal shelter, you know, another 24 hour type operation. They still need to be petted. They still need their cages to be cleaned. And, you know, the staff appreciates being able to take a day and not work on the holidays. So, you know, someone usually has to be there, but I think, um, that type of thing can be really helpful.

[00:35:01] **Laura Reagan:** And. Like you said, being in nature as well. You know, here on the east coast, you're always not too far from a beach or a river or stream. I love being near water. It's something that's very soothing to me. And I grew up in Virginia now, living in Maryland, you know, it was just as much of a chance that it'll be 50 or 60 degrees on Christmas day as that could be 30 degrees.

[00:35:23] **Laura Reagan:** So. Being at the beach in any weather, unless it's raining is pretty much a, it's always a grounding, enjoyable experience for me. And then there's, you know, so many other ways to be in nature, you know, just going for a walk in your neighborhood, no matter what kind of environment you live in. And then, but some other things that I thought of are, um, some people enjoy doing like yoga retreats or mindfulness retreats over holidays where the focus is not on the holiday.

[00:35:52] **Laura Reagan:** But it's still kind of like an inward practice and an opportunity to sort of be with others, but be with yourself. So it's kind of that same idea. As you said about volunteering, you may be with other people, but you're not necessarily trying to make a deep connection with them because you may feel maybe having a lot of feelings on your own and you're kind of in your head, but you're still able to not feel as alone.

[00:36:15] **Laura Reagan:** And I've also recommended to people. If they have the way to do this, and this is a very privileged thing to be able to do, but going to a hotel or something where you can just kind of be taken care of and not have to do anything for anyone else. And the food's prepared for you, or even like, um, you know, something that you can do.

[00:36:37] **Laura Reagan:** That's soothing, pampering, where you can get a massage. Be taken care of in some way, especially if you're feeling alone and kind of, you know, unloved, unwanted in relation to your family of origin. And you know, you don't have to actually spend a whole lot of money and get a massage. You can put, uh, Epsom salts in the bathtub and take a nice hot bath.

[00:36:59] **Laura Reagan:** You know, use some aroma therapy oils to give yourself a foot massage. There are a lot of things that you can do that feel very nurturing and soothing. That don't cost a lot of money. So, but I like that idea of doing things that are kind of the opposite of the feeling of loneliness and kind of unworthiness that you were talking about earlier.

[00:37:17] **Laura Reagan:** Things that just bring a feeling of being taken care of, soothed, supported.

[00:37:22] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah, I like that really resonates with me too. That idea of doing something very comforting and nurturing for yourself, especially if it's something that you wouldn't ordinarily do, maybe just because it does cost a little bit more money, or it just takes time that you wouldn't normally have during a busy work week.

[00:37:42] **Sharon Martin:** Like you said, I mean, it can just be, you know, that nice hot, soothing bath. It could be, you know, curling up in front of the fireplace with a novel that you've been, you know, anxious to read. And now you finally have a whole day to dive in and you know, like that can just feel. Ooh, this is a treat for me.

[00:38:00] **Sharon Martin:** Or, or again, maybe it's, you know, cooking, preparing some kind of food that you really enjoy that you feel like, oh, this is a treat, you know, and again, that's sort of, I feel like the message is I deserve a treat, you know, I deserve, deserve to be well taken care of. And I can do that for myself.

[00:38:16] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And, um, I know some people, I know a lot of people who love baking and like to bake huge amounts of cookies or holiday things.

[00:38:26] **Laura Reagan:** And, you know, if they're feeling alone at the holidays or if they're literally going to be alone, they may feel. Well, if I do all that, you know, like there will be too much for me to be able to eat and it's a waste and should I even do it? And I've recommended there are, um, homeless

shelters for families that will accept gratefully, accept your baked good donations.

[00:38:47] **Laura Reagan:** And, uh, just think how much, how enjoyable that is. For someone who's living in a homeless shelter. So they're away from their, you know, holiday traditions to have some baked goods that were made by someone else with love. I think that's a, a really nice way to do what you enjoy the baking and have as much as you want for yourself.

[00:39:05] **Laura Reagan:** But if you love making huge amounts that you couldn't possibly eat before they would go to waste, then you can donate them.

[00:39:11] **Sharon Martin:** I will second that as somebody who works for many years in a homeless shelter, sometimes we had enough volunteers. You know, already signed up to come in and, you know, make Christmas dinner or serve Christmas dinner.

[00:39:24] **Sharon Martin:** But just like you said, there are things that you can do at home and then deliver them to the shelter. And yes, it's often gratefully accepted, um, those types of donations of food and things that you made yourself. Um, and I think you could also, you know, maybe bring some of those treats around to your neighbors as well.

[00:39:43] **Sharon Martin:** And I can, that can feel nice as well, just to say, you know, I was thinking of you. And I would like to share this plate of cookies with you. You know, what a great neighborly thing to do.

[00:39:52] **Laura Reagan:** It is. I'll tell you what I mean, I might not be the most neighborly person, but there was one time when one of our neighbors brought us like, um, a food from their country.

[00:40:02] **Laura Reagan:** It was a neighborhood moved here from another country and they were giving it to us for something. And I was like, this is unbelievably kind. Like I was so struck by that. It's just such a generous thing to do. But

[00:40:15] **Sharon Martin:** if somebody took the time and the. To make that for you and then bring it over. It is it's very sweet.

[00:40:22] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. It's and it's connection. And I think that's the thing that we're missing. If we're alone at the holidays, or if we're, you know,

feeling sad about the way things were or how we feel during the holidays, it's wanting connection.

[00:40:35] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah. That's, that's a nice way of putting it because I think the variety of different ideas that we talk about, you could almost put them into two categories.

[00:40:43] **Sharon Martin:** One is, you know, how might I connect with other people. And the other one is how might I connect with myself?

[00:40:49] **Sharon Martin:** Yeah. And

[00:40:51] **Laura Reagan:** I think that that is what is the recipe for surviving the holidays when you have a, not so happy family of origin, or as I promised, when I was telling our listeners. This upcoming episode, I said, surviving the holidays.

[00:41:08] **Laura Reagan:** When you have a dysfunctional or abusive family of origin, it's focus on ways to connect with yourself and connect with others, whatever you need. Yeah.

[00:41:16] **Sharon Martin:** Yes. That whatever you need cannot be wrong. Yes. Right. It's uh, it's so simple and yet so complicated because that's not the message that we got as kids.

[00:41:27] **Sharon Martin:** It's not the message that we've told ourselves. All of these years, right? So often the message has been, you shouldn't have any needs or if you do, your needs are wrong and, and you should stuff them down and pretend like you don't have any. So that's, it's really that empowering shift to start to tell yourself that you are entitled to have needs.

[00:41:50] **Sharon Martin:** Everybody has needs, and you are entitled to have those needs met. And part of doing part of that is figuring out how to meet some of those needs for yourself. And then it's part, the other part is how can I communicate them to others? Because there's a relational component to having some of our needs met as well.

[00:42:08] **Laura Reagan:** Yes, beautifully said. And Sharon, I know we have to finish up here, but you have an ebook that you created about getting through the holidays. Where can people find that if they want to refer to that for some additional resources?

[00:42:25] **Sharon Martin:** Sure. That is on my website, which is live well with Sharon martin.com. And on there, you'll find on the menu, I have a couple of different eBooks, but this one is called handling the holidays. And like you said, I, I put this together this year, really with the idea of trying to provide some extra support for folks who were feeling particularly anxious and stressed out, going into the holidays. And again, particularly for folks who are struggle with family relationships and knowing that those are, you know, at least somewhat, you know, complex and dysfunctional and wanting to be able to make some different choices for themselves.

[00:43:08] **Sharon Martin:** I, I, you know, really emphasize you know, with my clients and in my books and so forth, you know, the idea that, you know, you can't change other people, you can't, you know, make your family be different this year. But there's a lot that you can do to help yourself either cope or make choices, you know, be more assertive in order to create holidays that are going to be more fulfilling and happy.

[00:43:34] **Laura Reagan:** I love that. So I will be sure to put a link to the ebook or your website, where they can find the ebook and all the wonderful things that you write. And. I'll put that in the details for this episode, so people can get right to it from their phones or whatever device they're listening on. Sharon, thank you so much for coming back to therapy chat today.

[00:43:55] **Laura Reagan:** And I want to have you back again another time soon, because I know you have more goodies that you've been working on that I'm dying to talk about with you for our audience. So until next time.

[00:44:08] **Sharon Martin:** Excellent. Thanks for having me. It's always a pleasure and I wish all of you listening, you know, holiday that feels right for you.

[00:44:18] **Sharon Martin:** That feels like you've been able to empower and take care of yourself through these challenges.

[00:44:24] **Laura Reagan:** Thanks, Sharon.

[00:44:25] **Sharon Martin:** Okay. Thanks Laura.

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