

Therapy Chat Episode 333



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy Chat Podcast, episode 333.

[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.

[00:00:18] **Announcer:** And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

[00:00:37] **Laura Reagan:** Today's episode is sponsored by Trauma Therapists Network. Trauma Therapist Network is a platform for finding a trauma

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[00:01:18] **Laura Reagan:** And now for all you prescribers out there, Therapy Notes is proudly introducing e-prescribe. Use coupon code chat, or click the link in the show notes to get two free months at therapynotes.com.

[00:01:29] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. Today, I'm so honored to be joined by Terrence Real. Terry Real is an internationally recognized family therapist, speaker, and author.

[00:01:45] **Laura Reagan:** He founded the relational life Institute, offering workshops for couples, individuals, and parents, along with a professional training program for clinicians to learn his RLT methodology. He's the best-selling author of, *I Don't Want To Talk About It*, *How Can I Get Through To You* and *The New Rules Of Marriage* and his new book, which comes out in 2022 in June is called *Us: Getting Past You And Me To Build A More Loving Relationship*.

[00:02:12] **Laura Reagan:** So excited to speak with Terry today, I have originally learned about his work from his book. *I Don't Want To Talk About It*, which is about men's depression and the intergenerational transmission of trauma. From patriarchy and culture to families where men are made to be, they're told they're supposed to be a certain way.

[00:02:36] **Laura Reagan:** And that includes moving away from tenderness and how that interferes with their relationships, with their partners, their children, and themselves. So this is something that I, I hear coming up in my practice a lot, whether I'm working with, well people of any gender, the hyper-masculinity and the harm that it causes to the individual and to the individual within their relationships.

[00:03:02] **Laura Reagan:** It's not just men who are harmed by patriarchy, of course. It's a violent structure that we all live within. In Western culture, at least.

So, I'm really pleased to be speaking with Terry today, and I hope that you will enjoy our conversation. Let's dive right in.

[00:03:23] **Laura Reagan:** So excited to be speaking today with Terry Real. Terry, thank you so much for being my guests today on therapy chat.

[00:03:31] **Terry Real:** Oh it's a pleasure, thank you for having me.

[00:03:34] **Laura Reagan:** I'm really excited. So can we start off by you just telling our audience a little bit about who you are and what you do.

[00:03:41] **Terry Real:** Sure.

[00:03:42] **Terry Real:** I am a couples and family therapist by training; psychiatric social worker by degree. I taught at the Family Institute of Cambridge for, I don't know, 25, 30 years. Back in the nineties, I wrote a book called *I Don't Want To Talk About It*. And I don't know whether to be proud or ashamed to say it was the first book ever written about male depression until that book came out. You know, women were seen as being depressed three to four times more often than men. It was a woman's disease.

[00:04:16] **Terry Real:** I'm very proud of having a part in putting male depression on the map. And what I said in the book is that there are just as many depressed men as women, but since then it's been taken up by others that we express it and experienced depression differently than women do. Women tend to pull in to internalize ruminate blame themselves.

[00:04:39] **Terry Real:** Men tend to self-medicate, act out externalized. And when you look at the rates of women's depression and men's depression, and then you factor in alcoholism, domestic violence, infidelity, it turns out that we're neck and neck. And so what I said in *I Don't Want To Talk About It* is, you don't see a man's depression often.

[00:05:04] **Terry Real:** You see the, the attempts that he's making to run from the depression, but more broadly, the book was about what we in our culture do to boys and men. It really was the beginning of a 30 year process, critiquing and deconstructing patriarchy and in the work that I do called relational life therapy. We lead men and women and non-binary folks into intimacy by leading them beyond patriarchy.

[00:05:37] **Terry Real:** So it's a practical methodology for breaking up traditional gender roles and moving us beyond them. After the book came out,

there are an estimated 6 million depressed men in America at any given point. So it did real well. And I got calls from all over the country, all over the world saying, is there somebody in Maryland or Topeka or wherever the does the work that you described?

[00:06:04] **Terry Real:** And after a while, the light dawned on me and I said, look, if you're desperate enough and you have the resources come to Boston, where I live and practice and what evolved was a two day, I call it relational intervention. You come, you spend two days at the end of the two days, you're either on track or getting a divorce.

[00:06:23] **Terry Real:** What I noticed in these two day interventions with two things, one, they were very successful. I say, 19 out of 20 couples did well. And two, I broke just about every rule I'd ever learned in therapy school, about how to do therapy. I was not neutral. I was relational. I judiciously self-disclosed. I made a point of it. I, uh, took sides, uh, often, uh, sided.

[00:06:52] **Terry Real:** I dealt with power imbalances and I threw my weight behind a disempowered one, often the woman, not always, and brought them up in relational life therapy. We have a saying, we want the mighty to melt and the weak to stand up. And so that was the word we dealt with. Power imbalances. We dealt with patriarchy.

[00:07:13] **Terry Real:** And, uh, we did really well and I created a school called Relational Life Therapy. We have a, about a two year training program. We're a re revamped school and we're opening up the doors in May for people I've trained several thousand therapists around the country over the years. And then I've written a new book called Us: Getting Past You And Me To Build A More Loving Relationship.

[00:07:42] **Terry Real:** And that is really about, well, we'll talk about it, but it's really a critique of individualism, the toxic culture of individualism, and that neurobiologically, we're not individuals, we co-regulate each other and that's a mess. And then when we move beyond the culture of patriarchy and individualism and really step into what I call ecological wisdom, that we're not separate from nature, surely not in control of nature.

[00:08:13] **Terry Real:** We're a part of nature. Whether the nature you're trying to control is your wife and kids or your body, or your mind or your thinking. Trading in a power and control individualistic model for a collaborative working with being in the spirit of kind of ecological model, all the terms, change, everything changes.

[00:08:38] **Terry Real:** So the book, which I'm very proud of really goes through the neurobiology of co-regulation. The, uh, the myths of the individual, the history of individualism in the west. There's a chapter on that. And then when you stop thinking about yourself as an individual and start acting like a team, the bulk of the book is full of practical skills for couples and for a couples therapists on how to really make that shift.

[00:09:08] **Terry Real:** For example, to give you a little example, you know, I have a saying, you can be right, or you can be married. What's more important to you and the ecological or relational answer to the question. Who's right. And who's wrong is who cares? It doesn't matter. Those aren't the terms, the terms are, how are you?

[00:09:26] **Terry Real:** And I'm going to make this work in a way that's going to work for both of us. And so the book is full of skills about how to speak, how to listen, how to respond, how to repair, how to cherish, and then it moves from there to bigger picture, um, moving out of a power control model, moving out of what I called the great lie that Western civilization has been based on the lie that an individual could be.

[00:09:55] **Terry Real:** Essentially superior or inferior to another individual. And I talk about race and I talk about gender and I talk about the ecological crisis or, global warming. So it's a deep dive that travels from our neurobiology, through our personal relationships, to our relationship, to the culture, to rather races and to the world at large.

[00:10:23] **Laura Reagan:** Wow. Yes. That's amazing and exciting. I can't wait to be able to read the whole book. It sounds wonderful. And you know, it doesn't really take a lot of imagination to see how. Our own disconnection from our own nature makes us disconnect from whether it's siblings, parents, our children, our friends, or our partners, you know, and then the wider community of humanity and nature and you know, the whole world.

[00:10:59] **Terry Real:** It's all the same stuff. But if I start with neurobiology and promo a B, uh, what we know is that the autonomic nervous system scans the body four times a second, going, am I safe? Am I safe? Am I safe? Am I safe? And if the answer is, yes, I feel safe. Then we stay in what I call the wise adult part of us, prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain that evolves last in someone's development.

[00:11:30] **Terry Real:** The part of the brain that evolved last of the species, the most mature part of us that can stop and think and make deliberate decisions.

What happens if the answer is no, I don't feel safe. If you lose what I call us consciousness, that prefrontal cortex, you lose the sense of relationship of the whole. And it reverts to me, me, me, me, me.

[00:11:56] **Terry Real:** Me versus you, you lose abundance. You live in a, uh, impoverished world in which it's me versus you win, lose zero. Um, and it's a fight to the death and it's about my survival. And you literally moved to a different part of the brain to the subcortical limbic system in amygdala when you're triggered. And the whole book is about, okay, when you're triggered, when you are overrun with that automatic part of you, which I call the adaptive child part of us, how do you develop the practice?

[00:12:36] **Terry Real:** Of what I call relational mindfulness. How do you literally build the muscles in that very heated moment of taking a breath, taking a break, taking a walk around the block if you need to. Having a little chat with your inner child, having, uh, doing some breathing, doing some meditation, uh, doing some of those regulation techniques that we know from trauma, taking a break, using some of those reregulation techniques that we've learned from trauma.

[00:13:06] **Terry Real:** And centering yourself back into the wise adult part of you. And then going back into the fray, that one of the things I say is, you know, I do workshops around the country and one of my, I have slides like everybody else. And my favorite side of the workshop shows this, or other workshops teach you skills.

[00:13:29] **Terry Real:** We deal with the part of you that won't use them.

[00:13:33] **Laura Reagan:** Ha ha ha, perfect!

[00:13:36] **Terry Real:** Because when we're triggered, we lose the us and we move into our trauma and we don't move into what I call the wounded child part of us. We move into the adaptive child. I want to share a Gabor Mate saying it: rarely do you see the wound, what you see is the scar tissue.

[00:13:57] **Laura Reagan:** That makes so much sense, yeah.

[00:13:59] **Terry Real:** And, and in relationships you rarely see a wounded child.

[00:14:03] **Terry Real:** You know, the world, that child part of us, very young 3, 4, 5, uh, just wants to crawl up in somebody's lap and cry. A wise adult

knows what they're doing, but between these two is what I call the adaptive child part of. Kind of empty chair or salty, uh, therapy work with the adaptive child shows you five, six all the way up into teens, twenties.

[00:14:28] **Terry Real:** And that's the part of you that you created to adapt to whatever the crazy situation was that you were in the middle of. And most of the people that I see and I see couples in extremis, but most of the couples that I see most of the people have been living most of their lives. Out of their adaptive child part, thinking that that's an adult and it isn't, it's a kid's version of an adult and it's rigid and it's immature.

[00:15:01] **Terry Real:** It's repetitive. You do the same damn thing over and over again. And this is the art of moving beyond that part into something more. Observational deliberate, mature, and relational. And how to make that work for you in your, in, in you're. One of the things I say is people often will tell you that, uh, relationships take work, but they won't tell you what it is.

[00:15:28] **Terry Real:** The real work of relationships is not even day to day. It's minute to minute. In this triggered moment right now. Am I going to fight the way I always do? Or am I going to shut down the way I always do? Or am I going to try and fix it all the way I always do? Or am I going to take a breath? And move into a different part of me that can make better choices than my automatic, uh, responses.

[00:15:57] **Terry Real:** Th the great spiritual teacher Krishna Murti once said true liberation is freedom from our own automatic responses. And this is about when one of the things I say is when an inner child kicks up, including the adaptive child, part of you fights flight, or fix you, put them on your lap. You put your arms around them.

[00:16:18] **Terry Real:** You'll listen to them. You'll love them. And you take their sticky hands off the steering wheel, you in the back seat. I am going to deal with my spouse, not you. And in doing that, we use the relationship, not in a way that our partner here is our trauma, but in a way that the relationship can heal our trauma.

[00:16:41] **Terry Real:** And I think this has been a big missing element in all the trauma conversation. We've been having, it's also individualistic. You can use, look, your trauma will spill out into your relationship. That's the bad news, and you can use this practice inside your relationship, not for your partner to heal your trauma, but for you to heal those inner children, by putting your arms

around them and forming a loving in some ways, parental relationship with them.

[00:17:12] **Laura Reagan:** That's beautiful. And every word you said just felt so true to me. And I think about, you know, this like way that we then, you know, as a trauma therapist and a trauma survivor and a person who's in a long-term relationship, I've been married for 25. This is my 26th year of marriage this year.

[00:17:31] **Terry Real:** Congrats.

[00:17:32] **Laura Reagan:** And thanks.

[00:17:34] **Laura Reagan:** You know, I think it's become apparent to me maybe in the past five years through the help of my therapist, that. You know, things that I am projecting onto my partner as them doing something to me is really me kind of reliving what was done to me in a, in a previous relationship, you know, during childhood, most likely, or really, you know, teen or early adulthood.

[00:17:59] **Laura Reagan:** And, and it does. And it's like the, he becomes that, but it doesn't like, it's not like he looks like the person that did that, or he's not them.

[00:18:13] **Terry Real:** Yeah, something is happening, you know, trauma triggering.

[00:18:17] **Laura Reagan:** It's so subtle.

[00:18:18] **Terry Real:** Well, all your partner has to do is behave in a way that is similar enough to what happened to you early on that it kicks out the response that's trauma triggering. You don't remember trauma, as we all know. The combat vet who hears a car backfire and spins around, like, he's got a gun in his hand.

[00:18:38] **Terry Real:** There's not thinking I'm walking down main street, remembering combat in combat. And, you know, I had a critical violent father. So did my wife, Belinda. Belinda comes in and she's angry about this, that, or the other thing that she's critical. I'm that four year old boy and that towering father six foot 3, 240 pounds.

[00:19:01] **Terry Real:** And, you know, I am ready to either duck under the rug and hide or bopper in the nose and fighter. And that's that adaptive child response. I call it whoosh, w H O O S. It's just a wave that comes right up from the fit. Now the one thing I do want to say, and that I teach my students is this. I always ask my students to be respectful of the exquisite intelligence.

[00:19:32] **Terry Real:** Of the adaptive child, you did exactly what you needed to do back then to preserve your autonomy and your integrity and your spirit. But I have a saying adaptive then, maladaptive now. Exactly what you needed to do. And that, that environment in which were, you were a little dependent being, uh, is probably what's ruining your current intimate relationships. So let's shake hands with that adaptive child. Let's embrace her, get to know her. Uh, but let's not let her run your marriage. That's a bad idea.

[00:20:11] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And I think one of the hardest things about it is that you don't know it's happening until you become skilled at recognizing the way it feels in you when you're triggered too.

[00:20:21] **Laura Reagan:** So it's like, it's a body response a lot of times. And I think, you know, you can please speak to this. I'm not a couples therapist. I do individual therapy, but the, you know, the common dynamic is women being more verbally expressive with their emotions because that's culturally more, at least women to women.

[00:20:41] **Laura Reagan:** We talk with each other about our emotions and men to men talk about sports.

[00:20:48] **Terry Real:** What happened at the ballgame? You know, and that goes back to patriarchy because our adaptive children, and this is where in the book, I think I'm proud of the book moves beyond the personal relationship to look the adapted children are cultural artifacts in the socializing agent in your childhood.

[00:21:10] **Terry Real:** Were your parents. And your family and the other kids on the playground and that culture doesn't wind up in us in some abstract way. It's the people who raised us. And so, you know, my God, I was treating a guy. He was a sex offender. He would publicly masturbate. And I unwind his childhood and he had a brutal macho stepfather who he remembered.

[00:21:40] **Terry Real:** He hadn't remembered this in forever, but he did in the therapy, lined up his entire family when he was three years old. Took his favorite blanket, his blankie, and burn it to the ground because he was too old

for that now. That is the imposition of patriarchy on a three-year-old little boy, uh, is from, this is not abstract.

[00:22:02] **Terry Real:** This is what happened to you. And, uh, what's happening across the board is that the adaptation of men and women are such that we know from the feminist literature that women lose their voices at 13, 14, 15 become over accommodating and slash resentful. The word to girls and women is disempowerment. And the healing move of that trauma is to re-empower them.

[00:22:32] **Terry Real:** The, the, the, the healing move for boys and men comes from the trauma of disconnection. Boys and men are not disempowered. If anything, we're falsely empowered, we're overly empowered, but we are disconnected. The way you turn a boy into a man in this culture to this day. Although it's better with the younger, the man, the better, but to this day, this through distribute, disconnect them from their hearts, from their feelings, when they're vulnerabilities, you disconnect them from others.

[00:23:05] **Terry Real:** The essence of traditional masculinity is invulnerability. The more invulnerable you are, the more manly you are, the more vulnerable you are, the more girly you are and what we know. I mean, thank you. Benet Brown is we, we, humans connect through vulnerability. So you have, you have millions of dissatisfied women who want more emotional connection from men.

[00:23:31] **Terry Real:** Then we raise boys and men to deliver now most therapy. And certainly culturally, there's been a huge backlash which is, you know, filming with Jesper shut up and learn to be more accepting, all would be well, which men's men's style of intimacy. What is men masculine intimacy. They bowl together and don't talk.

[00:23:54] **Terry Real:** No, that's not it.

[00:23:56] **Laura Reagan:** Or have sex.

[00:23:57] **Terry Real:** Yeah, right. I don't want women to stand down. I want men to stand up and meet these new demands. I take sides. I say the intimacy that women are asking for is good. You'll live longer. It's good for your kids. It's good for your body. Step up and do it. The way that women are calling about asking for that intimacy may suck.

[00:24:18] **Terry Real:** But and need a lot of work, but what they're asking for is a good thing. So, you know, I'll be sitting with Harry and I'll say, Harry, here's a piece of paper, here's a pencil. I want you to jot these down joy, pain, anger, fear, shame, guilt, love. For your listeners. Let me do that again. Joy pain, anger, fear, shame, guilt, love.

[00:24:42] **Terry Real:** Okay, great. What are you feeling right now? Right now as you're sitting in that chair, what are you feeling? I guess I'm a little nervous. I'm going to okay. That's fear. Where is that in your body? It's in my chest. Good. Uh, kind of butterfly. Okay. If those butterflies could speak, what would they say? I don't want you to judge me. Great.

[00:25:02] **Terry Real:** What else are you feeling? Well, uh, uh, I'm feeling like I love my wife and I don't want to screw things up. Great. Where's that love in your mind? And you take a guy who's completely emotionally inarticulate. You give him structure, mentoring and help. And the end of the exercise. I'm telling you, Laura, Harry has identified five or six feelings by the time we're done.

[00:25:27] **Terry Real:** He never done anything like that in his life before. And I get to say this wonderful thing. I turned to him and I say, Harry, you're a passionate man. You have a ton of feelings. It turns out your feelings never left you, you left them. They've been percolating all along. All you have to do is turn the satellite dish in and pay attention to them.

[00:25:48] **Terry Real:** And they're right there. And this is the kind of close. Active mentoring that I think men in particular need in therapy and that we're taught as therapists to not do. And, uh, so relational life therapy. What I, the school I've created does break a lot of the rules and it deals with some of the issues in very concrete, pragmatic ways that I think a great deal of therapy misses.

[00:26:19] **Laura Reagan:** Running a group private practice has been a challenging and rewarding experience. And one thing that has made it so much easier is Therapy Notes. Therapy Notes makes billing, scheduling, note taking and tele-health incredibly easy. If you're coming from another EHR, like I did, Therapy Notes makes the transition incredibly easy.

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[00:27:22] **Laura Reagan:** Well, and that goes to, you know, what we always hear in therapy that men do better with concreteness and, you know, structure and directiveness instead of just, you know, feeling like they're on the spot to tell what they feel when they don't know how to name it. And they're just becoming more and more uncomfortable and wanting to escape from the situation.

[00:27:43] **Terry Real:** Yeah, I think that's right. So, you know, it's one thing to say it will open your heart and be vulnerable. It's another thing to say, oh, by the way, if you're doing, when your heart and be vulnerable, you will be undoing masculinity. You will be breaking all the rules that were imposed upon you as a boy. And it's yet another thing to say, open your heart and be vulnerable.

[00:28:07] **Terry Real:** Let me take you by the hand and show you how to do it. And that's the work that needs to be done I believe. Now there's a corollary piece for women. If I may. Under a patriarchy and I like to say we're fish and patriarchy is the water we swim in a, under a patriarchy. You can be, uh, connected or you can be powerful, but you can't be both at the same time.

[00:28:32] **Terry Real:** Let me say that again, under patriarchy, you can be connected. Affiliative accommodating quote, unquote feminine, or you can be powerful. Instrumental, competent can do quote unquote masculine, but you can't be both at the same time because power as Riane Eisler put it as power over. Not power with its dominance.

[00:28:55] **Terry Real:** And so when we move into the power division, we break connection. And what happens with many women that I see in my office is they eat it and eat it and eat it and eat it. And when they finally do quote, unquote, find their voices, it's like, I am woman. Hear me roar, you know, this is what I call individual empowerment versus relational empowerment. Individual empowerment is, I was weak. Now I'm strong. Go screw yourself. I'm going to bark it out and I don't give a good god damn how you feel about it. Relational empowerment, which is brand new for our culture is I was weak. Now I'm

strong. I'm going to stand toe to toe with you. I'm going to bring my full voice into this relationship.

[00:29:38] **Terry Real:** What do you need from me, honey? How can we work together as a team? And that is brand new and it breaks the back of individualism and it breaks the back of patriarchy. So I teach women the skill and it's very concrete of what I call soft power or loving power, how to stand up for yourself in no uncertain terms and cherish your partner in the relationship at the same time.

[00:30:06] **Terry Real:** Can I give you an example? Please. If this came to me, when I was working with a couple heterosexual couple young classic deal, uh, she, uh, uh, he wanted sex all the time. She wanted sex, none of the time and they were killing each other. So like any good therapist, I moved them off of that. To what does sex mean to you?

[00:30:27] **Terry Real:** And like a lot of men, this young man filtered, many of his emotional needs through sex, uh, being sexual man that he was desirable, that he was good looking that she liked him, that they were in good shape together, that she cared and et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Okay. I do not do this. They came up with this two weeks later, they come in all smiles, the sex thing.

[00:30:49] **Terry Real:** Got it. Nailed. Uh, okay. There's a story here tell me the story. Yeah. So that night after the session they were home and lo and behold, he proposes sex. And rather than run to the other side of the room, which would be her normal move, newly empowered. This gal goes over to him and puts her arms around him and gives him a big passionate kiss.

[00:31:13] **Terry Real:** Looks him in the eye and says, this you're hot. I want you to know you are a capital H O T hot. You are gorgeous. You are sweet. You're a dear man. I feel so close to you. You got a big heart. I've never want anybody in my life as much as I want you, oh, by the way, I don't want to have sex tonight. Anyway. Let me tell you.

[00:31:34] **Terry Real:** I love you to pieces in there.

[00:31:39] **Laura Reagan:** Oh. I thought it was going somewhere else.

[00:31:43] **Terry Real:** And he, to his own amazement looked at her and went, uh, okay. And the reason why he was able to do that is because he felt so loved. And so cherished that the no went down just fine. And, uh, so there's a real skill

here. You know, the difference, one thing where I don't like how you're talking to me and saying, I want to hear what you're going to say.

[00:32:07] **Terry Real:** Could you tell me down so I could listen to Laura at role-play Laura, not the real Laura, Laura, I want to be close to you. And when you call me a chauvinist asshole, uh, I feel pushed away the other side of the room. Could you redo that? And, and, uh, let me get as close to you as I want to be, but who confronts anybody like that?

[00:32:30] **Terry Real:** No one, they have to be trained. They have to be taught. And that's what I go into in the new book. How to be held and not lose the us, the relationship and not lose your power both in the same time.

[00:32:44] **Laura Reagan:** It's beautiful. And it, I mean, again, it just feels so, right, because you know, it's not about me saying, okay, it's my turn.

[00:32:52] **Laura Reagan:** You've been a jerk for 26 years and now I get to be a jerk to you. It's it's about like, I want us to be connected. I want to feel like we are a team. I don't want to have power over, but I don't want you to have power over me either. You know? And if you want to have power over me, then I'm going to be fighting to take back my power.

[00:33:14] **Terry Real:** You know, uh, what I would say is I'm going to be fighting to help you remember that, um, power over is a toxic nightmare for both of us. And that if in your interest to treat me well, you know, uh, I don't talk to PE. This is not a power game. This is not a win, lose game. This is like, how are we going to work together in a way that's going to, it's like the difference between saying I want sex I need sex.

[00:33:42] **Terry Real:** We have to have more sex in this relationship and saying, honey, you know what? We both deserve a great sex life. It's kind of fallen off the planet. What do we need to do to resurrect it? What a difference, two ways of saying the same thing, but oh my God, one is relational. One is linear individualistic. The way we normally talk in this culture and the other is wise relational and loving how to be strong and loving at the same time.

[00:34:10] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. It's like, we have a problem. Let's come to a solution together. Instead of you are the problem and I'm going to lash out at you kind of thing.

[00:34:18] **Terry Real:** Yeah, that's exactly right. I write about this in the book. I say that virtually everybody who sees me is an essentialist, uh, what's what's the problem in your marriage?

[00:34:29] **Terry Real:** Her. And what's her problem? Well, that's just who she is. She is essentially like that. I tell a story of a guy we'll call him Bill. There are lots and lots of stories in the book, and I'm proud that the stories read like stories. So many clinical vignettes are cardboard. Uh, there's something novelistic about that. That is best.

[00:34:51] **Terry Real:** Anyway, Bill comes in. I asked him the question I asked, most people just starting off a session. I say, what would you wish for if this therapy were to work brilliantly, what would you get out of it? And, uh, Bill God bless him, says I want to get laid. Okay. Alright. He knows why he's there.

[00:35:12] **Terry Real:** I say to him, okay, so I did brilliantly deduced, your sex life is not what you want it to be, right? Why is that? That's my wife. Well, what's the matter with her? I dunno, she's just cold. She's frigid, their whole family's cold. I just don't think she's into it.. Okay. I dismiss Bill and bring in Mrs. Bill. Hi. Hi. Bill's not happy with your sex life. Oh yeah tell me about it. I hear you're not having much sex now. Why not? Are you kidding? Who would, he's a terrible lover. He's had premature ejaculation for 20 years. He won't deal with it. He won't talk about it. Every time I bring it up, he gets mad at me. Screw him the hell with it. I'm done.

[00:35:53] **Terry Real:** I bring. I bring Bill back in yet. I dismiss Mrs. Bill and I bring in Mr. Bill. And I say to her, I say to him, I've got great news for you.

[00:36:06] **Terry Real:** And the great news is systemic wisdom. The great news is Bill. She's not just a cold frigid bitch. You have something to say about this. If you change your behavior, let's see what happens. And this is great news for Bill and it's true for all of us. We're all like, you know, some giant guy sitting on one end of the seesaw, complaining to everybody who walks by that his wife.

[00:36:35] **Terry Real:** Can't come down from the other end of the seesaw. And he's tried to reason to cajole promise scream to won't come down and we therapists tap Bill on the shoulder and say, listen, let me tell you something. If you go up, maybe she'll come down. And this is the revelation. This is the wisdom that we as therapists have, that the people who see us don't have that this is in the ecology.

[00:37:03] **Terry Real:** That you're connected that the delusion of individualism is that we're apart from nature. And the delusion of patriarchy is that we control nature. And they're both nuts. Our relationships are our biosphere. We're not apart from them, we're in them. And once you realize that, for example, your marriage is your biosphere.

[00:37:26] **Terry Real:** You know, you can choose to pollute it over here with your temper, but you'll breathe in that pollution over here with your wife's anger or distance or lack of generosity. It's inevitable. You can't escape your own system. And so we moved from thinking linearly and stupidly and selfishly to thinking ecologically, relationally and wisely.

[00:37:53] **Terry Real:** And that's the transition that the whole book is about how to do that.

[00:37:59] **Laura Reagan:** So is the, what you have in the book and the newest book is it translated into what you teach in the Institute?

[00:38:09] **Terry Real:** Yes. We have a thriving Institute 2 year training, prep track, and. We teach relational life therapy. That's the, that's the name of the school.

[00:38:19] **Terry Real:** There are three phases of relational life therapy. The first phase we call awaking the client up. Loving confrontation. This is what you're doing to blow your foot off. You're lying or you're evading or you're shutting down or you're controlling or you're, uh, indulging anger over and over. This is the repetitive thing.

[00:38:40] **Terry Real:** This is what your adaptive child does over and over again. You wake up to that too. We move into trauma. We do deep trauma work. I think we're, uh, Janina Fisher also, but I think we're the only two. We do deep trauma work in the presence of the partner. The burner sitting right next to you, you know, once I get what your adaptive child is doing, the next question is where did you learn to do that?

[00:39:08] **Terry Real:** And that takes us into family of origin, trauma work and inner child work. You form a relationship to that little boy or girl, and you begin to tend to them and don't let them act out in your relationships. And then the third phase is teaching. Uh, once I tell you it, once we reveal what you're doing this, so God awful, we don't just leave you swinging in the wind.

[00:39:32] **Terry Real:** This is different from a lot of total work. Like my dear friend ditch worse than I have been around the block on this, you know, it's both personally. And, uh, and on stages together, it takes like a lot of trauma people that if you remove the trauma that people intrinsically know how to be intimate with.

[00:39:51] **Terry Real:** I think that's wishful thinking, frankly, I think we live in an anti-retaliation or narcissistic, a big patriarchal culture. And within that culture, we do not teach boys and girls the skills they need to realize our beautiful dreams of lifelong closeness with each other. And so once we identified the adaptor child response, once we go back into your childhood and release some of the energy that created that adaptive child, then we teach you.

[00:40:25] **Terry Real:** Okay. Try doing it this way. For example, soft power, loving power. Try not to tell your partner in no uncertain terms, just how angry and miserable you are rather tell them what you would like for them and what that might look like. So we coach people in how to do it differently. And I think we're the only system that I know that does all three loving confrontation, deep trauma work, and then education and skill building.

[00:40:55] **Terry Real:** This is how it's, this is what intimacy looks like. Let's get to it.

[00:41:00] **Laura Reagan:** So how long would you typically work with a couple in this model? Uh,

[00:41:05] **Terry Real:** I tell my couples it's a matter of months, not weeks, not years. So I'm going to say three to 12 months. Usually.

[00:41:14] **Laura Reagan:** That's great. I mean, that's a lot of good work to be able to do. And especially if it's as short as three months, but even in 12 months to be able to heal those relationship wounds.

[00:41:26] **Terry Real:** Yeah, it

[00:41:28] **Terry Real:** is amazing. Well, we've got something on our side, which is that we're born to be relational. This is, you know, it research tells us that he's the youngest of infants within weeks are reaching out for connection. The human body thrives on the emotional connection is as important as not smoking or diet or exercise for our physical health as a species we're born to be relational.

[00:41:59] **Terry Real:** And so when we can help somebody, I call it move into the jet stream of connection. It's so pleasurable that they just want more. And the defenses melt away. If you can take them by the hand and teach them how to do it, it's so gratifying to do it, that they move very quickly and permanently so long as you add the trauma piece with it.

[00:42:25] **Terry Real:** If you just do the skill-building without going back into jobs where they're going to get overwhelmed, but if they have an ongoing relationship with those inner children. And they know, they know down to the ground, the repetitive pattern they keep doing over and over again, and they have new skills to replace it with all three of those together can produce really a transformed person in a very short time.

[00:42:52] **Laura Reagan:** Wow. I feel like a good place to close is a quote that you have said before, and I feel like it fits. Here in kind of like a bigger picture context. The quote is family pathology rolls from generation to generation like a fire in the woods, taking down everything in its path until one person in one generation has the courage to turn and face the flames.

[00:43:16] **Laura Reagan:** That person brings peace to his ancestors and spares the children that follow. And I feel like this is beyond just family generational healing. It's culture.

[00:43:27] **Terry Real:** Yes it is. It absolutely is. And one of the ways that I get people to work is by reminding them that this is not for you alone. You know, when I think the great pieces look, the first book I wrote, I Don't Want To Talk About It about men and depression.

[00:43:44] **Terry Real:** There's a large photo biographical piece in that. And I say, my, I am the son of a violent, depressed, angry man. He was the son of a violent, depressed, angry man. I have two boys now, 31 and 34. And they do not say that. And that is the greatest work of my life. So one of the ways that, you know, a lot of big guys won't do this relational work for themselves and they won't do it for their godawful wives, but they will do it for their children.

[00:44:19] **Terry Real:** And I think that both individually and collectively we are living in horribly divisive times and remembering the unity, remembering the whole, remembering the community. That we are not a part from the world we're in and we certainly don't dominate the world we're in that we must interact in ways that are communal and collaborative and mutually respectful.

[00:44:49] **Terry Real:** If we don't learn how to do that as a species, we're on the skids. So, uh, I think this is, you know, one of the things I say is, look, we may not be able to bring peace to Ukraine. Or to the Middle East, but we sure can bring peace to our living rooms and our bedrooms. So let's start the work right here with our own lives.

[00:45:11] **Laura Reagan:** Terry Real saves the world,

[00:45:17] **Laura Reagan:** but not to make light, but it's, you know, it's the ripple effects of what we do interpersonally. Is what expands out. It's all of our interactions with everyone else in our lives and our communities. And, you know, if we're violent in our world, we're violent and we're spreading that out. And if we're kind and collaborative and connected in our world, then that's what we're spreading out.

[00:45:40] **Laura Reagan:** So I'm seriously saying like this really is world changing stuff. So I'm so grateful that you were able to take the time to come and share about it here on Therapy Chat today. And can you tell everyone where can they find all the wonderful training, the books and all that you have going on?

[00:45:59] **Terry Real:** Yeah, just go to my website, terryreal.com T E R R Y R E A L.

[00:46:06] **Terry Real:** There's a, for the general public there's listening, there's some wonderful tools. There's an inventory you can take about where you are and where your partner is and what the dynamic is between you. For therapists. There's a many, many trainings we're currently revamping the school top to bottom, and we're going to fling open the door then.

[00:46:25] **Terry Real:** May, but come and look at the website, terryreal.com. There's all sorts of goodies there for you. The book comes out in June seven, you can pre-order it. And, um, uh, I'm very proud of it. I think it's going to help a lot of people. I really do.

[00:46:41] **Laura Reagan:** I really do think so too. And thank you again, Terry, for coming onto Therapy Chat today.

[00:46:46] **Terry Real:** It's been a joy. I appreciate this.

[00:46:50] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you to Therapy Notes for sponsoring this week's episode. I do love therapy notes. It's such an asset to my business and

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[00:47:12] **Announcer:** Thank you for listening to Therapy Chat with your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C. For more information, please visit therapychatpodcast.com.