

# Therapy Chat Episode 247



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy chat Podcast Episode 247.

[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:** Today's episode is sponsored by Therapy Notes. Between writing notes, filing insurance claims, and scheduling with clients, it can be hard to stay organized. That's why I recommend Therapy Notes. Their easy to use platform lets you manage your practice securely and efficiently. Visit [therapynotes.com](https://therapynotes.com) to get two free months of Therapy Notes today. Just use the promo code: "Therapy Chat," when you sign up for a free trial at [therapynotes.com](https://therapynotes.com). [00:01:00]

[00:01:02] Hello Therapy Chat listeners. This is your host, Laura Reagan. It is late September and I am recording an introduction to an interview that I did back in early February, 2020. So right now it's almost October, 2020. By the time you're hearing this, it will be October and a lot changed between early February and now, so when I was recording this interview with my guest Gracy Obuchowicz, neither of us realized that in five or six weeks, we would be quarantining, staying at home because of Coronavirus.

[00:01:44] So I think our interview is as timely now as it was then. And the need for self care may be even more evident to you than it was before. So I hope you'll find it helpful. And there may be some things in our interview, [00:02:00] which sound out of touch with our current situation, because it wasn't happening at that time.

[00:02:07] So just listen, and I hope you enjoy my conversation with Gracy talking about her approach to self-care, using Ayurvedic principles. As always, I appreciate you listening. More new content will be coming in the weeks ahead, as I took a little break and was replaying past episodes, but now I'm back to giving you new episodes and a whole bunch more new ones will be coming in January. Thanks as always for listening.

[00:02:44] Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I'm very excited to be talking with Gracy Obuchowicz. Gracy, thanks so much for being my guest on Therapy Chat today.

[00:02:55] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Thanks for having me here, Laura.

[00:02:57] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, you're so welcome. I'm really [00:03:00] excited to talk with you about your work and your book, "Self Carefully," but before we even get into that, will you just take a moment to tell our audience a little bit about who you are and what you do.

[00:03:14] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Absolutely. I always like to start when I'm talking about how I learned to teach people about self-care, that my kind of my

best teacher was growing up in a family where people did not practice a whole lot of self-care and just trying to navigate life from learning that and having that be my basic role model.

[00:03:32] And as I got older, I started to look around at people and be like, okay, people are doing this thing in their life that it seems like they're kind of getting a better outcome from it than what I'm trying to do, which was like people pleasing, trying to be perfect, trying to like, fix or control other people as a way to keep myself safe, which is all stuff I learned in my family.

[00:03:55] And I, when I got to be in college and just after I really found [00:04:00] yoga during that time. And it was when I went into a yoga studio that I was like this, whatever this is, this is the thing that I've been looking for. And what it really was, was self-care. Even though I didn't have words for it at the time.

[00:04:14] And I taught yoga in the DC area for about five years, and really just felt like in that space, I was able to really understand a lot of myself and really help other people understand themselves and find self-care and grounding. And I got very interested in Ayurveda which I think we'll talk about during our conversation today.

[00:04:33] And Ayurveda, it's the sister science to yoga. So, it's a 5,000 year old science about how to take care of yourself, how to have a body, how to have a mind, how to have emotions, how to have a spiritual life. And the more I learned about Ayurveda, the more sense I started to make to myself and the more I understood what my body needed and I felt like the more that I could take care of myself, the more I was not only able to just keep a good sense of self-esteem and purpose in my life, but I [00:05:00] was actually able to help other people in new ways that surprised me.

[00:05:05] So I had this idea to start just a program to help people learn Ayurvedic daily habits, because they had helped me so much. And I wanted to do a group coaching format because I like working with groups of people and I brought a group of 20 women together and I called it Self Care 101 because I didn't feel like people would sign up for a course called Ayurvedic daily habits. If they didn't have a background in yoga. And what we started to do in that course was really talk about what we wanted to do in our self-care. And then also like why we couldn't do it. And I really learned a lot about perfectionism.

[00:05:38] I learned a lot about the cultural influences on our self-care that even if we try hard, there are things that keep us from doing it. And from there, I

started to see that this was a really transformational practice and it wasn't just about the habits, even though those are really important, it was also about coming together in community and really learning how to be vulnerable in each other's presence and learning how to understand the context of the world we were living in.

[00:06:04] And so over the past five years, I've run a coaching facilitation practice where I help people really find what authentic self care is in their lives. And I help organizations create culture of self care, where we can begin to honor ourselves and take care of ourselves. And I really think so much of what we're missing in our world is a real understanding of what self care and what care really is. And so that's what I'm super passionate about.

[00:06:30] **Laura Reagan:** Wow. Thank you. Yeah. That's one of the things that I'm really fascinated by in your book and what you're teaching. I didn't know when I first learned about your book, that it was going to have Ayurvedic lense. And I don't know that much about it, but I love yoga and I've learned a little bit about Ayurveda it's like kind of intimidating to me because it just seems so complicated, but I'm sure it's [00:07:00] not really complicated it's just a matter of learning it all, but I love that perspective in self-care is really something that's new to me. And I love that you're doing that. It's really cool.

[00:07:14] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Thank you. Yeah. It's interesting to look at how Ayurveda is coming into the West. The way that I think yoga did 20, 30 years ago where it's, I think it's starting off as sort of something that feels very foreign, but the more that we learn about Ayurveda the more that it makes a lot of sense.

[00:07:30] And what I always say about Ayurveda is that it just gives us a different framework to understand ourselves. And so really good learning of Ayurveda is being like, oh, that's why I always do that. Like, that's why I always wake up at like three o'clock in the morning. That's why I get hungry at this time. So it, it gives us a different way to understand who we are.

[00:07:49] **Laura Reagan:** That you said that about waking up at 3:00 AM and that's such a thing for people. I hear that from people all the time. I don't why I'm waking up at 3:00 AM every night.

[00:07:59] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** [00:08:00] Yeah. Well, I I'm hesitant to get too technical because I think like you said it, I would say Ayurveda, it's intricate and people go to school to learn Ayurveda in India like we would go to medical school here.

[00:08:11] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:08:11] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** And you could study it for years and not learn all of it. And yet I think there are a few basic principles that are pretty simple and easily applicable to our lives every day. So I'm going to- maybe I can explain some of those and then I can touch on the, like why we wake up in the middle of the night kind of thing.

[00:08:25] **Laura Reagan:** Sure. And yeah, you don't have to give the answer to why, but I think just even knowing that Ayurveda can help with that is like, whoa, but I would love if you could explain some of the basic principles, cause I think that helps sort of frame our conversation a little bit and might make it easier for our listeners who aren't familiar with it.

[00:08:44] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** I'm happy to. Well, I'll tell you what's been most profound for me to learn. And one of the things that I first learned about Ayurveda was that we are not separate from nature. And that is one that once I realized that I was like, that makes perfect [00:09:00] sense. Like why would I as a human being, not be connected to that tree that I'm looking out outside of my window right now? Like we're all made of the same stuff. And it, I think it shows so much of the cultural influence that we can have in the west that we think that we are, we have dominance over nature that we can control it in some way or we're separate from it. So that nature doesn't care about us. That's such a basic teaching of Ayurveda is like, it's all one thing, and that we are all part of nature. And that the more that we can honor that, the more that we start to find this power inside of ourselves.

[00:09:30] And so a huge part of Ayurveda is actually daily rhythms. And the word in Sanskrit is Dinacharya for anyone out there who likes Sanskrit. And what it means is that there's a way that nature works.

[00:09:42] The sun rises in the morning, and it goes to a certain point in the sky and then it falls. And if we look at what our even probably two or three generations back in our family, if we had any kind of farming influence, especially people woke up with the sunrise, they ate their biggest meal in the middle of the day, that was what [00:10:00] dinner was, supper was just like a little thing to get you through to the next morning. People went to sleep when it got dark outside, and there was a natural rhythm where we were living along with the nature and the sun. And what's happened in these past few generations is that we have a lot of technology. And I think we feel like we've kind of vested nature and a lot of us, we're not living with extended family anymore. We're not living as part of cohesive villages and towns, and as a result, we have a lot of

freedom in our lives, but what that freedom does when we don't have the routines is it actually kind of brings up like a traumatized response.

[00:10:34] And the energy of that in Ayurveda is it's called Vata and that is it's basically the nervous system and that what regulates the nervous system is community, routine, being in nature and feeling that, and I think anyone who goes on a hike and feels better is experiencing some of that calming.

[00:10:52] And what aggravates it is rushing, adrenaline, feeling lonely in our lives, feeling overwhelmed, [00:11:00] not keeping any kind of routine and traffic, our cell phone's going off all the time. So just what we kind of look at as life these days is I think inherently aggravating to our nervous system and that response really, it not only triggers trauma, but it also is just traumatic in that way.

[00:11:17] So a big part of Ayurveda is learning how to calm our nervous systems down. And they're very specific therapies that are given for that, but the best one is really just keeping a consistent routine. And so when I started to keep routine in my life, I'm like free spirit, like wanted to do whatever I wanted in my life and that was a big thing. And once I realized that the actual freedom that I found was through like waking up early and going to bed early and eating my bigger meal of the day at lunch and meditating and doing these things that seem kind of rigid. But actually they helped me start to experience this whole new level of what myself was.

[00:11:56] And so the last thing I'll say too about Ayurveda which I think is [00:12:00] really profound is that it's a lot about constitution. And so what it teaches is that each of us has a very specific constitution and that we need to care for ourselves according to that. And that constitution, there's a part of it that's kind of set from when we're born, but then it varies with the season and it varies with the time of life that we're in. So the self care that we need when we're kids is different than the self care that we need, when we're seniors. So being able to honor that there are transitions in our life is important.

[00:12:27] And then part of the transitions that happen are actually there are cycles of the day, so that are ruled by the different elements. And so that cycle from 2:00 AM to 6:00 AM is ruled by that Vata air element, which is the nervous system. And if we are experiencing nervous system dysregulation in our life, it's going to be accentuated between 2:00 AM and 6:00 AM.

[00:12:48] And also between 2:00 PM and 6:00 PM, which is I know for a lot of people, especially if you're working in an office, you're going to really feel a lot

less energy during that time, a lot more scattered, be a harder, emotional time. And those are just [00:13:00] because it's like the frequency of that energy is just a little bit more challenging at that time. Does that make sense?

[00:13:08] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah! How many parents have you heard call 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM the witching hour for kids. And I never knew why, why it would be that way. I mean, I knew why they called it that because the kids are running around hangry and wild and not going with the program, whatever the parent's trying to get them to do. I think that's really mind blown for me.

[00:13:33] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** And I, as a parent, I relate to that and that's also just like a parent to myself, I relate to that. I'm like, I just don't emotionally handle things very well between two and six. I can check in at 8:00 PM at night and feel much better about something, but that at 4:30 I was ready to fall apart about. So having some labels and words and vocabulary is such a big part of what I see self-care is having vocabulary to understand ourselves and call out things that are happening.

[00:13:59] [00:14:00] Cause they're not just again, you and I talking about this here. It's like, oh, that's not just me. I'm not just like a bad parent, right.

[00:14:06] **Laura Reagan:** Or I can't handle it for some reason. Something's wrong with me or my child.

[00:14:11] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** So, it's just, I think Ayurveda provides a really different framework and it is ancient and it's from a completely different culture and yet I love how relevant it continues to be for us all.

[00:14:22] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Thank you for explaining that.

[00:14:24] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** My pleasure.

[00:14:25] **Laura Reagan:** You

[00:14:25] know, I can't help but think as you talk about what you do and the way you're living, what a contrast that is to the DC lifestyle where you live.

[00:14:34] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yes, yes. DC is, it's not a surprise to me that I have a lot of clients here and that I've found, I found my niche here. I have a friend he's a shaman, and he's always said there's great power for you in the city where you're born. And I was born in Washington, DC. And I think about that now. It's like, okay, I'm not, I don't feel like I relate to the culture here in a lot of

ways, but I also feel like a lot of what is important to me is sort of the antidote to where people can go off balance [00:15:00] here.

[00:15:00] And it's challenging for us all I think. I think this is where we have to bring the cultural element into our self-care that we're not practicing self-care in a bubble. And if we could just figure it out for ourselves that we could get it all together because the reality is especially in DC, it's a very expensive place to live. If you have a family, both parents have to work and there's a lot of transportation that has to happen, which again is pretty aggravating to the nervous system. It's hard to, it's hard to keep a routine.

[00:15:29] I think DC is one of the highest kinds of like happy hour drinking cities in the country. I think a lot of people like when they're feeling that stressed out energy is what they're doing to try to take care of themselves is just aggravating it. And, and it's a big part of my work too, is helping people understand the difference between what I call numbing behavior and self-care.

[00:15:54] Cause I think, I think numbing can kind of feel like self care because what I say is it like turns the volume [00:16:00] down on whatever it is that's aggravating you and kind of numbs you from it, but it doesn't fix it at the root, which is what selfcare is about. And I know that's the work that you do is helping people get to the root so they can actually see a change and have a life that they're not trying to like numb from all the time.

[00:16:18] But the thing about self-care that I've really had to learn is that it doesn't always feel good. Like it feels uncomfortable, and I don't always want to have to go sit in therapy or go to bed early. Like there's still that part of me that thinks I could just sort of like stay up and watch another episode of Netflix and that would just be the sort of answer to my problem cause it's easier in the moment. So self does take a lot of discipline and it's countercultural too. Like, it was hard for me to start moving away from the happy hour culture and go to bed early. That definitely changed my relationships as well, but it also opened up a lot of space to have more authentic connection in other ways.

[00:16:54] **Laura Reagan:** That's really got me thinking with what you just said, because it's like pulling away [00:17:00] from happy hour culture means less social time. And I know one of the things you talk about in your book is, relationships as part of self-care and how time with important people can be self-care but sleep can be self-care too so if happy hour means you go and you have drinks and you don't, maybe you don't eat healthy the way you would have, if you hadn't been drinking or your whole self gets kind of off balance and



then it disrupts other parts of your self care routine in the service of the social time and of course the alcohol that takes the edge off, you know?

[00:17:41] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yeah. And, and belonging is just so important to how we're built. And I love the work of Brene Brown, because she really is so explicit in how she pulled that out of her research that like, we equate it with love. And how powerful that force is.

[00:17:58] I don't know if you've heard of Dr. Mario [00:18:00] Martinez, he wrote the book, The Mind Body Code.

[00:18:02] **Laura Reagan:** No.

[00:18:03] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** He's a psychologist and also I think anthropology background and he studied cultures from around the world and he found that the one thing, no matter where you're from in the world, that that it's affecting you, is this concept called tribal shame. And I use it a lot in my work, because it, it is just so relevant that the idea that you're not allowed to like do better than the people that you came from. So you can't, say you grew up in a culture where people drink and I grew up in a, like my friends from high school, everyone they drank and it's a happy hour culture.

[00:18:38] And I got to a point in my life and my selfcare where I was like, this doesn't work for me anymore. And it just, it felt so painful to have to like move out of some of those moments. Cause I really did feel like I was leaving the tribe in that way. And yet I think such a big part of our self-care is we were talking about this before we started recording is like, is you have to chart your own [00:19:00] course and you have to kind of leave what has been comfortable and really find your own authenticity.

[00:19:05] But I think a big part of self-care too is honoring the emotional impact of that. And that there's going to probably be a lot of greif if you have to end or create distance in certain relationships, because you just can't practice the self-care you want and kind of stay up with that rhythm.

[00:19:19] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, that makes me think about something else I saw in your book, which is about how self-care is a very layered process.

[00:19:29] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yes. And I, the layers continue to reveal themselves as I continue to study it. And so much of what I've learned about self-care has been just watching my clients work through it and all that comes up for them in the process. Because I think before I really thought it was just

about the body and the routines. It's not, not about that- like that is like, especially it's if you have experienced trauma in your life and just having a safe feeling in your own body that we can give ourselves through the power of just [00:20:00] routines. I think there is almost, I call it like a reparenting process that can happen by just mindfully giving ourselves the bedtime that we need and the meals that we need and keeping our environment clean and doing the things that make our nervous system feel safe.

[00:20:13] But then almost that safety will bring up all the emotional stuff is what I find. And that's why it's so important to be able to have a sense of emotional intelligence and like emotional allowance, like it's okay to feel grief, it's necessary. And I can't actually experience positive emotion, unless I feel that which is so hard in our very like grief adverse culture. And so it's like about letting ourselves see that as like a powerful place and really gaining compassion for our own internal lives and our own authenticity.

[00:20:45] And then the layer, which I find really fascinating because I had no idea before I started doing my work is that there's this third layer that I found, which is really about community, and how important it is to: 1. Get support from people that really want you to [00:21:00] grow. And I think that's kind of the antithesis to that tribal shame thing is that I think there's something unconscious often in us that wants to keep the people close to us, close to us and that sometimes means like denying them the opportunity to grow or denying ourselves the opportunity to grow.

[00:21:14] **Laura Reagan:** Mmmm

[00:21:14] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** But I think finding and aligning yourself with people that really want you to grow and are willing to kind of like go with you in that process, I just I don't think we can do it alone. I think the belonging is too strong and necessary to our psyche. And so to find the communities of people that want that for themselves is so important. And then the part that I really feel fitting into this very necessary conversation we need to be having about social justice right now is that the more we get together and that we practice vulnerability and we talk about where we're struggling and why it's hard to practice self-care and why we're just so mean to ourselves or we're doing self-destructive behavior.

[00:21:52] And the more that we see that everyone is kind of saying the same thing I think that starts to help me understand that maybe I'm not the [00:22:00] problem. And that was what started to happen with my clients is that we would get together and we'd talk about the perfectionism and the pushing ourselves

and the being mean to ourselves and the denying ourselves, the things we needed and we're like, well, why are we all feeling this way? Like if I thought this was just my personal problem, and that's the term I like to use for that is commonality.

[00:22:17] So it's really like, okay, if we're all feeling this way, then maybe it's culture. And if it's culture, then we don't need to work on fixing ourselves as much as taking care of ourselves, of course but like maybe culture does need to be fixed, but maybe we don't is like, what I like to say about it.

[00:22:35] **Laura Reagan:** Let's just pause for a moment so I can give you a little bit more information about why I love Therapy Notes. I switched to Therapy Notes a few years ago, I'd say it's about three years now I believe, and I have never regretted it. I was very happy with the EHR I used before, but Therapy Notes [00:23:00] is more intuitive. I love the interface. The customer service is fantastic, and I love how I can get my notes done quickly because I can customize the template that I use for my notes. And there are opportunities to put check marks rather than having to write out the intervention used, so I have cut my time spent writing notes way down, which is wonderful because I like to focus on seeing clients. I know documentation is an important part of our work, but it can also be time consuming. And that is why I love using Therapy Notes. If you are considering switching EHRs, or you're looking for one to use in your practice, give Therapy Notes a try. You can get two free months by using the code: "Therapy Chat."

[00:23:55] Now let's get back to our interview. [00:24:00]

[00:24:00] Mm-hmm I agree with you. And I do agree that we live in a culture that does promote, let's say self-neglect, because it's like work hard, push through Puritan work ethic. If you work hard, you were good. If you don't work hard, you are not good. Be independent. Do it yourself. Don't rely on others. Don't need others. Don't ask for help. How many times have you heard people say, I don't want any handouts and that's like encouraged by our culture as if there's something wrong with sometimes needing help, but in truth, we all need help at times. And we need each other, and we need belonging. We need community connection.

[00:24:46] So of course there's the old stereotype that self-care is selfish, but it isn't. I hear you saying it isn't just about the self it's about the self within community and [00:25:00] communities of self-care.

[00:25:02] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yeah. Oh, there's so much in what you just said. Yes. Well, that's the thing it's like as self-care's kind of gotten more into the modern lexicon these past few years, and I think people want to trivialize it and I'm like, I see why you could do that. If you just are kind of looking at like massages and bubble baths and kind the way that people talk about it, except what is the self? is the thing.

[00:25:25] **Laura Reagan:** Right.

[00:25:25] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** And I think when we really connect to each other, especially if we're open to practicing vulnerability with each other, we start to understand that like myself is not disconnected from yourself. And the self is this really, it's this amazing thing. And this connection we have to each other. And I think when we can give ourselves space to honor that, it's a lot harder for me to look at injustice in the world and feel like, well, that's them. And that's their problem because no, we're all in this together. And my suffering is wrapped up in your suffering. And my liberation is wrapped up in your liberation. Cause I think a huge form of [00:26:00] self care is to be looking at always at what's happening to the people in your community and how can you be of service. Which isn't about self neglect. It's not about self-sacrifice and depleting yourself, which I think is so much of the model of activism is like, I'm going to deny myself because that's the right thing to do. So it's, I think what's being asked for right now, what we're hungry for is this really updated view of how do I fill this sense of independence inside of my myself and show up and be vulnerable so I can really be in relationship with you and care enough about you, that we can start to change this together, especially if I have any kind of power and privilege in my experience, which I do. And so I want to be able to use that...

[00:26:44] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, using it for good.

[00:26:47] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yeah. And just as something else that you said to you about like our puritanical work culture, that it, I mean, I think so much of what our story of the United States is, is born out of trauma. And in so [00:27:00] much of what that culture comes from is a traumatized response. And what I've had to learn about perfectionism is so much of what my own perfectionism was, and it continues to be is really a traumatized response. Like it's what I learned in my family growing up around addiction and mental illness that was if I can be perfect enough, I can somehow keep myself safe.

[00:27:21] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:27:21] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** And so to really start to challenge that influence in ourselves and in culture. And I really think the antithesis of it is one it's vulnerability. Again thank you Brene Brown for helping us with that, to understand that vulnerability is powerful and necessary and where we connect from.

[00:27:37] And then two, I think it's really, it's a concept I talked about in the book called Kaizen, which is it's actually a Japanese word and it means small incremental change. And it's used in Japanese business practice, and I like to use it in coaching and I use it in everything. I use it in relationship, but it's really about how to show up with a growth mentality versus like a [00:28:00] right or wrong mentality.

[00:28:01] And I just, I find it so profound to be like, well, how do I embrace a small change? How do I celebrate that change? How do I look for the next change and get excited about that rather than feeling like, well, I don't have it all figured out right now. I must not know how to do this.

[00:28:16] **Laura Reagan:** yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely. And a note that I wrote to myself when going through your book was about that idea of how perfectionism keeps us stuck in our self-care and our personal growth. That was a quote from your book.

[00:28:33] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** I'm so grateful to my clients. I have to keep saying that because I don't think I fully recognized how deep my own perfectionism was until I started to watch what they were going through. And just that thing of like anyone out who is listening to this, it's like, if you've tried to take care of yourself before or make a habit change and it didn't work. My guess is that perfectionism was part of that. And it's the idea that we're taught this very willpower-based model about how to make a change in our lives.

[00:28:59] That [00:29:00] like the new year's resolution I'm gonna wake up tomorrow and be a whole new me, which doesn't work. Cause it's our nervous systems can only handle a certain amount of change at a time. And that's what a lot of what Kaizen is too. And then again, that idea that,

[00:29:15] **Laura Reagan:** That makes a lot of sense, really sorry for interrupting, but I mean that why it's so hard because we, our nervous systems can only accept a certain amount of change at one time.

[00:29:25] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** It's destabilizing, even if it's positive change, it's destabilizing. We have good reason for doing the things that we do. And the

thing about routine is funny, cuz I, I talk a lot about it and I'm like, we all have routines, like you are waking up and scrolling on Facebook, first thing in the morning for 20 minutes, that's a routine and you do it because it's safe in a way or staying in a relationship where we're not being honored and yet we can't break away. It's because it's a routine and it there's a feeling of safety there, even if it's not giving us what we want. And so I see so much of self-care being, how do we reclaim that [00:30:00] feeling of safety for ourselves is not something that's dependent on anything outside of ourselves and a big part of that is community and support from other people too. But then once we have that, then I think we really have the safety that we need to start to experiment with other changes in our life in a way that it doesn't feel so threatening to ourselves.

[00:30:18] **Laura Reagan:** Mm. Yeah. I'm just soaking this all in and I'm, I'm really enjoying what you're saying. And it's like resonant beyond the words somehow.

[00:30:29] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** I find it so deep. Like again, I really was just like, I just wanted to teach people about waking up in the morning. And the more that I've like watched people transform through this, whatever the self-care thing is, the more, it just makes me, it gives me hope actually right now cause I think it can be really easy to look out at what's happening in the bigger world and feel hopeless. And I know a lot of people do. And the thing that feels like the kind of the trap door of like that is [00:31:00] that, but the power of the self is so amazing, if we can learn how to access it, and utilize it.

[00:31:05] And it's not something that really takes money. It does take a little time, but not a ton. It's I think it's more about intention and that question of what do I need right now? I got that from Kristen Neff, who does a lot of work on self-compassion, and she was sharing in a podcast of that's the ultimate self-compassion question is what do I need?

[00:31:25] And again, we've been taught that so selfish, but I think it's the opposite of that, the checking in with ourselves, learning how to be an alignment with ourselves, and integrity with ourselves that gives us so much power, not just for our own lives, but really how to, how to show up for other people too.

[00:31:40] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I love Kristin Neff's work and Brene Brown. And in fact, I learned about Kristin Neff from Brene Brown.

[00:31:49] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Me too.

[00:31:50] **Laura Reagan:** And I'm thinking about that question of what do I need and what you said before about reparenting and how working with people who've experienced complex [00:32:00] trauma. It's often we parent ourselves the way we were parented.

[00:32:06] In other words, If our parent ignored our needs, our emotional needs, our physical needs neglected us, then that's kind of what we do to ourselves. That's what I think a lot of my clients realize. So even when asking themselves, what do I need for many of us, it can be like need? But, and I've actually had multiple people say, what, what do you mean, what do I need? What need, what do you mean need? What does that mean?

[00:32:34] Because whatever they experienced during childhood; they learn to just not have needs. Of course, they still had them, but to suppress their own needs so much, so significantly, that they don't even know how to connect to them.

[00:32:51] So that's one of the things that I think is really powerful about that idea of the layers is that you have to start where you are. If you can't [00:33:00] identify what you need, if you don't know that you have needs, then that's where you have to start, you know?

[00:33:06] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yes. One of my, like early clients, I still love this question so much. She's like, you talk a lot about feeling your feelings, but like how do you do that?

[00:33:17] **Laura Reagan:** Right.

[00:33:17] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** I was like, that's like the best question I've heard. It's like how we like to go back to the basics of like, what is it to have a feeling? What is it to like give ourselves space to feel that? What is it to even realize we're tired? Like, it took me a long time in my life before I even realized when I was tired. Like, I didn't know. Cause I was so disconnected from my own body or when I was hungry.

[00:33:37] **Laura Reagan:** Same hungry, tired having to go to the bathroom, even those basic basic instinctual needs are, can be hard to access when you've just learned to shut it off really, probably so early that you don't even know you do it like so young.

[00:33:54] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yes. and I think just the simplicity of what it is to just [00:34:00] start to feed our body again is great about self-care. I love

that. And kind of the Ayurvedic hack about daily routines, which I come back to a lot for myself is if you go to bed around the same time, most nights, wake up around the, same time most mornings and feed yourself like that's a huge amount of stabilization to your nervous system. To start to look a little deeper in, but it is just as simple as like giving yourself some food in a, in a scheduled kind of way, the same way you would do for your cat.

[00:34:34] **Laura Reagan:** Right. mm. Yeah. That's the thing I think even just those basic things that you just said are part of when someone is struggling with self-care or they're struggling they're feeling extremely depleted those are the basic questions. Well, what do you eat? What's your sleep situation? How much sleep are you getting? Do you have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep. For people who've experienced [00:35:00] trauma, having no appetite, not sleeping well, having trouble falling asleep, not sleeping long enough once they fall asleep, tossing and turning all night, having nightmares, all of those things are common for people who've experienced trauma. And so it's like you have to start there. Like, how could you really do any other work when your nervous system's not going to be regulated enough to do any healing if you can't sleep, if you can't eat cause your body isn't getting just the most basic, basic things that it needs to function.

[00:35:36] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yes. And I really think that creating the conditions of safety in our own body is really then things start to come up, in a way that we can deal with them so not to rush. That's something I work with my clients, it's like, when you need to work on that, that'll come up. First its like is it a safe place in your being right now? And [00:36:00] that is really just, it's a process too. And I want to say that out there too, is that I think so much of like a perfectionist kind of self-improvement mentality and I really put self-improvement and perfectionism because I think there's this premise that we have that once I kind of feel okay about myself, I can take care of myself. Yeah. And that comes from perfectionism because it's, we need to start by taking care of ourselves so we can start to feel okay about ourselves.

[00:36:26] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So true. Then what you you've said a couple times about how once you start practicing self-care and getting more self-care, the things that need to be dealt with are going to come up. So what I'm taking from that is the more you take care of yourself, the more you're going to start to feel more of how you feel inside, which could be not good feelings, feelings, you don't like you know. And then how confusing that is. I mean, even like the first, the first chapter of your book [00:37:00] is called, well, if it's a chapter or you call it an essay, Self-care and F\*\*\*ing It All Up and like, I'm just thinking how as you start to practice self-care and you start to feel better. And then all of



a sudden, as they always use that analogy of the layers of an onion, like it's like you peeled off a layer and now you're feeling all this stuff that you didn't know was there. And then you think, oh, I must be doing it wrong, or something's wrong with me. And it can set you back and then you give up on the self-care stuff. Then you think you screwed it all up. You give up and you stop.

[00:37:33] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yeah. Yes. Yes. That's why I think we need to like, have more open conversations about how hard it can be to take care of ourselves and what that brings up and have vocabulary around it.

[00:37:44] And there's just, there's certain metrics I like to give as like, is your self care working? And part of that I would say is like, do you feel a full emotional range? And if you're not feeling kinda flat in your life I mean, chances are there's probably, I mean, there's, for me, it was [00:38:00] denial. It was like I had to come out of denial about a lot of things that have happened in my family growing up and being able to, but that there's a lot of grief that I had to feel along the way.

[00:38:09] But once I started to feel the grief, then I started to let in like the emotion in general and the connection in general.

[00:38:14] **Laura Reagan:** Right cause the grief that you hold is why you weren't connected with yourself anyway, because like you said, in our culture, you are not supposed to feel that way. So you just have to suppress it.

[00:38:25] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Yes. So I think it's, I call it revolutionary self care cause I think it is revolution about like, no, I feel sad. I'm going to feel sad about this. I'm feeling, that's the thing to celebrate. And the more we can just normalize that and talk about how to really, how to care for ourselves when all of that comes up, the more that we start to change culture itself.

[00:38:49] And that's where to me is like self-care is so deeply unselfish that if we are committed to this and enough of us join together that are committed to this then culture [00:39:00] changes. Maybe not super quickly. Cause obviously there's a lot of work to do with a lot of people, but the people who, if you're hearing this and it's resonating, it's like, I think almost like we have a responsibility to do this for ourselves so we can help others too.

[00:39:12] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. It's like, if you recognize that we're all connected and we're connected with nature, the us versus them mentality can't hang on.

[00:39:23] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** I love that. Yes. Yes, we are all in it together. And another vignette in the book is like self-care and holding space. I think it's sort of, it's a hard thing to do, to have to like, have a level of consciousness in yourself that you've kind of gotten through caring for yourself and then have to hold space for other people to catch up.

[00:39:44] I feel that frustration in the bigger realm, sometimes I'm like, we just need to figure out the compassion is the way and why are we still in this?

[00:39:51] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah.

[00:39:51] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** And how to just hold some space for like how challenging it is right now, too.

[00:39:56] **Laura Reagan:** Mm. Yeah, it is. Well, I really [00:40:00] appreciate what you're doing. I think that this book is needed, and I love the particular perspective that you bring through this and the work that you're doing.

[00:40:10] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Thank you, Laura. I really believe so much of self-care is conversation. And so I love being able to talk to you in this space. And I feel it's an act of self-care and also I learn about it every time I have a discussion with somebody. So thank you for that.

[00:40:25] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, you're so welcome.

[00:40:27] And before we end, I just want to be sure that you let our audience know where they can find what you're doing and be sure to let them know that you have a podcast too, since they're all podcast listeners.

[00:40:39] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Oh yeah. Well, you can learn more about my work at my website, which is, [selfcarewithgracy.com](http://selfcarewithgracy.com). And I have a podcast which is called Self Care With Gracy. You can search for it on iTunes, which it's there. And I bring on guests who like to talk about, [00:41:00] who are doing work that I see as self-care and it's herbalist, and therapists and facilitators. And just to how to have these real conversations about self-care so we can all learn a little bit more.

[00:41:10] And as you mentioned, I have a book called Self Carefully. It's a collaborative book with a small printing press and a really wonderful illustrator who's a dear friend of mine, Maria Habib. And it's really about how to use self-care as a lens to not only navigate your own life, but navigate the challenges, the world that we're living in.

[00:41:30] And you can order that book on Amazon or wherever you buy books, as well. So yeah, I'm about to step out for, I'm pregnant with my second baby and about to step out for maternity leave in this next month. But if you do listen to this and it resonates, feel free to drop me a line and I always love to connect to people and I'll get back to you as soon as I'm back and in that realm again.

[00:41:52] **Laura Reagan:** Awesome. And I think most likely when this airs will probably be by the time you're just about finishing up your maternity leave, so it'll probably work [00:42:00] out just right.

[00:42:01] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** Oh great. Oh, great. Yes, I will. I welcome, I wanna hear about your self care cause I'm gonna learn from you on the process as well.

[00:42:08] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Well, thank you Gracy so much for being my guest today.

[00:42:11] **Gracy Obuchowicz:** My immense pleasure. Thank you so much for having me.

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