



EPISODE 008:

Every Reaction Makes Sense with Shelby Leigh

[00:00:00] **Shelby:** The number one hardest thing to do with the people I work with yeah. Is to help them learn how to feel safe enough to rest and exhale so that they can actually tune into what they genuinely want and need in every moment. And maybe at we start at the most fundamental. Basic needs. Food, sleep, water, exercise.

[00:00:23] Yeah, let's start there. Because when we're in survival and go, go, go. Push, push, push. We ignore all of those things and then that brings that window of tolerance slower.

[00:00:36] **Carolyn:** Today my guest is Shelby Lee, l p c. She has over 15 years of clinical practice, a master's degree in somatic psychotherapy, two coaching certificates, and numerous trainings in the somatic treatment.

[00:00:52] Of trauma between her own journey with Complex P T S D and supporting thousands of students and clients, she is truly ignited by supporting folks across the globe to be able to support themselves and the people they work with to move from simply thriving to truly thriving. Shelby offers somatically based trauma informed trainings for companies and organizations deep.

[00:01:22] Education and professional development around how we can create safer spaces. She also supports coaches, therapists, and health and wellness entrepreneurs in one-on-one nervous system support as they deepen and expand their professional work and businesses. Shelby's also the founder of Creating Safer Space, creating safer healthcare and embodied coaching experience online programs supporting.



[00:01:53] Around trauma informed care and deepening embodiment of therapeutic relationships and healing trauma. She's also the host of the Relationship as Medicine Podcast stories from trauma informed care providers around the world.

[00:02:14] Shelby and I met one time before we did this podcast that you're about to hear, and when I met her for the first time, there was such a sense of calmness about her that as I bounced into our call, having had a busy day and jumping from thing to thing, I couldn't help but find that calmness. So alluring, so grounding.

[00:02:42] And she really emulates the work that she does. And so in this conversation you will hear. About Shelby's work, how she helps organizations create safer spaces. We talk about what that means. We talk about the window of tolerance, and we also discuss the importance of compassion. Let's begin.

[00:03:09] **INTRO:** Welcome to Evolve a new era of leadership, a podcast for real leaders to join real conversations with business experts, practitioners thought leaders, and change makers who integrate head, heart, and body in all they do, who commit to compassion and curiosity, who commit to radical self-leadership in their quest to understand others better too.

[00:03:33] Because the only way to deliver real results is to understand what it takes to lead real human beings. This is a new era of leadership.

[00:03:48] **Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Sora, and this is Evolve a new era of Leadership. Well, listeners have evolved today. I have on our show, Shelby Lee and Shelby has some amazing content practice insight. There's so much good stuff that I know Shelby's gonna share with us today, and I'm really excited to have you on the show.

[00:04:11] Shelby, thanks for joining

[00:04:12] **Shelby:** us. Thank you so much. I'm really looking forward to this conversation and seeing where we go.



[00:04:18] **Carolyn:** Yeah. You know, I kind of referred to you at one point as a pioneer, and I say that with lots of love and admiration because when I came across your work I was really struck at how fulsome it is and your background.

[00:04:33] So Shelby, I was hoping that you could talk to us today about what it means. To be trauma informed and the work that you've been doing for 15 years with organizations to help them be trauma informed.

[00:04:50] **Shelby:** Yeah. Well, trauma-informed can mean a lot of things, but uh, it's most basic level. It's really learning how to not harm and not re harm people when they're in our care.

[00:05:07] Or who we're in connection with. We learn that trauma is a real thing that actually many, many people, Terry, more people than we could even imagine. Mm. It's, you know, I think we used to have ideas that people with trauma were. People with really big reactions, really big scary responses, and we've all been through a pandemic now.

[00:05:28] We've all experienced trauma on different levels, and so when we're trauma informed, we learn how to care for and welcome people in our communities and people in our care, and people in our organizations. in a way where we know that we have an impact on each other, and there are ways that we can create safe enough space so people can show up as authentically and fully as they can so they can have a better bet at learning in an easier way, growing in an easier way, participating in an easier way.

[00:06:01] And being supported in that. So when we're trauma informed, we know we have an impact and we know how to respond. We know how to set it up so that we're not causing additional harm.

[00:06:12] **Carolyn:** Yeah. And you said right there, we know we're having an impact. And I know my experience of being in the corporate world for, you know, 25 years.

[00:06:22] I didn't always realize or know that I was having an impact. And I think if we get right down to the nervous system and this whole understanding



that we are going to either move people away from us or bring them closer to us, I think that's a really important piece for us. Now to logically understand that that reaction's gonna happen in people and as leaders, we need to be accountable.

[00:06:50] To how we show up.

[00:06:53] **Shelby:** Absolutely. And you know, I like to define trauma informed care really as human informed care because mm-hmm. , this awareness and these tools, they are helpful to all relationships and really elicit a sense of compassion and curiosity, which any relationship, it doesn't matter if you are.

[00:07:17] A leader, if you're a follower, if you're the boss in charge, if you're a team member, it doesn't matter where you are. We can all lean into a sense of curiosity and compassion and do just what you just said. Yeah. Make space for people to feel free and safe enough to move towards us or do the opposite.

[00:07:35] Make a space where it feels like people want to move away.

[00:07:39] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Now you've been doing this for like 15 years.

[00:07:43] **Shelby:** At least, I think more now closer to 17 or 20. Yeah.

[00:07:48] **Carolyn:** and I mean the, the research in the neurobiology space has progressed a lot. The research in the space of trauma has progressed a lot. So, I mean, this is why I'm saying you're a real pioneer because 17 years ago, these types of things weren't necessarily welcomed in organizations or with leaders, were they?

[00:08:08] What's your experience been like over the past 17 years?

[00:08:11] **Shelby:** Well, it started with me learning what my own body and nervous system felt like, working within organizations, working in teams, working with others, and desperately wanting to feel, seen, heard, understand, and like I belonged. And often feeling like I was scared.



[00:08:34] I couldn't actually be my full self. And I was often managing a lot of layers of anxiety and other emotions just to be able to do my job, . Wow. And I noticed that when I'd start having conversations with others who were feeling similarly, that something needed to happen and. Back then, the conversations were not about trauma.

[00:09:00] they were just about power dynamics and how do we take care of each other? How do we help people feel like they can have a voice and show up and. Participate and not get fired, you know, or yeah, not want to leave, not burn out, things like that. How can they take better care of themselves? And now we know trauma's becoming so common as a word, it feels much easier to just say it like it is.

[00:09:25] Yeah. in the past we actually didn't use the word trauma much cuz we, it scared people a. Yeah, so now we can speak more directly, which is great. Yeah,

[00:09:35] **Carolyn:** and that, and that was really a huge inspiration for me in writing this book, is that I didn't know what that word meant. You know, there's a whole chapter, I talk about it in my book.

[00:09:44] I thought trauma was like a big, huge physical wound, and to the point where I didn't even understand that I had trauma in my life because I didn't wanna co-opt the word. From somebody who had had it worse than I did. And so huge learning for me is trauma is human because we all are going to have an emotional wound.

[00:10:07] And whether or not it's big tea, little tea, it really doesn't matter. It stores in our body. So again, how has your work, you know, being the pioneer that you are, how has your work changed since the pandemic happened? And people are a little bit more open to. Hearing this stuff.

[00:10:28] **Shelby:** Hmm. Well, it's been very busy.

[00:10:30] Yeah. I got so busy as soon as the pandemic started because all of a sudden people realized that people were living in a constant state of fear, and it



was creating all sorts of dynamics and their work life, their home life, their communities. And people have really shown up either feeling like they needed extra care coming to me, you know, and wanting to learn everything about what was happening or wanting to take care of people in their organizations.

[00:11:02] I mean, the awareness around mental health and burnout now since the pandemic is so huge. Yeah. And people are really want training on how to. Support mental health within their staff, their team members. Not just so they can perform, but so that they can feel like they're held or they're, they can show up in a way where they feel nourished and well, not every company, but a lot more organizations Yeah.

[00:11:30] Are realizing that when their people actually are supported to feel well and thriving, they're more productive, they're more generative. Everything is better. Yeah. And when we're trauma informed, We know that, uh, these things need to be prioritized. That we have to be making space for human to human conversations about what's happening, not only on a personal level, but on the organizational level between our connections with each other, what's happening in the power dynamics, both seen and unseen.

[00:12:02] And I've seen so much more willingness for people just to roll up their sleeves and look at their own stuff and also, Actually make a space for other people to have voices and experiences welcoming more parts of each other. Yeah. So that we can be human and whole together.

[00:12:19] **Carolyn:** And that's where the authenticity step comes in.

[00:12:22] Cuz we can't be authentic unless we've got all those elements of ourselves. And I know a tool that I like to use a lot is just these three centers of intelligence, our head, our heart, and our body. And, and making sure that they're integrated. And we can't integrate them if our nervous system is so hyper aroused.

[00:12:44] Which leads me to a tool that I know you use in your work, and I thought maybe we could talk a little bit about that today, which is the window of



tolerance. Could you help us help the listeners understand a little bit about what that is and how leaders might be able to use it to inform how they're showing.

[00:13:05] Yeah,

[00:13:06] **Shelby:** I love the window of tolerance. It's very common in the somatic trauma resolution world. Yeah. To understand what is actually happening on the inside. There are other models and science C models that are much more in depth, but I like this one cuz it's simple and at its most fundamental level, it shows us that when we can be mindful of what happens inside in response, either to a threat or perceived.

[00:13:34] Or also in response to goodness, things that feel good that our ability and our capacity to hold more and more emotions and experiences, it can widen. Mm-hmm. . So for example, When my window of tolerance is wider, I can be more responsive instead of reactive. I have more space for life to move through me.

[00:13:56] All the storms can move through. There's something in me that is steady enough, solid enough, held enough. That I can be a human being. I can hold that full spectrum. But when I experienced trauma that hasn't been held, healed, resolved, that window gets really small and almost everything sets me off. I can speak from direct experience.

[00:14:19] I would in that very tiny window of tolerance for decades where just anything would send me into a state of. Fight, flight or freeze or collapse, and it's very hard to get out though when we can start watching. What allows us to widen that window or what just naturally makes it widen. For example, a yoga practice for someone, a walking the dog around the block, you know, taking a cold shower, reading a book, leaning on someone we love.

[00:14:52] For a lot of people, those things just naturally widen the window, and when we do it enough times, the window stays wide. Right. And then we can also be aware of what closes that window. . Yeah. Um, what sets us off? If get feedback from a team member that maybe comes off as criticism, does that shut the window really fast?



[00:15:15] Maybe I worked on a project really hard and it didn't get the response I wanted it to. Maybe it closes the window. Maybe I didn't feel affirmed or validated and part of my identity in a meeting window closed. That's that like moving away that you were talking about .

[00:15:33] **Carolyn:** Yeah. And then when that window closes, the self-protective behaviors go up.

[00:15:38] We get short, we don't hear as well. We lose our, our ability to be curious and other people are gonna build off of. Lowered window of tolerance too, I'm guessing. Yeah. Then we're

[00:15:51] **Shelby:** all in a state of reactivity together, which takes away our ability to connect on a genuine social level. We can't be social beings if we're in survival.

[00:16:00] Right. And we're stuck in reactivity. The coolest thing about the window of tolerance is that. We don't have to necessarily change ourselves, , we actually just need to widen the window so there's more space for ourselves. There's more space for imperfection, there's more space for fear. There's more space for excitement and enjoyment, and a lot of people try to just work on fixing the symptoms.

[00:16:27] But when we can be mindful of what widens. and then stitch together 10 experiences of things that feel resourcing, supportive, soothing, comforting. That window just naturally wants to keep widening and widening. So I call that stitching. Mm-hmm. . And instead of focusing on what shuts it to more often, focus on what, why it isn't.

[00:16:51] and that actually helps us easily widen our window instead of stay stuck in those places of what's wrong, what's bad, what hurts.

[00:17:00] **Carolyn:** Yeah. I really like what you're saying there too. It's sort of fundamental concept, I think to leadership and life actually is nobody needs to be fixed. Mm-hmm. at all. I think maybe we need to discover a few things about ourselves.



[00:17:16] But nobody needs to be fixed. And so this notion of the window of tolerance, I think really helps live into that belief that we just need to expand things so that we can see broader, right? And be able to take in more of our

[00:17:31] **Shelby:** senses. Yeah. When our nervous systems are regulated, that means like when they're optimally functioning.

[00:17:37] When we have that full range of the human experience, there's so much space. To be ourselves, to be unique and different will also be connected in community in our organizations. But when we don't have s. Space. It's very hard to be ourselves, to stay connected, to be productive and generative and creative, all those things.

[00:18:00] And so I love this model because it gives us space

[00:18:04] **Carolyn:** to work with. Right. And so what are some of the things that you do with leaders to help them understand that they need space, and then how to find more capacity to build that?

[00:18:16] **Shelby:** Remind them that things like resting is okay, and what do we need to do to let you feel safe enough to rest and take breaks?

[00:18:27] The hustle has been very popular for a long time. Of the harder I work, the more successful I'll be and the more I'll be promoted and whatever, you know? Yep. and so I work as a business coach and that is the number one hardest thing to do with the people I work with. , yeah. Is to help them learn how to feel safe enough.

[00:18:48] To rest and exhale so that they can actually tune to what they genuinely want and need in every moment. And maybe it, it's, we start at the most fundamental, basic needs. Food, sleep, water, exercise. Yeah. Let's start there. And so those are called resources. How do we really listen in to what you really want and need?

[00:19:13] Because when we're in survival and go, go, go, push, push, push. We ignore all of those things, and then that brings that window of tolerance slower,



right? So start with basic needs, learning that it can be safe to rest and create more space for listening. And having choice around how we respond instead of react on a bigger level.

[00:19:37] Let's see. I think connection is really, really a key part. How do we let in support as leaders? Yeah. .

[00:19:47] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Well, and that's, that's a big part of my evolv model is well, connection and reactivity and connection can look different for different people. It doesn't mean I'm gonna give you a hug or tell you everything about myself, and I find that with the people I work with is sometimes that's a belief that's, uh, a little bit hard to detach from.

[00:20:08] But what are some other ways that we can feel connected to each other?

[00:20:13] **Shelby:** Hmm. That's such a good question. I'd be curious, you know, just for people who are listening right now, what comes up like, cuz it's different for all of us. Yeah. And for some people, connection with other human beings is the last thing in the world, , that comes to mind.

[00:20:30] And so, you know, our pets walking in nature, connecting with, you know, fresh air. and movement that can bring a sense of the big kind of connection out, like things that are much bigger than us. Yeah. That help us connect in when we are talking about connecting with other people. I like thinking about side by side play

[00:20:54] Hmm. In terms of. I don't know if you want to go to some kind of group or you're working on something together or where you don't have to do something work related, but you get to let other parts of yourself out that you haven't accessed because you've been working so hard.

[00:21:10] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Things like that. Yeah. I know I've heard some clients say like feeling connected.



[00:21:17] It comes to them. In maybe more practical ways, like you said, what you needed to say in this meeting in an efficient, clear way that makes me feel connected to you. I'm like, whoa, really like that. That doesn't necessarily. Resonate with me right outta the gate, but it really helped me understand that that is important for other people, and knowing that is important to create those spaces of, again, safety or connection.

[00:21:46] And with that connection, people are gonna feel safer.

[00:21:50] **Shelby:** Absolutely. Yes. I love that example. That's beautiful. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

[00:21:55] **Carolyn:** I think other things too that I've witnessed, some people like to get stuff done and take action quickly. And so this sense of connection can come through doing something quickly, but with mindfulness, right?

[00:22:12] With some thought and intention behind it. It's been an interesting exploration for me over the past year, really understanding what safety can look like to different types of people. Absolutely.

[00:22:24] **Shelby:** Safety and connection, right? Yeah. If we go hand in hand.

[00:22:27] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Now, can you talk a little bit more about safety and again, how do you use those words?

[00:22:34] I mean, before 2020 we would hear about safety in terms of psychological health and safety. And here in Canada we have a national standard around psychological health and safety. But how, like, how do you describe it with your corporate clients?

[00:22:50] **Shelby:** I like to think of safety on a spectrum, and I like to remind us all that there is no way we can create a perfectly safe space.

[00:22:59] And if we try, we're going to fail and I think we either. Don't even wanna think about creating a safe enough space because we could do it really wrong. And so if we don't even know about it then, right? We don't even have to



do it. Or we tell people this is a safe space, but don't even really put up the structures in place for people to be able to feel safe.

[00:23:23] And so I like to go for in between . Okay. We're aiming. Creating a safe enough space where people feel like they can advocate for themselves if they have a need or a want, or if they're feeling challenged or scared. And the way I start with creating a safe enough space is. First with the leaders, , the people who are creating the structures and spaces for others have got to feel safe enough themselves, right?

[00:23:56] They have to feel supported, grounded, able to breathe as much as possible. Obviously that's not possible all the time. Mm-hmm. , so we start with ourselves. How do we become a home inside of our. You know, how do we become safe for ourselves to open to every part, every emotion, everything that arises, how do we meet that with friendliness, kindness, care, compassion, and then how do we bring that into the places where others are in our care or we're connecting with our colleagues?

[00:24:29] Mm-hmm. . And I look at structures and a lot of people who've experienced trauma didn't get to know what was coming at them, right? . And so some people find setting up structures really contrived. Do they roll their eyes? What's the point? Does it even seem like it would help? But what I mean by structures are.

[00:24:51] Letting people know what's gonna happen before it happens. Creating very basic instructions for here's what I would like to have happen in this meeting, or in this event, or in this thing when we're doing together, and here's what I imagine that will look like. And then consent. Are you available for them?

[00:25:11] Are you up for that? Is there anything we could change or adapt together so that feels even better for you to be able to participate in this? Collaboration is really key. I like to emphasize consent in so many ways possible that when people have access to step in with a yes or a no to everything and know that it will.



[00:25:35] Honored and not questioned . Yeah. That actually people step into almost everything because they know they have choice. And so setting up that up is part of the structure. I like to have agreements as, yeah, in our, and values, right? Most companies and organizations have values, so we create shared agreements together in the spaces that we're working in.

[00:25:57] What helps you feel most held, seen, understood, and at ease in yourself, like you can be most. I can't hand you a thing and say, here's what your company's agreement should be. Yeah. It has to be based on the human beings that are there in the present moment and how they want to feel celebrated, supported, held, all of it.

[00:26:19] Yeah. And,

[00:26:19] **Carolyn:** and you know, those things to set up at the beginning of a meeting, for example, do not have to. 30, 40 minutes, they can be done in a nice succinct, you know, five to 10 minutes. And I hear you on the consent part. I was in a workshop last week and this facilitator openly said like, I would like you to write your consent into the chat.

[00:26:46] I know for me it was sort of that one step further cuz, uh, technique that I'll use at times is please indicate, you know, you are actually, I haven't used the word consent. I think I need to be a little bit more explicit about that. But I'll say, please type in an emoji, you know, pick an emoji there on Zoom cuz so much is virtual that indicates you're on board.

[00:27:06] and like you said, it helps our nervous system know that it's safe. We've got options. We've got options. And there's a bit of agency here, which like we can't fight biology, right? It does a lot for our nervous system to be able to set that up. .

[00:27:23] **Shelby:** Absolutely. Yeah. So that is the setting up of structures and then consistency, right?

[00:27:29] Yeah. So doing the same thing again and again, so people know where they can lean in and how they can lean in. They go, oh, I know what to



look forward to. Mm-hmm. , that feels so nice to a nervous system that had right come out of left field. Yeah.

[00:27:45] **Carolyn:** Do you have any anecdotes or examples of teams or leaders where you've seen some really remarkable shifts in how they work together based on implementing some of these structures?

[00:28:01] **Shelby:** Ooh, yeah. Concepts. Yeah. Ooh, let me think. So many , I won't name the organization for confidentiality purposes. Yeah, but working within. Or supporting a team that were hosting events all over the world for both adults and teenagers, and they were having a lot of things come up in the team , like more than the people they were holding in their care like the students.

[00:28:34] There was so much friction. Everybody was fighting for their voices to be heard, to be the leader on top, to the point where they weren't actually connected in any way that felt safe. You know? They all didn't feel seen. And the funny part about this is that the entire purpose of the organization is around supporting people

[00:28:56] Yeah. To feel seen and to access compassion, and to be supported in their humanity. But because of the way structures have been set up and power roles just naturally. Illicit competition. Yeah. If you're not careful and fear of losing your role, all sorts of things, it just becomes the same thing again and again and again, no matter what kind of organization you're in.

[00:29:23] And so they brought me in and they also brought in, um, diversity, equity inclusion experts, which often I won't show up if that's not happening too. Yeah. . The amount of tears that were shed together. Wow. Just in being able to say. This is my human experience of what it has been like for me to try to show up for this purpose and mission and not get to be my whole human self.

[00:29:56] I mean, that to me was so moving and honoring, but to see the way everyone started moving towards each other as they were given permission in a space that was set up with structure. More than one time over the course of a year that the more they were able to be human together in a structure that had these agreements.



[00:30:15] This is confidential, you only speak from your direct experience, , and I think it changed their entire organization. Uh, in the years after that, their organization, I think, tripled in. Wow. You know, just because they were inspired again. Yeah. To be doing their mission. They all felt secure in their roles.

[00:30:38] They felt like they could compliment each other's roles and help each other out instead of. Secretly be grabbing power from each other.

[00:30:48] **Carolyn:** Yeah. . Yeah. I love how you've recognized power in there. I remember having a conversation with a leader a few years ago, and they felt quite strongly that if the door was open, that that was, you know, I have an open door policy.

[00:31:03] Like, well, that's great for you, but all of these other people underneath you on the hierarchy, your actions or your response to them dictates. Their compensation, you have to do more. Like, you have to be aware of those power dynamics. And for some people that's sort of been willful ignorance almost. It really is.

[00:31:24] It's naive.

[00:31:25] **Shelby:** Yeah, I w I mean, I was actually on the chairlift recently last week talking to somebody who has been used to being a boss for a very long time and very kind person. You could tell like one of the absolute best, highest intentions. Yeah. Were his company and his people and had no awareness of the power that he held.

[00:31:49] Yeah. And I just felt grief because I could tell he deeply. But didn't have the resources and tools. I mean, he has access to them, but hadn't been able to lean into them, and it's rampant, you know? And I just wanna say that trauma is coming down from some really big systems that we have been living in.

[00:32:13] For decades and decades, if not min centuries, longer centuries. . . Yeah. And so to just say like, let's throw a few tools into this organization. It's something that requires a lifelong commitment. If we're trauma informed, it's



something we become. It's so a way we connect together, not in the five minutes before the meeting.

[00:32:36] Yeah, those things are great, but it's a much deeper way. And to me it's activism, , you know, it's how do we be together? Because all of us are products of this society that we are standing upon and these structures that we've brought into the ways we run our companies and businesses and organizations, and so we're all carrying that in our body.

[00:32:58] It doesn't matter what identities you hold. Yeah. It takes so much compassion and care and courage. To go, okay, I'm gonna look at this. I'm gonna try just one thing on today. Yeah. To try different,

[00:33:11] **Carolyn:** yeah. And you touched upon a word there that we haven't yet talked about, which is compassion and how important that is to this work.

[00:33:23] **Shelby:** It's fundamental. Yeah. I love Chris and Neff's work around self-compassion. Yeah. Because. Again, it's really hard to have compassion for others, especially we're in a state of reactivity when we don't have tools to be compassionate to ourselves when we're in a state of reactivity too. Yep. And so it really has to start there.

[00:33:48] and the reality as our window tolerance widens, we have more access to compassion. Mm-hmm. kinda, it goes both ways. The more compassion we have, the more it widens. Right? Right. So we can't lose by cultivating compassion. And when we can sit in that place of warmth, we could just say warmth. Right. In a really genuine way.

[00:34:10] Our connections change and then the window of tolerance of the organizations changes. You know that that's a whole nervous system in itself. Mm-hmm. and compassion seems so fluffy and woowoo for so long, but I think it's coming into so many places, which makes me so happy because it is the connections.

[00:34:30] That make the work that we do worth it. Absolutely. It's a sense of belonging. It's what contributes to the inspiration.



[00:34:38] **Carolyn:** Yeah, and I know her work, she's got a, a really great website. Maybe we can put it in the show notes as well. I know there's a test on there, like a little quiz you can do, and she, she talks about compassion in three different areas.

[00:34:50] And I've used that with clients before to help them hone in on certain areas where they think they might be compassionate, but it, in fact, it's sort of like a hole in a leaky ship type thing. And one of the ones that I find. People connect to pretty quickly is this notion of common humanity versus isolation.

[00:35:11] And so when our tolerance is really small, right, our line of sight is really narrow and it's really hard to see that we're in amongst a whole lot of other people going through similar emotions. Experiences might be different, but emotions can be similar and that this. When we realize we're part of something bigger, it allows us to open up and be more in a state of of connection.

[00:35:37] **Shelby:** Absolutely. Yeah. It makes me think of the word generosity too. Mm-hmm. , you know, when we're, when we actually are resting in that state of compassion, it's so much easier to be generous.

[00:35:48] **Carolyn:** Yes. . Yes, absolutely. And, and with that generosity comes curiosity and not getting judgey or mad, or how could they do that?

[00:35:57] Don't they know? I mean, let's face it. We all go there. We're human beings.

[00:36:01] **Shelby:** Yeah. So yeah, that reminds me, you know, I, and when you asked, you know, what is trauma informed care? I should have said, it's absolute root for me, and the way that I bring it into the world is that, Everything makes sense. Like every reaction that we are having makes sense.

[00:36:21] So if somebody in in their professional role is really overwhelmed and really reactive about something that seemed so mundane, when we're trauma informed, we know there's something about this that makes sense and



that naturally brings compassion on. It brings that sense of warmth instead of what's wrong with them or, Ugh.

[00:36:46] Yeah, get move away from them. It's like, oh, something makes sense here about this.

[00:36:52] **Carolyn:** That's a really great way to put it. And then that just elicits the compassion, the curiosity. And it's a matter of, again, finding that space so that we can allow ourself to slow down and hear it and explore it versus push through and try and check the next

[00:37:10] **Shelby:** box off of our list.

[00:37:12] Yeah, and we can do that for ourselves too. It's so rare that we don't try to make ourselves wrong about emotions that we have taught. We're not supposed to feel or express. Right?

[00:37:22] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. Shelby, where could our listeners find out more about your work in some of the programs that you offer? Sure.

[00:37:31] **Shelby:** Yeah.

[00:37:32] My website, Shelby hyphen Lee, l e i g h.com, or creating safer space.com. I'm on all of the social medias, so you can find me in a lot of places. . Yeah. And, and what kind of

[00:37:46] **Carolyn:** work do you

[00:37:47] **Shelby:** offer? I have a few online programs. I have a trauma informed care program for coaches, therapists, and facilitators, and healers of many kinds.

[00:38:00] That's called Creating Safer Space. Creating Safer Healthcare is for medical providers and people in the more wellness fields. Those are all self-paced online. I show up for live calls a couple times a year. For bigger, we'll do like a let's all learn together for six weeks. And then I have a program called



Body of Work, which is for generally coaches and therapists and other care providers.

[00:38:25] And we meet 10 months out of the year. So that opens once a year. And then I work with entrepreneurs and, what do you call these people, CEOs,

[00:38:38] people who are leaders in resolving their own trauma, but also, Bringing their visions into the world in a trauma formed way. So, you know, we can work on mindset all day long, but if we're not working with those foundational layers of nervous system regulation, the mindset won't work. It'll just add more stress.

[00:38:59] Yep.

[00:39:00] **Carolyn:** So

[00:39:00] **Shelby:** we work to just feel totally at ease in our leadership and totally supported. Wow.

[00:39:07] **Carolyn:** It's tremendous work. Shelby, I am really so grateful to have found you along this journey. I'm certainly a little further behind, but I think, you know, it's people like you and I and other folks out there bringing this work into the corporate world that can really help transform our workplaces.

[00:39:26] And so I hope the listeners have a chance to go on and look at your great work. Are you ready though? It is kind of at that end of the recording where I ask three questions that connect directly to being an evolved leader. Are you ready

[00:39:39] **Shelby:** for those? I think so. I'm gonna give myself permission to do it imperfectly.

[00:39:44] **Carolyn:** There you go. Love it. Love it. There is no perfect in this. So the first question is around self-awareness and would invite you to share a moment that. Perhaps had a level of discomfort to it, but full of insight about yourself, maybe some level of reactivity that you might have



[00:40:03] **Shelby:** uncovered. I'm just gonna go with real and raw.

[00:40:07] I had a moment last night, it's fresh where, oh, I learned something really painful and I felt very disappointed by it. Hmm. And it was one of those left field that happened at the wrong time, in the wrong moment. And I was churning all night long, just like, how do I process this? How do I wrap myself around this?

[00:40:31] Ooh, ouch. You know? Yeah. But my mind was turning on it. And then this morning I practiced. I did my yoga and I did my meditation. I did some breath work, . I really brought it this morning. . . I realized this is just pain, you know? Like I don't need to make sense of it. I don't need to figure it out. I

[00:40:52] **Carolyn:** know.

[00:40:52] **Shelby:** I don't need to fix it.

[00:40:54] Can I just like open my heart, make space for this is just pain. It felt like it dissolved in that moment.

[00:41:02] **Carolyn:** Wow. That's really profound. Yeah. We don't have to fix everything, do we? Oh, just

[00:41:08] **Shelby:** acceptance. I drive myself crazy trying to control it all with my mind. Yeah.

[00:41:11] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Wow. Thank you. Within the past 24 hours, that's pretty amazing.

[00:41:16] Oh yeah. It's here. . It's a real testament to self-awareness being a journey. It's not a destination. There's always something.

[00:41:24] **Shelby:** Always every day. I mean, I think people should sign waivers before they start getting mindful because it's just nonstop .



[00:41:32] **Carolyn:** That's funny. Um, so second question. What is a practice or ritual that keeps you in a calm, regulated state or returns you to one?

[00:41:44] **Shelby:** Yeah, there are a thousand, but the fastest one I access is just hand to heart. Hand to belly. Mm. And three breaths. Like, can I just take three breaths before I try to jump to any conclusions? Anything? And more than anything, feeling the pressure and the warmth of that self connection, self contact.

[00:42:09] **Carolyn:** Wow.

[00:42:09] That one helps a lot. It's not just taking in the deep breath, it's the hand of heart and

[00:42:13] **Shelby:** the hand of belly. More than than the breathing for me. Mm-hmm. . Yeah.

[00:42:19] **Carolyn:** Yeah, I'm gonna have to try that a little bit more. I do the breathing but I don't necessarily resort to, I'm gonna

[00:42:24] **Shelby:** try that out. Yeah. And you know, I had this great teacher one time who wore these cool necklaces and she one time told us I actually wear them cuz I secretly go to my meetings and I just hold this necklace, move onto it really close to my heart and nobody knows that I'm holding my heart.

[00:42:41] They just think I'm playing with my necklace.

[00:42:44] **Carolyn:** Oh wow. Hmm. Tactile. Love it. All right. My last question. What is a song or genre of music that makes you feel connected to others or part of something bigger than yourself?

[00:43:00] **Shelby:** Well, there are a lot, but lately I've been listening on repeat to this song called Electronic Sea.

[00:43:08] Hmm. I think the artist is East Forest and it has Rom Dass in the background. And I would've never thought I would wanted to snowboard all



day to this song, but I do. And it just makes me feel part of something much bigger than myself. Oh,

[00:43:26] **Carolyn:** beautiful. I, I mean, I've been asking this question to all the guests and I've never gotten a duplicate answer.

[00:43:32] And every time I get off, if I haven't heard it, I go Right on. So that's what I'm gonna be doing after our podcast is going on and having a look for that song. Uh, Shelby, any last insider advice that you could share with the listeners? Any last words for. Yeah,

[00:43:49] **Shelby:** I just wanna reemphasize for all of us as much as we can to pause and take three breaths right now in this moment, tomorrow later, , just give ourselves as much permission as we can to rest and to meet those parts that don't feel safe enough to rest with as much care as we can.

[00:44:11] Wow.

[00:44:12] **Carolyn:** Shelby, thank you again for your time today. I'm guessing maybe we pulled you off the slope, so I'm glad that you're able to come inside and spend a bit of time with us today. Thanks so much, . Thank you. As I was finishing up Evolve, I was really excited about these concepts, about my model and this notion of safety, consistency, and authenticity.

[00:44:40] And understanding our reactivity, and I knew I wasn't the first person to pull this all together. And I have to say, when I found Shelby and her work, it just brought a lot of reassurance. It brought a lot of comfort, and it brought a lot of conviction to bring. Work to life in organizations. And so having Shelby on the podcast today and having her share her 15 plus years of experience doing this work and talking about the window of tolerance and talking about nervous system regulation, it's not new stuff, but it's time.

[00:45:25] It's time that we bring this into our workplaces and it's time for us as leaders to get really. Really serious about it. Our nervous systems are leadership tools and we owe it to ourselves and the people that we work with to use them with much more intention. There's only a few more weeks till my book gets

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TRANSCRIPT

launched, evolve, and I hope that you will be inspired and feel some curiosity to pick it up and, and have a read in the meantime, if you would.

[00:46:04] To learn more about my work, you can find more out

[00:46:12] com. Thanks for joining us today.