



## EPISODE 010:

# Breaking new ground with trauma-informed leadership with Michelle Baker

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[00:00:20] So we built a team. We brought those folks on board to help us think about us as a workforce and an industry, but then also, Help us think through how we do work for clients. My

[00:00:33] **Carolyn:** guest today is Michelle Baker. Michelle is an E V P Managing Director of Corporate Strategic Initiatives at Keem. Keem is a PR and communication firm.

[00:00:45] In the United States, and Michelle is a communications expert who works within this pioneering firm. And Michelle recently launched keem's trauma informed consultancy to help clients navigate society's new norms, including the significant shifts in how people live and work. We're gonna hear about this program, how it's going with the employees, and a broader impact that it's starting to have as well.

[00:01:15] Enjoy the conversation. Back in January, I got this text message from my friend Alyssa, and it had a link to a fast company article and the article was about trauma informed leadership. After reading through the article, I just knew,



I just knew I had to have someone from this organization on the show, and that's how we found Michelle Baker.

[00:01:46] I hope that there are more companies out there like Ketchum, and we're gonna hear all about what they're doing. It's companies like this and people like this that are helping us find our way out of the burnout and the chaos and the confusion that too many of us are feeling in our workplace.

[00:02:09] **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.

[00:02:33] 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.

[00:02:48] **Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Sora. And this is Evolve a new era of leadership. Well, I have been looking forward to today's conversation since I first met our guest several weeks ago. Michelle Baker is joining us today from a PR and communication firm called Keem. They're also I understand strategic advisors. And Michelle, thank you so much for joining us on the show.

[00:03:13] No. Great. Thank

[00:03:14] **Michelle:** you for having me. So excited for today's conversation.

[00:03:17] **Carolyn:** Yeah, and so here's why I'm so excited because there was this great article that was published in Fast Company, I believe it was in January of this year. Uh, Talking about trauma informed leadership, and I've got a book coming out on that title and I thought, wow, they're gonna speak the same language.

[00:03:36] We're gonna be able to really understand each other. And so Michelle, I'm really excited to have you on on the podcast and to hear about the program and the trauma informed consultancy work that you have brought into



Ketchum. So we're gonna hear all about that, how it got started and, and the impact that it's.

[00:03:57] Okay, so Michelle, could you maybe just start us off and maybe tell us a little bit about, you know, what does it mean to launch a trauma informed consultancy?

[00:04:07] **Michelle:** Oh, great. Well, thank you for the chance to kind of talk about this a little bit more. It's an issue, um, that, as you mentioned, I'm very passionate about.

[00:04:15] In the work that we do as communications consultants at Public Health Advisors, strategic advisors to clients, we just kind of realized that there were some things we were missing in terms of keeping pace with all of the changes that have come not only out of the pandemic, but some of the other recent shifts with environmental change and climate.

[00:04:35] With social justice issues, the financial uncertainty in the world, w at large, we realized we kind of needed to operate and think differently, both as an employer and a workforce, but then also as a communications consultancy and in our work with clients. So we built a team, as I mentioned, we're communicators.

[00:04:52] We're. Designers we're creatives. We aren't necessarily psychologists and experts in mental health and some of the folks you would need to have on your team for an issue like this. So we enlisted a new team of experts to join us that included a clinical social worker who has ex. Experience with multi-generational traumas and issues of different community perspectives.

[00:05:14] We onboarded a PhD in Psychology who has an expertise with trauma-informed change management. We also worked with an attorney who has expertise from working with the Department of Justice in being the liaison with victims in some of the most high profile, you know, crimes and cases, including Bernie Madoff and the Boston Marathon.



[00:05:36] Shootings, the poll shootings and her perspective is really how you communicate with someone who has experienced drama and who's, who's sharing a personal story or sharing some sort of information. So we've brought those folks on board to help us think about us as a workforce and an industry, but then also help us think through how we do work.

[00:05:56] For clients. And that team of experts have helped us develop a series of resources that we started pilot testing with some of our, um, most senior officials and folks on our team. We ran out over seven and a half hours worth of trainings to go deep into some of the issues and get feedback on these pilots.

[00:06:15] So we're in the process now. We're refining them, we are now rolling them out to our entire company and we are going to be deemed a trauma informed organization, and we're super excited in the US to have this work completed in the coming weeks. That's great for not only our people in our workforce, but for our clients as well.

[00:06:34] So, Michelle,

[00:06:35] **Carolyn:** I know you were integral in making this happen, and I'm curious what inspired you? What made you realize that this was important and could make such a big

[00:06:45] **Michelle:** differe? Yeah, I've worked in public health, communications, healthcare for most of my career and also worked in big agencies in, in the communications industry.

[00:06:56] And as you know, that is a pretty strict pace. You know, it's client service, it's billable hours, it's nonstop monitoring of the news. And the news lately for. Part has not been great. And then as I look across the industry, we see record high rates of burnout and turnover and realizing we've got team members of all levels watching the news 24 7 on everything from the pandemic to environmental news to political violence and other things happening.

[00:07:25] And we kind of need to very carefully navigate this new normal of not only. Force, but also the demands coming out of the pandemic, the the





second wave of the pandemic, which is really mental health crises and problems. So wanted to be very deliberate about what we could offer that was very unique to our industry and our teams.

[00:07:45] But then also taking the lessons learned and applying that to our client work, our creative work, our communications programming. Because really if you launch the same campaign or program, Today that you would've put together three years ago, it's going to fall flat, right? Everybody in the world at large, you know, we've just changed the way we purchase things, the way we prioritize certain things in our life, whether it's time with family or what we're scared of.

[00:08:11] Even in terms of you're trying to get someone to get a breast cancer screening or, or in here for their medication regimen or apply for a job. There's just different things that factor in people's priorities today, and a trauma informed lens will help people in campaign. Address that more directly. And so

[00:08:28] **Carolyn:** I'm guessing because of your healthcare background, I mean this notion of being trauma informed and trauma informed care is not a new concept in sectors like that, or nor in education, right?

[00:08:38] So that terminology's been around, but what's brilliant about what you are doing is you're bringing it into the corporate world and really, Making a place for talking about it. And so as you've rolled it, I've got so many questions. The first one I think I'm gonna ask about it is, as you've rolled it out and piloted it, how have people responded to that big hairy T word?

[00:09:01] That's a hard word to get our head around, isn't it? Yes.

[00:09:04] **Michelle:** Yes. The T word is sometimes a barrier for sure. Some people don't understand, okay, why would that be part of communications work? Or how does that apply to me? Or what are we supposed to be getting out of a trauma training? I found there's another T word training can sometimes be triggering it



[00:09:20] True, that's the word, trauma because people think a training means a certain level of time and something that's may be remote or not connected to them. So that was one of the things that was pleasantly surprising as we rolled this. Was, while there might be some initial reluctance, once people got exposed to our consultant team, to some of the content that we put together to the steps that you can help, there's a, you know, a, a very deliberate step in process you go through when you're communicating with someone who's sharing that they're stressed or in trauma or have had a bad experience.

[00:09:50] People saw it at work and it actually became a form for sharing improved team collaborations and people kind of got it and started thinking, oh, this is how it might apply to actually my. A campaign, we're putting together a program that we're helping co-create with another academic institution or a third party partner.

[00:10:08] So it really did fuel a lot of different thinking. But the trauma word doesn't always have to be front and center too. We've realized it. Trauma is one end of the spectrum. It can also be wellbeing, mental health. Human centered resilience building, grit building. Every organization or individual sometimes gravitates towards a different way of defining or describing it.

[00:10:31] And we're using the terminology trauma informed, because as you mentioned, it's grounded in science and medicine. Schools and universities are using it, militaries using it. It is a very grounded and research based approach. , but you can use different language so that different audiences might receive it in a different way as well.

[00:10:49] **Carolyn:** Yeah. And you've chosen to use the word trauma, and I think when I looked at the article, the Fast Company article, there was reference to empathetic leadership. I think there's a lot, there's a lot of support now for this notion of empathy and vulnerability in the workplace. How would you say empathetic leadership and trauma informed leadership?

[00:11:11] Are they the same? How are they connected? How would you differentiate those two? . Yeah.



[00:11:16] **Michelle:** I think, you know, they are very different, as you pointed out. And, and not all organizations or agencies could do this. Ketchum pre pandemic had already had sort of the tagline or the anchoring, the foundation of empathy plus intelligence as our kind of mission and and goal.

[00:11:31] And it was very much kind of embodied in the leadership and the people and the teams here. So taking it to that next level of being trauma informed is kind of leveling it up and, and adding a little compassion to the mix. Mm. Because when you're trauma inform, and you're a trauma informed organization or leader.

[00:11:48] What you're doing is you're recognizing the pervasiveness of trauma in the world and where possible you're gonna make sure you don't make it worse or add to it, and where possible you work to mitigate those effects, right? So that's like a three or four step process in terms of being trauma informed.

[00:12:03] And it means you have to really be deliberate about thinking about the outcomes of the campaigns you put together. What words do you use? What photos do you use? What stories do you like to tell? How and when do you involve people who are the subjects of those images or those campaigns? It's a very deliberate process that, yes, our industry does include with focus groups and research and profiles, but bringing that added lens of the historical and generational traumas of certain populations or the real life experiences that the pandemic has had on people in terms of financial hard.

[00:12:38] Loss of loved ones, employment challenges, and really thinking about that lived experience and how that might affect the client work or the work we're doing directly is that added lens that is very deliberate and it's a step kind of beyond empathy. Yeah, it's true understanding and action. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:12:56] **Carolyn:** Um, and so can you tell us a little bit, obviously not all of it, but like a little bit about what the program looks like and how long it is and sort of what the desired outcome is from this program.



[00:13:08] **Michelle:** Sure. So it kind of looks different for every organization and, and even for individual teams. So at Catchum we did do an in-person training that was the pilot that informed the content and the format and the rollout and what types of types of subjects we put together.

[00:13:23] But it's now in a, a virtual template that people can do on their own pace that will be supported by some one-on-ones in sessions with our consultancy teams for people that might have questions or, or wanna get more information. So that is a, a virtual format that's very tightly constructed for people who work in the communications industry.

[00:13:42] People who might be. Creating social media content or creating campaigns or doing media picturing, just monitoring the news, working as teams on some really tough issues. Issues in crisis and things that happened in the world. But then we've started to create it now for clients and interestingly enough, being anchored in healthcare, I instantly saw a lot of opportunities for health organizations, but organizations have come to us who might.

[00:14:09] You know, fast food service and because there's this thing kind of a, where we've termed it, restaurant rage that, you know, people are coming in off the interstate hot and angry about something that happened on the roadway and, and taking it out to the restaurant worker or retail rage where people are.

[00:14:25] you know, frustrated in the middle of a grocery store line and, and being rude to a clerk or someone. We're really seeing it show up everywhere that people are, and the definition of, of front lines workers in and of itself has expanded where we used to think of it as nurses or police force or others.

[00:14:42] It's really now anyone who interacts with the public in any level from transportation. retail to restaurants and beyond.

[00:14:50] **Carolyn:** So if I understand this correctly, then it's offered to your internal folks, so internal Ketchum employees, is it part of onboarding or is it

[00:14:58] **Michelle:** optional? We've started with our people first.





[00:15:00] Yeah. So we are training our entire workforce. We're going to be rolling it out to new employees. Now, it's not mandatory because, you know, being trauma informed, we realize we wouldn't want to, right. Make it mandatory that anyone is required to take. , but the resources are available there. People will be informed about it.

[00:15:18] We talk about it in how we put together campaigns and programs. Our leadership is behind it and references it in our work. We weave it into new business and client work we do kind of automatically, so people are exposed to it just by that level, but. Everyone has available to them this training series, and now we've taken those lessons learned from these months that we've spent working with consultants and doing the hard work ourselves and applying it to our clients and the different industries that we work with.

[00:15:46] And we are actually doing some pro bono projects, most interestingly, because this information is so crucial and so needed. , we've identified several nonprofits that we're working with that have high levels of food insecurity, high levels of other challenges that certain communities are facing, and applying it, just making those resources available to a few nonprofits that will be kind of rolling out and coming, um, months as well.

[00:16:10] **Carolyn:** Right? So this notion, um, understanding what trauma is and how they can create an environment that essentially keeps our nervous systems in a regulated state as opposed to dysregulate.

[00:16:24] **Michelle:** Yes. I mean, and that's one of the key takeaways, which you just mentioned from our teams that they took away is, you know, because especially in the Zoom world, you know, you don't have the benefit of hallway conversations or, let me follow up on what you meant there, or can you walk me through the steps that you meant to take here and, and so just losing that.

[00:16:44] One off, you know, conversation. Um, people make assumptions or they're reacting to the last call when they're coming into the next call. So it's really helped people who have done this training, it's helped me. Mm-hmm. , kind of think a little bit differently about those offenses you might take to some interaction or an assumption you might make about.



[00:17:03] Someone's tone or the timing of a response or something. Right. Um, to think about all the other factors that could be influencing it. And so what has

[00:17:10] **Carolyn:** the feedback been? Do you have some specific anecdotes or some, some specific insight that people have shared that has impacted how they work and how they show up?

[00:17:20] **Michelle:** Yeah, I mean multiple sort of folks. When we first rolled it out, I was extremely nervous. I actually called a few people and said, Hey, um, if nobody talks when we have the open q and a, would you please just say something? Because I was really genuinely scared, and so I was very pleasantly surprised when we did our first series of trainings.

[00:17:40] To see the chat light up and hands, you know, when you do the little hand raising in teams, I didn't even know how to navigate it cuz there were so many hands raised comments and, and what have you. So I realized, well we've really tapped into a nerve. So I think that first permission to talk about this in the workplace, everyone has said how much they appreciated being able to kind of have a name and a frame for what we're all feeling.

[00:18:03] You know, when different things happen in the. Our job, while we're not at all, is, you know, exposed to challenges as many other industries and workforces, but it is really hard if you're monitoring the news and you're writing about a shooting and it's in a community that you're really relating to, but you're on a client call and in real time you have to, you know, keep a straight face and write a nice statement, or there's other things happening in the world that are affecting you personally, but you're like monitoring news for it every day.

[00:18:31] It is really challenging, so it helps managers and people who run those teams even to think a little bit about that process and how they manage the teams and how you, you kind of give people breaks from, from news monitoring when possible, or shifted around or highlight the people in the work they do and let them kind of level up and share.

[00:18:50] The collective insights they've gotten from being a media monitor, doing that unique expertise, giving them a moment to be more than crafting



reports, but also kind of talking about it and sharing about it and, and interacting about the subject matter. It's just a processing step that some people have found a little more helpful in how they've put together.

[00:19:08] Just even a basic step like media monitoring, right? Um, our accounts,

[00:19:13] **Carolyn:** what myths have been debunk. And maybe you can speak on your own. I, you can't speak for others, but like doing this work and digging into this content, what really changed or influenced your perspective on trauma informed leadership?

[00:19:27] **Michelle:** Well, I think back to what you mentioned, the T word, especially when we even talk with global colleagues, the trauma word means something so vast and so significant that. It's kind of on a different level than maybe you would talk about things that happen in the workplace or what people bring to their work experiences.

[00:19:46] And as you know, as writing a book about trauma, there's been a bestseller with the topic of trauma for like almost three years straight now in the New York Times bestseller, there's, you know, it's been rotated out a little bit, but people are genuinely interested in the US. And beyond, but in sharing stories about trauma and talking about it in a more candid way, we're seeing the Gen Z population and workforce almost demand transparency around mental health benefits and programs and operations of offices.

[00:20:16] So, That myth busting was like that trauma was something that workplaces maybe didn't need to acknowledge or, yeah, like it's this thing that you just kind of put on a shelf when you go to work, like your previous life experiences or the hardships that you're dealing with don't affect work because they're separate and.

[00:20:34] A lot of people now see, oh, okay. A family that's dealing with family caregiving or has other financial hardships, you know, a loved one that lost a job. Or other physical health challenges, mental health challenges, how



that could really show up at work and how work can do better by those team members.

[00:20:52] And that's trauma, maybe not capital T trauma of having experienced a, yeah, you know. Violent event in an earthquake or something of that nature. But there are other traumas that trickle through and impact day-to-day work life.

[00:21:06] **Carolyn:** There was a fantastic quote in that fast company article. Trauma isn't a jacket we take off.

[00:21:12] When it's time to go to work. We carry it with us. It affects productivity, engagement, absenteeism, turnover, and more. . I thought that that just summed it all up as to why this is a lens that organizations would really benefit from

[00:21:29] **Michelle:** looking through. Exactly, and even right now, as in the US the public health emergencies expiring.

[00:21:35] So a lot of the, some of the public health benefits of GLE policies, time to go get vaccinations, doctor's appointment, even coverage for immunizations or testing, some of that's falling off the wayside at the same time. Some of the things in the public health landscape are changing, such as benefits for snap, which is food insecurity, resources and tools.

[00:21:56] So families at the same time, while inflation and job insecurity is skyrocketing, some of these essential and added benefits that came up over the pandemic and we're losing those. So that'd be a way that employers and organizations should be thinking about this shift. Like, yes, it's great news that the public health emergency is ending and that we can return back to some sort.

[00:22:17] Normal, whatever that means in today's world or whatever, but there are gonna be ripple effects of some of these resources that really helped out families who knew need of food or need of healthcare resources and how we think about forced policies, how they might impact those folks directly as well.





[00:22:34] That would be a, that'd be an application of a trauma-informed lens. Yeah,

[00:22:37] **Carolyn:** and I think, you know, one of the things that I learned when writing my book was trauma is not activated by convers. It's stored in our body. That blew me away because often here I hear people say, oh, I just got re-traumatized hearing that conversation.

[00:22:54] And I think, you know, it would really help us as a. As a workforce, I'll say, but as a society to learn what that word means and what it doesn't

[00:23:03] **Michelle:** mean. That's a good point. It is used a little too casually. There's even a thing called like trauma bangs that was on like Emily and Paris. It's views very loosely on TikTok.

[00:23:12] Yeah. Trauma talk or something. So like there is a line between what it is and what it isn't and making sure that you're clear about that, that line or not making light of something very real and serious, but not all trauma. P T S D and right. That fine line in between it. But yes, totally agree that there needs to be better definition around what it, what it is not.

[00:23:33] So it's not the paper cut or the smaller things that might happen in your day. Yeah.

[00:23:38] **Carolyn:** I'm curious with your program maybe, and I don't know if you've gone there with it or not, or if you've rolled it out enough to see, but on my experience, and I'll use myself as an example, I didn't feel I could use that.

[00:23:51] As a white woman of privilege, I felt like it was wrong for me to co-opt that word. And so I went way to the other side and pretty much denied that I had any trauma in my life. And in fact, you know, if we look at trauma just as an emotional wounding, we're all gonna have some sort of trauma. And what I find can happen, and I did this, is I would get internally, like the judgey side of me would be like, oh, that's not a big deal.



[00:24:17] Like, try doing what I'm doing. Um, I would never say that out loud, but there was sometimes it went on in my head. And that is also very problematic because it's not for us to compare. Right. We're all made up differently. So I'm curious if you're seeing a different level of compassion or understanding or a change in judgment in just accepting that.

[00:24:37] We don't need to compare this stuff. We just need to recognize it's a part of our humanity.

[00:24:42] **Michelle:** I think. So I probably see that more in the volunteer work or the sidebars I do, because I think we're still figuring out in a work. Place. Yeah. What gets shared and what doesn't. So I always make the assumption there's so much I don't know about another person that I'm working with.

[00:25:00] You know, on the other end of the line, a call a client, a whoever, and so I think that's what talking about trauma in the workplace. Does is while you don't necessarily need to know every single person's lived experiences, you can assume they've had something that might have affected them. It does take away that level of nobody needs to prove it.

[00:25:22] Yeah, nobody needs to share it. This is work at the end of the day, but if you assume someone might be processing something that you don't have any clue about, Any situation or life experience, it helps. It helps you do your work and it helps you not make assumptions because that's where I think in the workplace, we get into the most dangerous places.

[00:25:41] We start telling ourselves stories about, oh, your boss didn't call you back, or What your coworker really meant by that line in a short text. And reality is this is just one more tool and you're coping. Skills life box that might help you just mi mitigate something at work that doesn't need to become an issue for you personally.

[00:26:02] I'm curious

[00:26:03] **Carolyn:** if there's anything you could share with us around. How senior leadership bought into this and how they, they deemed it was important



to invest in. Now, I know you said like your organization had already been fairly empathetic, you know, with empathy and, and intelligence combined together any further.

[00:26:23] I mean, we might have people out there listening thinking, yes, I want my organization to do this, but you know, that good old churn of capitalism and making money and productivity. How did your leaders accept this and.

[00:26:36] **Michelle:** That's a good question. Well, I mean, I think the foundation, like I mentioned at Catchum, it's kind of part of the culture here.

[00:26:42] I had earlier work to put together a health equity practice, and again, they supported that, putting that together in the same way. Like yes, it's needed, how in a pandemic and that we just put that together a little over two and a half years ago, but like it's a pandemic. Everything has been exposed. Just in terms of the disparities of healthcare, the need is there.

[00:27:04] To deliver better healthcare work for our clients, we absolutely have to have a better understanding. So we quickly hired an un onboarded subject matter experts that had real meaningful public health experience from the front lines of working with medical colleges and working with public health nonprofits and, and government agencies and others to help enlist us in that work.

[00:27:24] So it was really a replication of that model, like what do we have to do and build to be keeping up? These enormous changes that are happening in the world right now. And I think that we see it. I mean, no employer could look at the past few years with quiet, quitting loud, quitting everything in between.

[00:27:43] Yep. You know, and, and every day there's some new little cutesy term about what's happening in the workforce. Nobody can look at that and say, Hey, we got that covered. You know, we think we're doing okay . So it was just the proactivity of our leadership and the focus that they. We gotta start with our people.



[00:28:00] We can't roll this out to clients or anybody else until we better understand what it looks like. You know, one of our leaders even referred to it, it's gonna be in perpetual beta. Mm-hmm. Just cause it's not a fit for, you know, you've gotta revise as you go based on the sector, best based on the client, based on what's happening in the world.

[00:28:18] I think it will always be a work in progress, which is challenging when you're creating slides and plans, but it is.

[00:28:25] **Carolyn:** Yeah, it's also a great reflection of life too, right? I mean, we're not perfect. We're perpetually beta as well, so I think there's a pretty good image there that attaches with that. One last question.

[00:28:35] Is there anything that you can share, any long-term goals or desires or where you hope this will go in the next year or so?

[00:28:42] **Michelle:** Yeah, one of the place we've stayed, places, we've seen some really strong initial interest. Looking at some of the challenges of the day, and I've mentioned food insecurity and you know, it's raising globally at record high levels.

[00:28:55] Some have referred to it as like a global threat to security. Yeah. You know, cause after every world event war, Earthquake, all of these things, everyone's scrambling to feed and nourish the people in the surrounding area and beyond. And we see these record high inflation rates and a lot of the things shifting in policies now.

[00:29:13] And so finding similar challenges that corporations, organizations, nonprofits, governments should be collaborating on to increase awareness of the. Of a social justice issue or a cause issue. So if you take, for example, food insecurity and how it might show up in schools like that, we talked earlier about assumptions being made.

[00:29:35] So on a college campus or in a school, someone might assume a kid's not paying attention or they're lazy, or they're just distracted. And the reality is they're now nourished and you. can't retain information and you can't study and





learn if you're food insecure or you're maybe not able to, you know, have the energy to get up and go to class, or you're not showing up as well as you would if you had had a meal the night before.

[00:29:59] So it's just like giving professors and teachers and school administrators and others like working together with our organization and corporations who might touch on that as well. So I'll look at a challenge through the lens of being trauma informed, and you could really take that for any type of issue or challenge that's that's happening in the world, any population specifically, and just help people better understand how multiple different types of organizations might not only understand, but address challenges together.

[00:30:30] Yeah.

[00:30:32] **Carolyn:** Well, I'm with you on that desire. That's why I felt so compelled to write my book and, and when I, again, when I, I know I started off the podcast this way, but when I came across your work, I was like, oh, there's somebody out there that's doing this and doing such a great job, so I'm really so thankful that you came on Michelle, to share this, you know, pioneering.

[00:30:54] That your agency is doing, and I'm really looking forward to seeing where it goes and, and perhaps reading more articles about it in the media. Yeah,

[00:31:02] **Michelle:** we might have a few, but really appreciate you inviting me here to chat today and it's been great talking with you and comparing notes from all of the work you've done as well.

[00:31:10] **Carolyn:** Yeah. So now I'd like to close off my podcast by asking three questions. And these three questions are part of my Evolv leadership model, which is obviously trauma informed. So are y'all set for the these three questions? I'm ready. All right, so the first one is all about self-awareness and that moment of, uh, oh my gosh, I'm not like I thought I am.

[00:31:31] And so can you share a moment, an anecdote, something that was perhaps quite uncomfortable, yet full of tremendous insight about yourself?



[00:31:41] **Michelle:** Sure. So I think I mentioned, I, you know, I'm in communications and had the difficult task of putting together some videos with parents who had lost a child to drug overdose.

[00:31:52] So very powerful, strong. Day ahead. And we had a creative director who was there setting up the, the video shoot and certain things in the room weren't the way he wanted. And you know, it was a lot of back and forth just in time in putting together that room. And so I was going back and forth with the parents and, you know, Being typical kind of agency, you know, giving updates and kind of, you know, dealing with the stress of the production.

[00:32:18] And the dad, I had leaned down to the data, said, I'm so sorry we're running a little late. It's gonna be, you know, a few more minutes until we can, can get you in there for the filming. And he just looked up at me with this like, just. Sweet face. And he said, well, you know, take all the time you need, you know, when you've already lost everything.

[00:32:35] What's a few more moments matter? And I thought, I'm sitting here running around worried about production and timing and he's, you know, this is his way of sort of paying tribute to his lost son. And it just was a reminder like, You know, we are dealing with in healthcare and any subjects, any work we do, we are dealing with some really tough subjects sometimes.

[00:32:55] But that pause about like why we're all here and what we're doing Yeah. Work we're doing. It really kinda struck me, um, yeah. In the industry I'm in where we're very type A and organized and what's next planning type thing. It was a pause. He did become a very close person that we continued to work with and, and he, it was just amazing to be able to.

[00:33:16] The discipline and the thoughtfulness he brought to every public policy initiative and issue. He was a huge advocate for, um, a lot of legislation changes. And it was just kind of watching how he lived his life and paid tribute to his son is, is one of the more inspirational chapters of my professional.

[00:33:33] Hmm.



[00:33:34] **Carolyn:** And amazing that you, that moment it stayed with you, it sounds like it's really had an impact with. Yep. Yeah. Beautiful. Uh, second question. What is a practice or a ritual that keeps you in a calm or regulated state or perhaps returns

[00:33:50] **Michelle:** you to one? Well, I think I mentioned I had to put my dog in another room because he might bark, but I've always owned dogs, and during the pandemic we now have two dogs, large dogs, and they're great coworkers because they sit there and wag their tail at you.

[00:34:04] If you just had a tough call or. or whatever at work, they're always here, but then they also at the end of the day, make you, uh, get up and take a walk and get outside. Yes. And, and do things. So I would say my adopted dogs who are very big and demanding, enforce that ritual where otherwise I probably would've skimped on it some.

[00:34:22] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. I hear you. And what are your dog's names? Would you like to share? Riley

[00:34:27] **Michelle:** and Winston, they're, they're mixed breeds, adopted dogs. Very nice,

[00:34:31] **Carolyn:** very nice. I guess Riley and Winston will be going out for a walk after the podcast,

[00:34:35] **Michelle:** perhaps ? Yes, they will. But we'll see with the freezing cold. I'll think about when winter, when winter's over, for sure.

[00:34:42] **Carolyn:** And last but not least, the final question that I have is, what is a song or a genre of music that makes you feel connected to others or part of something bigger than your.

[00:34:54] **Michelle:** Well, I love this question because I'm a, a huge fan of believing art and music are very centering. I I'm on a board of an organization that's focused on, um, art and music for senior citizens and people living with



dementia because I, my mom had early onset dementia, so one of the great connectors is music.

[00:35:14] Yeah. So my mom couldn't remember my name or my kids' names. She could sing every Christmas. Carol, the words to you are my sunshine and all of that. I'm a huge believer in like the power of music to take you there. And there's actually research that even shows that the songs of like your high school years and your formative years really are like defining connecting songs.

[00:35:36] So you know, if you listen to a song that was popular when you're in like high school or college, that sometimes those songs are your like great connectors. And so I'm a Jen. Or so it was like the Modern Rock, like those types of songs at the late eighties and early nineties are the ones that always make me feel like, you know, I can sing along with, I don't play them regularly, but when they come on the radio or whatever, you definitely can sing them all.

[00:36:02] So is there a specific song

[00:36:03] **Carolyn:** that's coming into mind right now? I'm with you. I'm and my mind's going in a bunch of different directions cuz we're

[00:36:08] **Michelle:** up the same generation mean what was such a weird time? It's everything from like Nirvana to Whitney Houston to Yes. Police to. George, Mike. I mean, there was just such a weird mix of songs of the and nineties, but they were all, you know, can take you back to a certain chapter.

[00:36:23] But not that I, yeah, sit around and play that music every day, but it is fun when it comes on.

[00:36:28] **Carolyn:** I didn't realize all those connections. I mean, I. I didn't realize the connection to dementia and patients with Alzheimer's. Yep. Music's always been a huge, huge part of my life. And in fact, when I was writing my book, I made my own playlist and it was called My Life in Three Acts, and I could tell you like I play it and I just get immersed into a whole other world.





[00:36:48] So, Thank you so much for sharing that insight and that genre of music. You might go put on a little George, Michael, myself after this podcast. One final thing before I'll close off, Michelle, where could people get in touch with you or catch 'em if they are interested in hearing more about what you do or perhaps working with you?

[00:37:09] Yeah, I'm

[00:37:09] **Michelle:** on LinkedIn, so Michelle Baker and then Catchum has, we have a page on our website for our trauma informed consultancy. So if you go to [kham.com](http://kham.com), K E T C H U M, and enter trauma informed consulting, there's a page there that has introductions to our team and the consultants that we've onboarded, some video and some content, and happy to chat with anybody that has any.

[00:37:30] **Carolyn:** Perfect. And we'll make sure that those get put into the show notes. And I think we're, we're gonna call that a wrap, Michelle, and I hope that Riley and Winston enjoy the walk that you're gonna take them on. Thanks again for joining us. Great. Thank you for having me. I'm so inspired by the work that Michelle and the team at Ketchum is doing, their commitment to move beyond empathy and move into a place of.

[00:37:58] Educating their workforce and now their clients about what it means to be trauma informed. It will make a difference. It really will. And it was really exciting to have Michelle on the show today cuz it's the first organization that I've come across that is committed to doing this work and is resourcing the work, getting the right people in place to provide the training.

[00:38:25] And not only are they giving it to their. They're starting to expand it into work with their clients. This is exactly why I've written my book and I know that there are many people out there who are excited to learn more and are curious about what it means to be trauma informed. And if you are list.

[00:38:48] Scene to this, and you're one of those organizations who is bringing this work in and doing this work with your employees, please reach out and let me know. I'd love to share your stories as well. I think the more that we can

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## TRANSCRIPT

normalize this word and really be real about what it means to be human, it's really gonna be the next level of employee engagement.

[00:39:14] And we all know that when we have an engaged workforce. Activity is better, profits are better, but that stuff's all secondary. We have to look after each other first. I hope you enjoyed the podcast today with Michelle, and if you're curious about learning more, I put her contact information in the show notes.

[00:39:36] And also I've got my new book coming out soon called Evolve the Path to Trauma Informed Leadership. So I hope we'll consider picking that one up and digging. And learning a little bit more. Thanks for joining us today.