



021: Finding the leader within with Luke Iorio

[00:00:00] **Luke:** When I combined compassion and empathy with greater awareness being brought to my physical space, my physical structure, my physical being, all of a sudden it was like discovering I had a body yes. Because I could live from, right. How often did we hear that phrase of living from the neck up? Well, I, that's what it felt like, right?

[00:00:17] And so all of the sudden I started to gain this very different appreciation and connection to what was going on in my physical being. And I started to receive a different level of ease, a different level of felt spaciousness that was in my body.

[00:00:38] **Carolyn:** Luke Iorio is a transformation coach, guide, advisor, and host of the podcast.

[00:00:45] On this walk, not only has he walked alongside tens of thousands of clients and listeners as they search for meaning, purpose, and alignment, he himself has been on his own path. Reconnecting with the true nature, finding real balance, and feeling connected, healed and whole. Luke is the previous president and CEO for the Institute for Professional Excellence in Coaching.

[00:01:15] He's had the unique and fortunate opportunity to work with influential people and organizations who are not satisfied with life and business as usual, granting him access to a laboratory of. Transformation that few people have had. Luke continues to serve as a partner and board member for this organization, ipec and the insights and experiences he gleaned continue to inform his coaching retreats and podcast.

[00:01:42] I have often tried to find the answers much earlier than I was ready for them. This sometimes chasing oftentimes in patience was born from trying



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to find my way back home to center within my true nature. This was a statement from Luke's bio that I thought was really profound and really guided our conversation that you were about to hear.

[00:02:11] In this episode, Luke and I will talk a little bit about some of our own experiences and ultimately how connection and compassion are so needed. In leading today, you'll hear Luke's great definition of a leader. By the way, I love it. I hope you enjoy this episode and that it gives you some things to think about as the leader that you are in the world and helps you find inspiration to keep doing this work of leading and showing up in the world.

[00:02:49] **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.

[00:03:14] 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.

[00:03:29] **Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Sora. And this is Evolve a new era of leadership. Welcome listeners, to evolve a new era of leadership. I'm your host, Carolyn Sora, and today I'm really excited to have our guest, Luke I, Oreo on the show. Welcome Luke.

[00:03:47] **Luke:** Thanks for having me, Carolyn. I'm looking forward to it.

[00:03:49] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. So now beyond the fact that you have a really cool last name that has the word Oreo in it, you are also doing some fascinating work that I just wanted to talk to you about.

[00:04:00] You know, this work that you're doing around helping people really connect with who they are. And I know you have your own podcast, so I'd love



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to hear a little bit about what inspired you to start this podcast and really help people on this journey of

[00:04:14] **Luke:** self-awareness. Sure. Well, the podcast on this walk really started just outta my own personal journeys.

[00:04:19] I had a really kind of wonderful career, very fortunate career, one of the very world renowned coach training institute, uh, inside the coaching space. And after I had gotten to the point of being c e o for about five years and being in this work right, of personal development and focusing and, and looking at ourselves and all the different angles, right, to keep us optimized and keep us into wellness.

[00:04:40] And the emperor had no clothes on and I burnt out. Oh. Um, wow. So I was so focused on achieving the things that I had set out to achieve, which was a kind of an old way of operating a part of my old identity, and I was so clear that I was doing work that was meaningful in the world. Mm-hmm. I was aligned because it, it did have a lot of purpose to it.

[00:05:01] And I was still achieving under a lot of that old paradigm of, I've gotta have more, meaning I've gotta achieve the next thing for myself, the next thing for the company, I've gotta hit the next goal. And so I was on that hamster wheel that just kept going. And what led me to the podcast, what led me to the, the work I'm presently doing was in that moment of burnout, even though I'd had so many things that were going really well and looked great from the outside looking in.

[00:05:29] I hadn't taken the time to recognize that I was no longer that person. Hmm. And so while that time that I was living was a future that had been envisioned when I was in my early twenties, mid twenties, and I had set out on that vision, and thankfully a lot of those things ultimately came to pass. But then when I'm now in my late thirties, and I've been c e o for five, six years now, my values had started to change.



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[00:05:56] Mm-hmm. The things that I wanted out of life started to change. And I didn't feel that deeper sense of connection to that part of myself, that truer part of myself. I didn't feel a connection to anything beyond me, meaning more from the spiritual aspect of things. I didn't feel the depth of connection there, and it became very clear to me that it was time for me to start looking and reflecting on my journey myself in a very different way.

[00:06:23] That led me into all sorts of different fields of study and different paths, things I'm sure we'll get into today. Mm-hmm. But it was after that. Now that's going back maybe about eight years ago when I started to go through that process and I. Now, uh, as I started to share that with clients, share it with some colleagues, share it with some friends.

[00:06:43] Uh, I had podcasted in the past and it just kind of came together. Like we want to hear more, like yeah. Whatever it is that you keep talking to us about. There's something here that is very rich and very much, maybe it was a personal experience, but it seems more universal than that.

[00:06:59] **Carolyn:** That's the beauty of doing this work, podcasting and sharing stories and really, you know, I find it helps people connect to the humanity that we all share.

[00:07:07] Yeah. Right. Our stories might have different details, but the themes are relatively the same. Absolutely. Now you referenced burnout. Yep. And that's a big word, a word that I think a lot of people can identify with. And what I caught and heard in your story was this recognition of disconnection. Yep. How long did it take for you to realize you were in burnout?

[00:07:28] Or heading towards

[00:07:29] **Luke:** burnout. For me, it ended up being one of those blinding flashes of the obvious. Hmm. And honestly, it was my business partner who reflected it back to me. I had gone through a very difficult year. I was actually



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headed out to my fourth funeral in 10 months. And this one happened to be for, uh, a pretty big influence when I was growing up.

[00:07:49] And I just happened to be on the phone with my partner that, that morning talking about a project that wasn't going really well and he paused me in the middle of it and he's just like, what is going on? Really? You just, you're very off. And I explained, no, I, I'm, I'm literally leaving here. I'm a Paul bearer at the next funeral.

[00:08:03] He's like, good lord you've had a year. I'm like, yeah, it's been interesting. And uh, he said, listen to the project, whatever, we'll talk about that in a week or two that, you know, that doesn't matter today. And he goes, however, when you get back, let's chat cuz you're starting to display all the classic signs of burnout.

[00:08:18] Wow. And he reflected it and it didn't take me long. I had another experience that day. And then just over the coming weeks of reflection of, yeah, I'm tapping it, I'm draining it at a physical level, emotional level, mental level, spiritual level. It's just I'm running on empty coming every everywhere. Yeah.

[00:08:35] So I mean, you can, we can talk about it from the physiological, which was. States of incoherence and dysregulation all the way up to just the emotional, mental, and, and spiritual stress that was so inherently obvious of what I was going

[00:08:47] **Carolyn:** through. I've had my own experience with burnout. I wasn't as wise as you unfortunately, cuz I denied it to the people around me until I was pretty much unable to walk.

[00:08:58] That's really how stuck I was cuz I, I just felt like I had to like power through and I can do it and I can do it.

[00:09:06] **Luke:** What do you think you were holding onto? Right, in terms of there's a reason when we create that denial, right? That's it's cuz we're holding



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onto something. I know what it was for me. I'm curious, and I can share that in a minute, but I'm curious.

[00:09:16] **Carolyn:** Well, you know what it was, I didn't realize I was holding onto trauma. And the trauma was in my body. Mm. And cognitively, I knew that my family needed me to not fall apart, and so cognitively I had managed the rest of my life. I'm like, this is no different. I can get through hard times. I'm a strong person.

[00:09:36] I. And so that's how we got connected. You know, cuz I'm doing this podcast and really it was understanding what that word meant. But if my body hadn't have shut me down, I would've kept going. Yeah. Yeah. Mm-hmm. So I mean, the body stores that trauma, so what

[00:09:50] **Luke:** about your Yeah, man, that, that, that sits with me as well for me, from the perspective of holding on because of people depending on me, et cetera.

[00:09:59] But for me, I used that as a piece of identity. What I could only articulate much later than this was that if I in fact was burnt out and needed to go on a new path, it was not only a matter of giving up what I knew then, but it was a matter of giving up the entire imagined expected future that was supposed to come from it.

[00:10:20] Yeah. And so like all of a sudden that whole timeline collapses and that's what you're walking away from. So

[00:10:25] **Carolyn:** it's really interesting you said that cuz I had no choice, right? Like the experience I'm talking about when my burnout happened, you know, my husband was four years into his illness, which was terminal.

[00:10:35] I had two young toddlers and so. I was trying to hold on to like all of it. Damn, this wasn't supposed to happen to our family. So yeah. I'm gonna hold on to like this reality of having, you know, us as together as a family for as long



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as I bloody can, because yeah, this really sucks. So there's like a lot of, I'm not gonna say stubbornness, but I think a lot of resistance.

[00:10:57] Mm-hmm. To. Accepting and surrendering to what is, and trying to willfully push through, because I've always been strong and you know, the wisdom now that I have so many years later is like, man, your body doesn't lie to

[00:11:13] **Luke:** you. It doesn't, it doesn't. Right. It, it's amazing to me how. No matter what. Right? If you are, and I, I heard somebody actually give this example the other day of you can logically sit there and look at somebody who you feel has done something to you, and you can forgive them, right?

[00:11:30] Yeah. You can say, I forgive you, but you're gonna know in your body whether or not you actually have forgive them, right? There's your body. Just, it will be the lie detector, and I just use that as an example. So at any given time, We can try. How often do we try to tell ourselves, no, I'm fine. No, I can push myself through it.

[00:11:47] No, I've got the, you know, I've got it all figured out. I'm good. I'm good the entire time. Your body is just screaming like you do not, man, I, I know. You are a mess right now. Yeah. Your pulse is all over the place. Your nervous system's all over the place. You can't sleep. Your mind is all over and your body is just like, you gotta come back to me.

[00:12:05] And the only way you can do that is you gotta simplify. Yeah. At least for a period of time. You've got to get back into simplifying what's going on to be with what is.

[00:12:12] **Carolyn:** Absolutely. And you know, the power of somatic work in this leadership space, and I know that's something you're familiar with. Yeah, and I mean, at the time for me, I was like, no, I can power through this.



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[00:12:21] And literally, if, if my body hadn't have shut me down because it did, I, I couldn't walk, I couldn't get outta bed and sort of move through the world the same way. I was like, oh my gosh, wait, like, wait, wait a second. Can you talk a little bit about how somatic work is involved in your practice and what you do with that?

[00:12:38] **Luke:** Sure. So for me, how I was exposed to it and then how it shows up now. So as part of being burnt out, I started looking at different paths and I've ultimately landed on mindfulness as kind of that next first step for me. Yep. And thankfully, I chose intentionally with two aspects in mind. The first is I did want it grounded in the spiritual tradition itself.

[00:12:57] I did not want a secular mindfulness program. I did want a spiritual mindfulness program. Mm-hmm. And because of the one that I chose, And the tradition that was connected to it brought me into not only a somatic approach to mindfulness, but also a very compassion based approach to mindfulness. And so when I combined those two things of compassion and empathy, with greater awareness being brought to my physical space, my physical structure, my physical being, all of a sudden it was like discovering.

[00:13:24] I had a body. Yes. Cause I could live from, right. How often did we hear that phrase of living from the neck up? Well, I, that's what it felt like, right? And so all of a sudden I started to gain this very different appreciation and connection to what was going on in my physical being. And I started to receive a different level of ease, a different level of felt, spaciousness that was in my body.

[00:13:50] And of course, when you go into that type of direction, It meant that I started to achieve greater coherence from a heart rate variability standpoint. So my whole nervous system started to fall back into sync and regulation moving back into parasympathetic more often than not. Yeah, and when all of that happens, I.



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[00:14:08] Now you've got greater connection to your executive function. You've got greater connection to your intuition, to your felt sense of things. And it felt like certain things were coming alive again in ways that had been offline for a very long time. That was a kind of a fundamental part of, and a foundational part of my path of kind of recovering as it were, and I use that almost always with my clients.

[00:14:33] Because I find, again, the nature of the path I've been on and therefore the nature of some of the clients that I tend to attract and work with. They're very familiar with that path of a lot of high achieving. They're familiar with living from the neck up. They are familiar with the fact that they're now fighting them space selves in a space and life.

[00:14:50] It's like what I used to know and what used to bring me happiness and what used to bring me fulfillment doesn't seem to be working anymore. Hmm. But they're trying to think their way out of it. Yes. That doesn't work anymore. And so we've gotta get reconnected to the rest of who we are because we've got bodies, we've got emotions, we've got all of these other senses we can tap into, including inner senses we can tap into.

[00:15:11] So we've gotta get more fully connected that way, and then everything comes back online, then all of a sudden it's like things are, are there and in front of us. Uh, the last piece, which I'll just mention, and I think you, you know, you could speak even in, in much greater detail to this, but it's the recognition that weather.

[00:15:28] It's trauma or whatever degree of hurts and pains that we have been through within our lives get stored inside of our bodies and get stored inside of our nervous systems. Yeah. And we don't realize how often we end up repeating patterns and repeating loops because we don't know how to face it. We don't know how to release it cuz it's not necessarily easy.

[00:15:48] But it's also not rocket science. Yeah. Meaning that it really is truly being able to create a safe container. A safe space for us to go there in a manner



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that allows things to actually be brought to completion from a physiological standpoint. And that creates a, an profound effect of healing as well as release.

[00:16:06] Yeah. So I use some of those types of techniques and practices and understanding inside of my practices as part of the whole, of everything

[00:16:12] I

[00:16:12] **Carolyn:** do. Yeah. One of the words you said there was, receive. And it really stands out to me because I think we can have a hard time receiving a lot of things, but receiving the grace and compassion for ourselves.

[00:16:30] So can you comment a little bit on your journey with self-compassion?

[00:16:39] **Luke:** To put it in context, when I was five and a half years old, my childhood home burned to the ground. Ugh. And I went from being a very curious, very explorative, very weird, fun, playful, imaginative little kid to being incredibly serious and incredibly self-reliant overnight.

[00:17:02] Wow. And I stayed that way for another several decades, started to come out of my shell after Samir experiences in my twenties. But I always still had this very hard view of the way that I needed to show up in life, because if I didn't, I wasn't safe. I wasn't gonna be protected. So I had to be the one who would take care of everything, and I couldn't rely on on other people beyond a certain point, because then I'd be exposed, I wouldn't be safe, right?

[00:17:31] And so I didn't have a lot of room for compassion, let alone self-compassion in my life, because that would have felt like I was making myself vulnerable. Right. And it was later on and it was some of the mindfulness and compassion based mindfulness work specifically that introduced me to not just the concept of empathy, but the actual feeling of empathy.



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[00:17:54] Mm-hmm. Where I could actually genuinely feel what was going on for me. Genuinely feel what other people must be going through and in that space for me. It was actually more helpful for me to feel that compassionate empathy for others, and then that was able to create the space for myself.

[00:18:14] **Carolyn:** It was through others that you were able to find at first.

[00:18:17] Yeah,

[00:18:17] **Luke:** that's how it worked for me. It became so clear that I would be willing, like my heart was open, and so willing to extend that compassion to others cuz I could feel their desire to be free from pain. I could feel their desire to have nothing more than happiness within their life, no matter how they end up going after it.

[00:18:34] Whether I'd agree with whether what they do or not, doesn't matter. I could feel where it was coming from and if I was willing to extend that space and compassion to them because, Whatever it is that they've been through in their lives is still seen through the lens of them doing the best they can because they want happiness and they don't want pain.

[00:18:52] Yeah. And the more that I could extend that compassion to them, it became kind of that question of, well, if you can do this for them, why aren't you part of that same group? Hmm. And there are specific practices that I had, I had learned at that time in mindfulness that you do incorporate yourself into that space of loving kindness.

[00:19:09] Right. And all of a sudden I could actually feel it and I could feel. Where I was at that time, I could feel the compassion I had for myself as a five and a half year old boy losing his home. Mm-hmm. As I could feel myself having compassion for any number of experiences that I'd been through in my life, as well as how hard I'd been on myself.



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[00:19:25] I had to go through, for me, the lens of seeing that for others that cracked open the door to say, yeah, you really truly wanna have full compassion for somebody else. You can't do that if your cup's empty. Yeah. You've gotta be able to extend that from yourself. That's how it's gonna actually flow from you.

[00:19:41] **Carolyn:** I know you do a good deal of your work is with men, correct? Yes. Correct. And so this notion of compassion, I'm curious cuz I'm, I'm not a man, I'm married to one and I'll sort of throw it one of those, you know, these sort of sociological beliefs that have been ingrained into our society is that to be strong you have to be like controlling.

[00:20:01] And I. How do you help your clients find the self-compassion that we all need regardless of our gender or our identity

[00:20:10] **Luke:** in the world? It's interesting cuz I think certainly some of the practices that I have used and been manifested with me, I do share, but in the context of that, for most men, when they find this type of work where they want to do some type of exploration for bringing out more of who they are or more purpose or more meaning or what have you in their lives.

[00:20:31] When you have a conversation with them about what are the present stereotypes of men they see and that they feel, and that are even painful for them to witness and yet feel the constraints of. Yeah. So when they look at that and they define, as you said, you know, well, what it means to be strong is you can't be vulnerable.

[00:20:52] You can't be weak. You can't display emotions, you can't do this. You can't. And then you ask them, so, When you feel that, when you go through, like literally what are you feeling in your body, not emotionally do we not have to go there yet? Just what are you feeling in your body? And they'll start to, well, I'm feeling the tension, I'm feeling the stress.

[00:21:09] I feel myself tighten up. I feel the constriction of that. And it's a way of them beginning to get a felt sense of what those old images and definitions



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are doing to them. Wow. And when they start to feel that. You can ask them, and in many instances, not always true, but in many instances, a lot of the men that I work with happen to be parents.

[00:21:30] Hmm. And that's also a great source of leverage, especially with Yeah. What's true for men and women, just in different ways, is to be able to say, so if your son or your daughter was going through something like this and you can feel like what they were experiencing, what would you feel for them? Hmm. And they'll just like, and what would you want for them?

[00:21:48] What would your hope be for them? What would you want them to be able to see, or to be able to acknowledge that they could lay this down? And I mean, the wisdom just starts flowing from them and now it's taking them back and saying, okay, so now how can we extend that to you? Yeah, because you just displayed everything that it means to be compassionate.

[00:22:07] It's finding bridges that's just, I'm giving a little bit of an example, but it's finding bridges and very often it starts with acknowledging what is, which we said before, and acknowledging what is has to do with a lot of the stereotypes, a lot of the broken definitions that we still carry around for ourselves.

[00:22:23] In this context, we're talking about men, but this could be true of any role that we feel like we have to take on for ourselves on any mask that we happen to pick up. Yep. And once they can see that, They can start to separate from those stereotypes and that creates an open space which we can then play

[00:22:39] **Carolyn:** in.

[00:22:40] Yeah, and I love the fact too, that you're making it very like felt, that felt sense. You know, we're back to the wisdom of our body, of our nervous systems and feeling that calm and safety unfold when you can cross that bridge with them.



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[00:22:54] **Luke:** It's so easy, and I'll speak as men. I'm not saying this isn't true for women, so I'm just speak this time from my experience with men.

[00:23:00] It is so easy for us to get trapped in our heads, to figure things out and to cut ourselves off from emotion because we are trying to figure it out and we believe or have been taught that that is a, a weakness that is not gonna make us as strong as we need to be. Well, as soon as you connect yourself off from your emotion, disconnect from your emotions, disconnect from your body, yeah.

[00:23:20] You disconnect from your felt sense of things. And that creates such a, a dichotomy and a split from the wholeness of who it is that we are. And so the more that we can start to bring that back in and get that felt experience, get the somatics working in our favor, it quite literally feels like coming home.

[00:23:39] It does, doesn't it? Right? It does. And so you feel like I'm at home again in my body and in my own skin. It builds the buy-in, the motivation, the engagement to say, well, Can I actually like, can I live this way like a lot more often? Like you can live this way a a whole lot more

[00:23:54] **Carolyn:** often. Yeah. Like it can be this easy, like, wait,

[00:23:58] **Luke:** it actually can, it's the reminder just to use that as a different point.

[00:24:01] It's the reminder for anybody, whatever your mind is racing, whenever you're caught in a story or the details of what's going on, even the emotional swirl that's attached to those stories. Best thing you can do is find a way to get into your body. To get present with a breath, to get present with some type of a practice.

[00:24:22] Even to go out for a run or something that is a little bit more physically taxing. So you have to concentrate on your body when you're doing it. Going out in nature and going out on a, a nature walk or a hike, something



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like that too. It just connects you and all of a sudden things start to drop away and you gain space again.

[00:24:40] It's like being in the shower and all of a sudden the idea appears. Mm. Same thing happens, right? Yeah. We're on the long drive, we're on the long hike, we're in the shower, whatever. Cause we're just focused on the present of what we're doing and then all of a sudden it's like, oh. That story's not real. Oh.

[00:24:53] All that mental chatter. Actually, 90% of it, it's garbage. It's not even happening. Yeah. I'm worrying about things that, that, that are imagined right now. And then you look at the 10% that's there and go, well, I could just do this. Yeah. And then you move forward. You know

[00:25:06] **Carolyn:** that part of the story I was telling you with my brun when I couldn't like actually walk?

[00:25:10] Yeah. It had happened after I had done a 10 K run. Now for anyone listening who knows me personally, I'm not a runner unless I'm chasing after a basketball or a baseball, right? But I actually had found for a few years running to be like a therapeutic way to cope with what was going on, which I still laugh at cuz I don't like to run.

[00:25:33] And here's what I confused is when I physically and my body was shutting down, but I didn't attribute it to. The trauma that I was going through, right? I was like, oh, clearly I'm being too hard on my body from a physical perspective, right? And so I went the other way and then I just stopped doing anything because I thought, oh, clearly it just wasn't the right thing to do.

[00:25:58] So I share that for any of the listeners Yeah. Out there. Because when we are on this, Hamster wheel of going and going and going and doing, we might be getting signals crossed. And for me, my signals were crossed all over the place. I wasn't able to really understand what my body was trying to



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[00:26:16] **Luke:** tell me.

[00:26:16] And what you also just highlighted and, and exhibited is beginning to get curious about what's the energy underneath. Any of the actions, any of the stories, anything that you happen to be going through in a given time, we tend to look at the surfaces. Exactly. You said is, oh, my body's breaking down because I went too hard.

[00:26:34] I went too far, so now I'm gonna go in the complete opposite direction. All of that is actually what's happening in the external, the outside of our lives. It's this, the, what we can see, what we need to be able to get to understand is, well, what am I not seeing? Meaning what's actually going on in me and not just physiologically that's a big piece of it.

[00:26:51] Yeah. But physiologically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, relationally, what are all the things that are actually going on? Because if we see an affect inside of our lives, uh, something that's changing, that's just a symptom we've gotta be cautious of, of just treating the symptom. We've gotta use that as an internal exploration and a systemic exploration.

[00:27:14] Of looking at the whole, of everything that's going on that might be contributing to this at any given time.

[00:27:18] **Carolyn:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, and I'm thinking too of these brilliant questions. Your clients are very lucky to have you, Luke, cuz you ask very deep questions and you're really demonstrating that we have this wisdom and it's not about other people telling us, it's about allowing us to find space.

[00:27:35] And again, I come back to that time. I absolutely had people in my life that were trying to help me Sure. And trying to show me, and I mean my mom in particular like had sat me down a few months before and said like, you don't know what's going on around you and this is where the trauma comes back in. I was so guarded trying to protect myself and, and you know, probably just so afraid I couldn't see what was actually around me at all.



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[00:28:00] And so, you know, again, we can't do this work on our own. We're. A species that needs to be together and support each other. And so I wish I had listened a little bit more. I eventually did, and I'm very grateful that those people in my life did not walk away from me. But you know, we're getting, we're back to compassion for each other as well.

[00:28:18] **Luke:** What do you think would've helped you, meaning a little bit earlier, to be aware of the support that it was actually all around you? What

[00:28:25] **Carolyn:** I think would've helped me is what I ended up writing about. I wish I'd understood what the word trauma meant because had I understood that it is essentially, it's not an event, it's how you cope with an event.

[00:28:39] Yep. I think that would've just given me permission to be like, oh. Okay. That just hadn't been how I had moved through life. And sure there were a whole lot of like Big Ts. Little Ts, big trauma, little trauma. But to me, trauma was an event. And you know when you get hit over the head and a lot of blood comes goo oozing out, right?

[00:29:00] It was external, right. So I don't know what would've helped me. It was a different time, you know, like we were raised in different times. The research is very different now, and I just like to think everything happened in an order, in, in a way that it needed to.

[00:29:13] **Luke:** Yeah, I very much, I believe that as well. It happens in the manner that it's kind of meant to happen and help with the unfolding of where you are and what your journey happens to be.

[00:29:22] And at the same time, I think it's why you're in this space that you're in, which I'm in. Is, how do we spread information that we believe people might be able to hear and adjust or integrate, even if it's just a couple of days, couple of weeks, couple of months, you know, earlier than they would've normally.



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[00:29:40] And certainly right now, the, you know, this understanding around trauma and the way that it's evolving in the last, the understanding of it, how it's evolving, uh, in just even the last five to 10 years is becoming a lot more helpful.

[00:29:49] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I'm curious, let's, uh, one more question or I guess space to move into is the work you're doing, your podcast, your coaching.

[00:30:01] Why do you feel that this work is so desperately needed right now? Like, if, I guess it's sort of the passion behind your purpose. Why is it so passionate for you right now?

[00:30:12] **Luke:** There are so many individuals that I'm connecting to right now that. Are getting this sense that the way life has been, meaning the way they have worked, the way they've related, the things that they have thought were important for them to be able to achieve or to obtain within life, none of that's holding true.

[00:30:34] Hmm. They're checking the boxes of what was supposed to be the happy life and the good life, and however we wanna define it. And they're getting there and they're saying, but I still feel a sense of emptiness. Mm-hmm. I still feel like something's missing. I still feel like I've done this, but is this really why I'm here?

[00:30:53] Was it to draw out a paycheck and to make a difference at this company, or what's the real reason? There's something more here. Yeah. A lot of people that are asking that question, and I think it's because we're at a time of paradigm change. I mean, for better or worse. The pandemic gave us a period of time that the whole world was not focused on all the externalities and busyness of everything going on.

[00:31:18] And instead, there was a lot of time for reflection. There was a lot of time for being at home. There's a lot of time for spaciousness and there's a lot of



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pain and hurt. Obviously they went with that, but it's also usually during those times that there is that deeper reflection that comes out. Yeah, and there's a lot of people right now that are really questioning.

[00:31:38] How do I redesign my life around what I think really, truly matters, as well as the difference that I want to be able to make in my life? Yeah. When I say like, what difference I wanna make, I don't mean like big and global, it can be around your family or your kids, your community or your home, your neighborhood.

[00:31:54] Yeah. Doesn't it? It's whatever, whatever context is appropriate for you and what calls to you. You know, for me it was, this happened before the pandemic, but I keep going back to it because I, I just don't think. I've got a better reference point for this, which is that however many years ago, probably while I was burning out, I had read the article by Bronny Ware palliative care nurse called The Top Five Regrets of the Dying.

[00:32:16] Yep. And I referenced that probably every week in some way, shape, or form. And that number one regret is I wished I'd had the courage to be true to myself as opposed to the expectations of others. Yeah. I think when you consider what's going on in the world right now around the expectations of others from a social media standpoint, news media standpoint, political standpoint, economic standpoint, environmental standpoint, round and round and round we go, we have got technology and platforms built in such a way that we are surrounded by the expectations of others.

[00:32:45] Yep. So we right now have this pressure cooker, and that is actually the regret. Instead, we want to have the courage to be true to ourselves. And for me, the one way I would, I'd frame it, even though I know this is what was intended by the, the statement, but I would say the courage to be true to our true selves.

[00:33:04] Mm-hmm. Making that distinction that it's not just on any given day. How we feel and what we're upset by or what we're happy about or whatever.



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That's more the surface us. That's the what we present to the world. But it's how do we go deeper and get to know the truth of who we are beneath the assumptions, the illusions, the limiting beliefs, the identity, and actually get to know this is actually the core of who I am and what I care about in the world and the way I wanna show up in the world for all the people around me.

[00:33:30] And when we get in touch with that, we want to have the courage to be that, to be congruent to that part of ourselves. And I see more people than ever before are turning towards that and whether they know that's what they're looking for or not, although more people than not are starting to find that language.

[00:33:47] I'm passionate about it. Cause I think that's something that's going on that is also gonna help upgrade our humanity.

[00:33:54] **Carolyn:** I, I couldn't agree with you more, Luke. I do think people are realizing that is the way through all of this. Okay. And you know, when I look at at, just, you know, if I look at our workplaces, cuz so much of our identity is tied up in that the best leaders out there are the ones who will take the time, invest the time in themselves to deepen that self-awareness.

[00:34:19] And like I always say, self-awareness is not a destination. It is a journey.

[00:34:26] **Luke:** Most definitely. Most definitely. And that is a, a key piece of this is for. Anybody who finds myself in a position of leadership, and now let me clarify what I mean by that. If you have a heartbeat, if you have a pulse and you were still breathing, then you are gonna have some level of influence and impact on somebody else, including yourself inside of your life.

[00:34:45] Yeah. And if that is true, then you are leading whether you wanna call yourself a leader or not. So for all of us, we've gotta recognize the leadership ability that we do innately have and we have, whether we choose it or not, it's there. Yeah, and the more that we can start leading in terms of bringing



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out that true authenticity in somebody else, the helping them find the courage to be who it is that they really truly are, and to help them show up in the world the way that they're meant to show up in the world, to give their gift to the world, the more we can embrace that as a society and leading and supporting each other in doing those things.

[00:35:23] I think we evolve faster. I think we innovate quicker. I think we're getting more creative. I think we're gonna start solving some of the major issues Yeah. That are actually out there right now. And we're gonna solve 'em from a place of human ingenuity, not ideology. Yeah. And it's gonna come from a very, very different place.

[00:35:39] But we've gotta stop saying, oh, it's up to those leaders to make the difference. It's up to those leaders to make the change. We are somebody. Right? I always thought somebody should do something about that. Then I realized one day I'm somebody. Yeah. Right.

[00:35:53] **Carolyn:** Uh, you know, the other thing that comes to mind when you say that too is the ingenuity and the authenticity.

[00:35:59] I think, you know, the ego can take on many forms and one of the things that I've learned in the past few years is my ego showed up in a way that didn't make sense to me. Like, how does helping others, how is that an ego? Again, this is why. People like you and I do this work is to help people understand that an ego isn't just a big, loud voice at the front of the room.

[00:36:22] Absolutely. It's the quiet voice or the loud voice inside that's not coming out, or it's, you know, not giving yourself the space or time to reflect or think. I mean, there's so many things that are tied up in that word ego. Yeah. And so I'm guessing you've seen that with your clients as well? Yeah. As sort of deconstructing what that word actually

[00:36:42] **Luke:** means.



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[00:36:43] Oh, completely. And I'd, I'd love to say that I do a lot of that work with my clients, but the truth is I've done a lot of that work with me. Yeah. It starts here and for me, recognizing that, you know, my ego, it's my attachment to a identity. Yeah. Ego is my attachment to safety. It's my attachment to certainty and control.

[00:37:00] An ego is the way in which we see ourselves. It's this image, this self-image that we hold. And the challenge is, is that self-image is actually something that is very malleable. It's, it's evolving, it's ever changing, but the ego doesn't want change. The ego wants something that's very, very static and stays the same because that's how it stays in control.

[00:37:20] Yeah. And that's how it feels safe. And that's okay. It art of it developed out of this loving place of wanting to keep us safe. Yep. We're a couple thousand years past that at this point, and we need, we need an upgrade in this. You know, we need an awake ego. We need a conscious ego that can help us create, that can help us have an identity but not attached to it.

[00:37:40] Attached to it having to be a certain way. The ego comes up in many different ways. I taught, you know, many different ways of presenting it. I've talked about it even on the podcast as the masks that we wear is one of, of the ways to look at it. Read all these different roles and faces that we wear at an even time.

[00:37:54] Uh, had another episode. I'm not sure if you ever run across the Disempowerment Triangle, but it talks about this triangle of. The victim, the perpetrator, and the rescuer, which is this. Oh, yes. This power dyna. Okay, so you, you are familiar with it, this power dynamic that we enter into, and one of, just to make this clear, One of the places that I actually get into a lot of conversation around ego is actually this role of the rescuer when we feel like we need to rescue.

[00:38:18] Yes, it comes from a really noble place. Like this is a beautiful, noble, caring, even compassionate place. But what it ends up doing is it ends up



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locking that disempowerment dynamic in place cuz it says to the victim, I don't actually believe you have enough power to get outta this yourself. I don't think you have the answers that you need for yourself.

[00:38:36] And so I'm gonna step in to try to solve this for you. That's ego. Yep. This is what it is. So it's ego isn't just the loud, brash talking head. Right? Yep. It can show up in a lot of ways and at times it can even show up in noble ways. Yes. We still need to be aware of, at the end of the day, the ego simply wants its worldview.

[00:38:56] Yes. Yep.

[00:38:57] **Carolyn:** Yeah. What would you say would be a theme out of all the podcasts that you've done? With your guests current podcast and, and maybe once before. Sure. Is there a theme or like a common connection between all of your guests and conversations?

[00:39:16] **Luke:** I'd probably say the one theme that is by far, the one that we've returned to the most is the recognition of learning how we can listen within, because, you know, you said it before we have, and we possess such extraordinary wisdom.

[00:39:33] And I'll even say that it's not even just what we possess, it's what we have access to. Yeah. Because when we can be in that deep state of meditation or coherence or whatever, we want to describe it as we have access to that collective unconscious. Yeah. It's where those incredible ideas come from, the ether, right.

[00:39:53] However we wanna talk about it and we have access to that, and then we pull it through. Our lens authentically who we are. So it's How does that wisdom mean something personal to me? If we could cultivate that, to me, that should be a 1 0 1 to a one and 3 0 1 starting in elementary school. Yeah. Because the more that we could look within.



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[00:40:18] For our real guidance. And by looking within it means looking beneath our biases. Yeah, looking beneath our assumptions, looking beneath our blocks. All, all the things that get in our way so that we can access the real us, the real wisdom, the real truth, the real consciousness. If we could get down into that and stop looking outside of ourselves, the number of problems that we have would fade away.

[00:40:42] We wouldn't feel inadequate. We wouldn't feel incomplete. We wouldn't feel broken. We wouldn't feel like we've gotta stack up and compare ourselves to everything else that's out there, because we'd know the truth of the wholeness and fullness of what we are and how to access it, how to connect there.

[00:40:57] Yeah, it would change a lot of things. That is a consistent recurring theme that I'd say almost every episode at some point touches on that, at least briefly some touch on it for the whole episode. Yeah,

[00:41:08] **Carolyn:** well, kinda like this one. We touched on it for most of the episode really in a lot of ways. Yeah. It's been here the whole time.

[00:41:13] Yeah. Yeah. Luke, I'm really grateful that you came on the show and shared your insight and depth and, and just how you've described. I mean, I'm still sitting with how you described ego. Yeah, you just had a really interesting way of shedding insight and the way you've described some of these things. It's really, really helpful.

[00:41:30] Thank you very much for coming on. I appreciate

[00:41:31] **Luke:** it very much. Yeah, I enjoyed this a lot.

[00:41:34] **Carolyn:** Now, before we close out though, Luke, yep. Two things. How can our listeners find you? They're like this, Luke guy is like, I wanna hear more of him. We're like, I wanna talk to him myself. How can they find you?



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[00:41:45] **Luke:** First thing is my podcast is on this walk.

[00:41:47] So wherever you're listening to this search up on this walk, you'll find me. Yep. Uh, the website is just that as well on this walk.com, and you can find me there. You'll also find all my socials. If you look up D as in Daniel, Luke Iorio on any of the socials, you'll, you'll find me.

[00:42:02] **Carolyn:** All right. Now, before we let you go, Luke, we have three questions for you.

[00:42:06] Every podcast. We end with these three questions of an evolved leader. Mm-hmm. So the first one is about self-awareness and specifically, uh, Could you share a moment with us or a time where you developed some really interesting insight? Perhaps it was at a time of a lot of uncom like discomfort, but something that really like gave you an insight into who you are.

[00:42:32] Yeah.

[00:42:32] **Luke:** Yeah, interestingly enough, I struggled to launch my podcast cuz I knew I wanted to be very vulnerable in opening it up because that's, that's what people were responding to in the, the stories and client work and everything else. I was, I was sharing. Uh, so I struggled with putting it out there for a while and then I decide to, and I'm only a couple of episodes into it and I can feel the struggle of, I don't know where this is gonna go.

[00:42:52] I don't really know what I'm doing, where am I supposed to head with this? This whole process. And I sat down with two friends back to back. One of which I actually recorded and ended up releasing as a podcast episode. Mm. Where it was effectively me coming to this realization that for my entire life, one of my major control mechanisms was I had to have that detailed plan I needed, wow.

[00:43:17] Needed to know where things were going, and I needed to have that kind of all figured out. And one friend, this was, I mentioned it, but it was not



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on the recorded episode, had turned back to me and said, you know, you read. All these incredible people and these incredible thinkers, incredible traditions, everything else.

[00:43:32] And he goes, use somebody like Carl Young, you know, totally archetypal, quite literally in, in who he is. He became Carl Young after 7, 8, 9 years of journaling and reflecting and not even knowing what he was doing and creating at that time. And then afterwards he birthed this whole psychoanalytic approach to, to psychotherapy.

[00:43:52] And it, it revolutionized everything you're trying to figure out. How are you gonna have those insights? Without doing the 7, 8, 9 years of, of journaling and everything else. He goes, just put it out and just do it. Just put it outta the podcast and see what happens. Yeah. And so I brought that into an actual episode where I had a friend of mine, a facilitator, uh, hold space for me for an hour, and I actually released it as an episode of me literally talking about the whole of, wow.

[00:44:19] I was thinking if people look it up, it's, it's, I think it's maybe episode eight or nine with me and the facilitator was Aaron Klo. It was one of those things that I knew I was gonna have him do and I said, I'm gonna hit record. Cause I, I need this for me. And after we recorded, I said, I can't believe I'm gonna release this.

[00:44:33] I'm actually gonna release this in an episode.

[00:44:34] **Carolyn:** I'm just having a look. Yeah. Listening within and finding that inner voice. Yeah. When you think of On the walk, that's a beautiful title too to the podcast, so

[00:44:42] **Luke:** thank you. Yeah, thank you. It's get, there's a lot of meaning to that. Yeah. There's, there's some personal meaning of just being on this walk with friends on this walk with conversations we've had.



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[00:44:51] But honestly it was an indigenous friend of mine who, mm, they refer to being in this life is on this walk of life, meaning on this go-round in life on this time through this thing we call life. Mm-hmm. And so, yeah, something about it really stuck with me and, uh, I wanted to pay, pay homage to that. Wow.

[00:45:10] **Carolyn:** So second question, I don't know if you can answer it second and third one any better than the first one.

[00:45:15] What is a practice or ritual that keeps you in a calm state or returns you to a calm regulated

[00:45:22] **Luke:** state? Mm-hmm. There's a few that I use when I be a little bit more specific than just saying like meditation, but mm-hmm. In meditation, here's one of them is that, uh, actually I was just having this conversation with somebody earlier today, very often.

[00:45:40] We undertake a practice for the benefits we believe we're gonna receive. So for instance, part of mindfulness meditation became so popular because it was stress reduction, right? And that's how John Kazin popularized mindfulness in, in that sector very widely, right? What I began to recognize and what changed for me was meditation now is about connecting to where do I want to fuel myself from, not what I'm doing it for.

[00:46:07] And so, I want to be able to live from a place of peace, to live from a place of love, live from a place of truth, of groundedness. And so when I meditate, it's actually a meditation to connect with that fuel source, with that energy source. And then I marry that feeling once I feel like I've achieved or connected to that state.

[00:46:30] I tend to marry that state with a breath pattern. Hmm. So that at a later time I'm able to repeat those couple of either deep breaths, whether they're deep and diaphragmatic, or whether it's a very specific heart-centered breath where I can feel my energy there. I kind of mirror it to something physiological so that I can recreate that state.



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[00:46:51] And so that's one of the practices.

[00:46:54] **Carolyn:** Very nice. Very nice. I'm gonna think of that when I'm doing some of my, uh, I've, and I've recently, Come to that place as well and realize like the meditation sort of fell outta favor for me for a while. Cuz it was too stuck up here. Yes, exactly. Yeah. Yep. Yeah. And last but not least, what is a song or genre of music that makes you feel connected to others or part of something bigger than yourself?

[00:47:19] **Luke:** It's not just a song, it's an artist. Is that I tend to always go back to Mr. James Taylor. Oh yes. And there is something so folksy and connected about his lyrics and they're simple. They're not the poetry of Bob Dylan or, or anything like that, but they speak to me and they seem to be matched with a specific.

[00:47:43] Tone and quality in the way that he sings. Mm. It, it feels like experiences that a lot of us have shared. Yeah. And that's, you know, when I, when I find myself in those kind of moments with that little bit of melancholy or whatever it is, even, even at times when it's just. Happiness. I can go back and find a James Taylor song that, that connects me deeply.

[00:48:03] And, uh, for me personally, it, it, uh, my wife and I have listened to James Taylor for decades together. Mm. Uh, and it always connects us and, and makes me think a lot of memories we've shared is through the, through the years.

[00:48:13] **Carolyn:** Is there a particular James Taylor song that's coming up for you right now?

[00:48:18] **Luke:** Hmm mm That's not the name of the song I'm thinking of.

[00:48:23] Uh, not at the moment.



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[00:48:26] **Carolyn:** I know the one that, can I share the one that always please. I mean, there's a few, like you've got a friend, I think he wrote that one, right? Or did Carol King write that one? I know they both signed. You've got a friend. You've got a friend.

[00:48:37] **Luke:** Yeah. You know, honestly, I don't know which one wrote it.

[00:48:39] I think James Taylor did write that one, but yeah, they were both connected to

[00:48:42] **Carolyn:** the hip on that. That one was huge for me. In a lot of ways I won't get into that, but I think back to fire and rain. Yeah. And that brings me back to high school and there's just a warm feeling whenever I hear that song. Yep. So that's what came up when you said James Taylor.

[00:48:58] I thought of those two songs.

[00:49:00] **Luke:** Yeah. Yeah, there's a lot of them. Those have always connected me knowing some of the story about how he wrote Sweet Baby James for his nephew that was born. He wrote it on the road on his way to see his nephew. Oh wow. Um, yeah. A lot of those tunes just drop me into a different space.

[00:49:15] Fire and rain. Every time I listen to it, I can feel just the deep emotion behind what he was accusing.

[00:49:20] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Well, Luke, uh, an absolute pleasure to have you on the show. This has been a wonderful hour of conversation and I'm glad I found you along my walk of life. Um,

[00:49:32] **Luke:** likewise. I'm glad you have this conversation.



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[00:49:34] I have thoroughly enjoyed our time and, uh, yeah, I hope it's of great value to your listeners.

[00:49:38] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Well, thanks, uh, to all the listeners for tuning into this podcast, and please let us know what you think by responding with some comments to us. Thanks again, and we'll see you on our next episode. How much compassion are you giving yourself these days?

[00:49:59] Are you finding any space? To reflect and think and process what's happening. Are you allowing yourself to hear the signals somatically in your body? I just invite you to think about some of these things that Luke and I talked about. If I could go back 20 years and integrate some of. These things into my life back then, I think I probably would've avoided burnout.

[00:50:40] So I hope this conversation that Luke and I had gives you pause for thought and allows you to find. Some insight that can help you on your own leadership journey. Thanks for listening, and if you like what you hear, please rate and review and subscribe to the podcast. And if you are interested in hearing more about my book, *evolve the Path to Trauma Informed Leadership*, you can check more out on my website@carolynsora.com.

[00:51:17] Thanks for listening.