

Yoga, Trauma, and Becoming Safely Embodied with Deirdre Fay

[00:00:00] **Deirdre Fay:** How do you be at one with everything? The good, the bad, the ugly, the need, the happy, the joy.
I am. All of that. I'm all of that. There is No, separation. And when I can embrace all that, can I be connected to all that as even when I don't like, but it's happening.

Diana Hill: You're listening to Deirdre Fay on psychologist off the clock

Yael Schonbrun: We are four clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships, work and health.

Debbie Sorensen: I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in mile high Denver, Colorado, and coauthor of act daily journal.

Diana Hill: I'm Dr. Diana Hill coauthor with Debbie on act daily journal and practicing in seaside, Santa Barbara, California.

Yael Schonbrun: From coast to coast, am doctor Yael Schonbrun. a Boston based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown university.

Jill Stoddard: And from sunny San [00:01:00] Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of be mighty and the big book of act metaphors
we hope you take what you learned here to build a rich and meaningful life
Thank you for listening to psychologists off the clock.

Diana Hill: If you listen to this podcast, you probably know by now that we are partnered with Praxis continuing education, and there's a reason why it's because Praxis really can help you transform your client's lives by learning how to effectively promote lasting change with evidence-based approaches act, DBT, compassion, focused therapy.
And we love Praxis so much, especially because. Our very own Debbie Sorensen is going to be doing a workshop through Praxis. Tell us about it, Debbie.

Debbie Sorensen: Yes. I'm doing a webinar on acceptance commitment therapy for burnout. This is for therapists who are working with clients who are

burnt out. And of course, as therapists, we are also occasionally may experience our own burnout. So hopefully it will be helpful for that too.

[00:02:00] It starts August 25th and it's on Wednesday afternoons just for a few Wednesdays in a row. So you can check it out on the Praxis website and learn more. I hope you can join me if you're a therapist, be great to have you there. And for all of the live online courses that Praxis offers, you can go to our website OFFTHECLOCKPSYCH.COM and get a discount code.

Diana Hill: Exciting news. I'm going to be taking a group of folks to Nosara Costa Rica in April, 2022.

We're going to be staying at blue spirit, which is a beautiful retreat center there, and we're going to be exploring psychological flexibility. I'm going to have a yoga teacher with me, so we'll be doing some movement and then just a lot of rest and restoration on the beach in Costa Rica in one of the blue zones of the world. So join me. You can find out more at DrDianaHill.com.

Diana Hill: So today on the podcast, we have Deidre Fay, who's an expert [00:03:00] in yoga and attachment theory and how to help people. become what she describes as more safely embodied. And I think that the reason why I was really interested in having her on is because she brings an integrative approach to something that a lot of people experience, whether you have experienced trauma in your life, or you've maybe had experience of extreme anxiety or an eating disorder. A lot of times we avoid the feelings and sensations that show up in our bodies and we can get really disconnected from our bodies.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, I've noticed in my practice over the years, especially. Often with trauma when I've worked with PTSD or trauma, but other types of extreme distress is that people can get a little bit numbed out, disconnected from all aspects of their experience. So they might avoid certain memories or thoughts.

They might get really disconnected from their feelings where they can't really understand them or feel them or name them. And also from body [00:04:00] sensations where it's almost like they're so strong people. Sort of learned over time to just shut down and disconnect. And I think that approaches like these can be really helpful because it's a gentle way to reconnect with your body.

It's really, it's a form of exposure. I think sometimes we think of trauma exposure. You know, going back to a memory that we've been avoided avoiding of a traumatic event, but this is really exposure to the sensations in our body, to our feelings, right? Like the, the feelings that come up in our body and in our emotions.

And it's a very, it's one way to do that. That's a very gentle approach.

Diana Hill: Yeah, it's a really gentle approach. And it also incorporates a lot of theory from like compassion focused approaches as well. And in this episode, Deidre goes through some specific skills that she uses in her program. One of

the practices that she teaches early on is around, um, creating a sense of belonging. creating a [00:05:00] sense of belonging can be really helpful and grounding for folks. Another practice that we talk about is a really simple mantra that I use a lot, which is a breathing in the word, huh? And then breathing out the word saw, and that's a really grounding practice because it's working with your breath. It's also helping you kind of focus your mind on one thing in the present moment. And it's also that sound hum and saw is that hummus.

Aspect, and there is some emerging research on humming and its benefits in terms of our physiology so that's a really sweet one that I liked a lot. And then there were some other ones she does in there that are more kind of physicalizing parts of ourselves. And that is helpful too, because we can kind of take whatever we're feeling inside. And if we can pull it out and look at it, then we can start to realize that yeah. What we are feeling. We're more of the observer self observing what we're feeling and with all of these practices, hopefully we can get a little bit more flexible with our inner experience. We can choose to feel what's happening in our body, but we can also choose to [00:06:00] be engaged in our lives and in the world around us,

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. And I think you have some resources to share with listeners, Diana who want to learn more about this.

Diana Hill: Yeah. So I've been. Diving into this intersection of yoga and contemplative practice and act. And I teach every Tuesday a class that's free for folks and all of my recordings are available on my website you can listen to talks that I've given, but also be able to do some of these products.

Diana Hill: So welcome today. I'm really thrilled to have Dierdre Fay on the show. She teaches a radically positive approach to healing trauma, and his most recent book is becoming safely embodied. It became a bestseller before it was even published and it's based on her becoming safely embodied groups, which she started in 1996 and continues to lead online.

Dierdre is the author of attachment based yoga and meditation for trauma recovery, co author of attachment disturbances for adults, as well as the coauthor of chapters [00:07:00] and neuro-biological treatments of trauma association, a former supervisor at the trauma center, and she's certified in internal family therapy and a qualified trainer in mindful self-compassion. She's a respected international teacher and mentor for working safely with the body, and she's joining us from France. So welcome. Dierdre it's wonderful to have you.

Deirdre Fay: No Diana always so good to talk to you.

Diana Hill: And I first met you at a company, passionate mind foundation retreat. A number of years ago, I was enamored by you. So there was a number of

leaders in the field of compassion. Paul Gilbert was there, uh, Dennis Tirch and Laura Silberstein were there and Kelly Wilson, and you got up to do your talk and you we're integrating yoga postures into our experiential approach.

And I was like, Ooh, I like her. I want to, I want to learn more about her. So I'm excited to learn more from you today. And [00:08:00] also with trauma. I mean, how can you be a therapist or just a human on this planet without needing to learn how to navigate it? So welcome.

And I think a good place to start. Just what you mean by safely embodied. Cause that's the title of your book. And I'm curious what you mean by that becoming safely embodied.

Deirdre Fay: I'll give you the short story. My own trauma history came up and then late eighties, when I lived at a yoga show and I went from being able to be in my body, doing yoga meditation for hours and months at a time, I was training for triathlons to suddenly not wanting to get out of bed. And I was a, what happened to me, what happened to me and I was, uh, teaching a lot at that time, two large, large groups, a hundred, 200 people at a time.

And I didn't know that much about trauma at that point. In fact, the whole field was really starting to open. I got into therapy, I did some work and then I left and I went [00:09:00] and I worked. One of the big teaching hospitals in the Boston area. And, uh, somebody had been to one of my programs and invited me to come and teach yoga and meditation to those on the dissociative unit at night, I wasn't getting paid for it, but I really wanted to see could I translate what I had learned and how I'd helped myself heal to other people. And, um, wow. I had to relearn everything. How do you step it down? And then Bessel, uh, heard about the worker that's doing it. Invited me to join his clinic. And it was there that I started doing these groups. I called become a safe and bodied.

How do we step by step? Make it so concrete. So simple that the mind doesn't get freaked out about it, that the body can just do the next step without it having a big deal come up.

So that's what I started doing. So the [00:10:00] idea is really about how do you break things down. And it was only later on as I was studying attachment theory that I realized, this is the whole idea you have, it's Diana, you know, you have to take a big thing and break it down into smaller bits and the attachment developmental theorists call it scaffolding, Carmen lines, Ruth.

So that's what I realized I was doing. So that's where it all came from.

Diana Hill: And your program is really skills-based, which is what I appreciate about it, because I actually think there's a lot of misconceptions about skills-based approaches, where we think that maybe you're not connecting with the person you're just handing like a toolbox. But actually when you are not feeling safely embodied, you want some skills.

And that's actually one of the kindest things that you can offer. Someone is some concrete skills to use to help you get back into your body. Be present in this

moment, feel safe in the present moment, even when the past is coming to visit you. [00:11:00] And I'd love to today, actually. Talk about some of the skills that you teach.

And one of them that you start with is, uh, around belonging. One aspect of belonging is like finding places or images or objects that make you feel a sense of belonging or being part of. And I, and I would, I, I would add it sort of like belonging with yourself, belonging with others, but then also belonging to a group. Whole like those three aspects of belonging.

And in the, in the book you do the specific exercise of a cherished box of objects as a way to connect and feel a sense of belonging. And it, it just made me think a lot about when we were evacuating from the fires here in Santa Barbara. And I gave each of my kids a shoe box and said, okay, this is all you get. What are you going to put in there?

And what was fascinating was when we [00:12:00] came back from evacuating to look inside their boxes and see what they put and the sweetest things that they put, the little pictures of the little objects or the rocks or the things that name meant something to them and how much it's sad about who they are. So I'm just curious about that, that particular exercise, how you use that with folks to cultivate a sense of belonging.

Deirdre Fay: Exactly. You, you, you just said it so beautifully. It was when I was leading live groups, it would be some people bringing objects in and telling a story about it, and then allowing that richness of the story of the listening of others to elaborate even further and make it more real. And there's two bits to it. There's the actual object outside, but then there's the internal experience. And the whole idea is linking that together. So that. I can retrain my body, relearn how to live inside and have that felt experience because if somebody is [00:13:00] feeling overwhelmed all the time or an anxiety all the time or depressed, they, we become so used to that state that we forget there's another option.

And so how do we train our body, mind and heart to say, oh, I want this experience instead.

Diana Hill: Yeah. And even how we carry that feeling of belonging. In the, in the scary spaces. Right? So it was just sort of, so symbolic, like here we are leaving our house during this traumatic event. And I have on my lap, my little box of belonging. Right. And that we have that within ourselves. And I think about, um, that we could even do this with each other.

We could, and this is where I think it's very helpful storytelling and sharing more personal aspects of ourselves. And I was actually thinking, I have a, um, event coming up where our office space is reopening with some new people in it. And I'm going to invite them.

We're having a dinner. I'm an invite them to bring the little box of cherish things and share it's like show and tell, because I love [00:14:00] that exercise so much. So, so we have belonging as the first.

Skill set. And I'm curious how that relates to your understanding of attachment theory, because I know that you're very steeped in attachment theory. That's something that I don't have as much experience in. How does that relate? Like why, why is that the first skill that you teach?

Deirdre Fay: The BSE skills really came about way before I knew about attachment theory. This was really a bottom up experience of what helped me, how can I translate that into other people? And then I learned the theory of attachment theory and one of the main, uh, ruptures that happens to everybody is attunement.

And I think of it as one of the fundamental attachment needs that we all have is we need to be attuned to, we need somebody like you, who so good at connecting with people and knowing that you're just not an object. You there's actually a human being in there and your [00:15:00] curiosity and interest, uh, you know, lead you right into that space.

And the other person me in this case are like, oh, I want to be with Diana for many people, that didn't happen. And so it can, we can equate the two that rupture and belongingness is also the rupture and attachment attunement, not having that, not having somebody. Care that there's another human being over there.

That's interested and has something to say

Diana Hill: One of my girlfriends. I was recently when she was a psychologist and we were talking about our children and she said, you know, I heard somewhere that one of the key aspects of attachment with kids is letting them see you enjoying them, just you enjoying them, and then seeing you enjoying them, like how incredibly soothing that is to our attachment system. And you you've written about [00:16:00] this sort of seven, uh, Fundamental attachment needs. And it seems like that fits into some of those seven. Can you, can you S can you speak to.

Deirdre Fay: Well, it was **Dan bro, my mentor and attachment. When he talked about this idea. At what kohat** called being the apple in someone's eyes. This idea of expressed a light of like, like, oh my God, you're so incredible. You're like, you're the most interesting, unique person I've ever met. That sense of like delighting in somebody, just because they're there, they may be goofy. They may be unusual. They may not fit in and they may be beautiful. They may be ugly. It doesn't matter. But somebody was like, oh, wow, that is such a missing piece. Especially with people who have some kind of trauma. So, this sense of being able to develop once again, um, this idea of being delighted in and [00:17:00] expressing that delight and being able to receive the delight, being

able to be like, all right, this is what it's like safe to have somebody see me, get me delighted me.

Cause that's often where the ruptures and attachment.

Diana Hill: So, what are some of the other attachment needs of those seven fundamental attachment needs that you write?

Deirdre Fay: Well, um, one of the main ones is, uh, just safety, physical, emotional, psychological safety. That's primary. If you don't feel safe in your environment, it's going to be hard to relax and be inside yourself. If you don't feel safe emotionally, it's going to be hard. So that's where boundaries come in. This is very say primary place.

Then there's about being able to be reassured and calmed and soothed. Are you Okay.

Can you be with yourself? Many people didn't have that. [00:18:00] Um, Being delighted in being guided and mentored, having somebody say here, here's the next step, not the big next step, but this small, next step that you can take, it just flows easily and effortlessly.

It just dealt with someone around conflict and repair. How awful that is. You know, most people don't develop relationships where the conflict comes up because it does come up, but that it resolves itself in a way. And between each other, that actually deepens the relationship that makes it better. I know you do this with your kids.

That is such a gift, and many people don't have that. And when we don't have that, that's what makes it difficult to have a secure attachment somewhere along the way. If we don't learn that you can let life roll off your back, that you don't have to take life. Perfect. That you can actually be like, oh, okay, let it go.

When you don't have that ease of wellbeing, [00:19:00] we talk about it in the Buddhist literature. If you don't have that capacity, it's even so much harder there too. So when we start developing these and are surrounded by these and live in the nest of those, a person develops what we call a secure attachment, the ability to be in life, reach and step outside of their comfort zone and try something new and different.

Because every time we do something new and different, there's going to be some level of anxiety or trepidation. So can we have enough inside ourselves to step outside? And if something gets scary or overwhelming, do we have a safe Haven to return? So that cycle is something that John Bowlby and Mary's work worked with this sense of having a safe place inside being able to reach out.

And it's so natural and normal, there's all the research from these developmental psychologists who watched kids in playgrounds and said, [00:20:00] oh, look at how they launch themselves versus huddle close. And then what allows them to step out having that sense of self inside?

Diana Hill: So, if you haven't had some of these fundamental attachment needs met, uh, you know, th those, those that you just listed as a child, it seems that

part of your work and becoming safely embodied is how to start to meet those needs for yourself. And one of the, um, really simple ones that you write about that, I've also used a lot with, in my work with eating disorders and Rhonda Merwin.

Who's an act, uh, expert talks a lot about it is that attunement and just sort of check in of what do I need. Of the pause and checking is what do I need right now? And then actually responding to your core need, whether it's the need for comfort or the need for food in some cases, or the need for rest.

Debbie Sorensen: I am so excited that we are [00:21:00] being sponsored by Art of Tea, because I am a tea drinker. I drink tea almost every day, whether it's a cup of green or black tea or a matcha to get me going in the morning. Or a cup of herbal tea late in the evening to relax before I go to bed. I think it's just a really nice way for me to slow down a little bit and take care of myself in the middle of a busy day. And the teas that art of tea are so good. They're really good quality. They're delicious. My favorite is their signature Earl Grey Creme. I'm going to stock up on that. It's so good. And they also have a collection of teaware, and tea gifts. And so they're not just for taking care of yourself. They're also a great for giving to other people as a gift. I can't wait to get it for everyone. I know for the holidays this year. And I love it when people give me a gift of tea for any occasion. So check out their website artoftea.com and you'll want to be sure to use the discount code OFFTHECLOCK20. You'll get a 20% discount off your entire purchase. And that's good from august through october 31st, 2021. we hope you enjoy their tea as much as we do.

[00:22:00]

Diana Hill: can we talk a little bit about, more about yoga

Deirdre Fay: Sure.

Diana Hill: um, some of the more, yeah. Favorite subject? Uh, one, one of the things I really appreciate about you is how you physicalize some of these, um, skills. So the, like the standing on the mountain practice. Can you talk a little bit about how you use the, like the actual physical aspects of yoga, yoga in your work?

Deirdre Fay: I'm going to give you a little meta perspective.

Diana Hill: Yeah.

Deirdre Fay: um, so what I love about yoga is the transformative aspect of it. And in yoga, there's this idea that prana or the life force is moving through us, pushing us, nudging us, taking us home to ourselves. It's reminding us don't stop

there, keep going. But what happens is [00:23:00] certainly happens to me is that life intervenes and I tighten up,

Diana Hill: Yeah.

Deirdre Fay: I make a mistake, I do something wrong and my body holds that now my body can hold it on multiple levels, physically, emotionally, psychologically energetically.

And we shut it down. And so at some point we have to let go and let it come through. And the gift is it can move us through. , I've just gone through a whole process. The last six months of just like identity shift, who I thought I was just getting like annihilated.

I don't like it when I'm in the middle of it, but it is, I can see a dilemma on the other side And, I have faith because I've been through it a few times. So the question is, how do you teach somebody? How do you support somebody in making friends with that experience? So there's multiple postures. You can do it with, but just take the [00:24:00] simple mountain posture, hold it. What's it like to hold it and hold it longer than you think.

And suddenly your mind is going to be telling you all kinds of stuff. Your body is going to be hurting. You're going to feel pulsing and shaking. So what if you just start noticing this is mindfulness. But it's also concentration. Can I, all my body stuff, I don't know something that's going to happen. I know I'm like really I'm going to die.

This

Diana Hill: And, And, the mountain posture you're talking about is the mountain posture where you're standing with your arms straight up in the air, not with your arms at your side.

Deirdre Fay: right. Or you could

Diana Hill: Which is a little more challenging.

Deirdre Fay: You're just activating your system. And what is happening then is your unique configuration. Is going to get activated and that's product coming through and saying here, honey, let's just let this go. You don't have to hold onto it anymore.

And we're like, but when we let it go, that's, what's possible is meeting that [00:25:00] and then feeling afterwards. What thoughts do you have? What sensations do you have? What feelings do you have when you let go?

Diana Hill: Yeah. And, and even there's even within the holding, there can be a letting go, you know? So, so it was one of the big teachers for me, and yoga has been moving into a pose really mindfully. So say it's just a really simple pose,

like a forward fold, right. Standing, but then touching my hands to the, towards the ground and all the tightness that shows up in my body.

And that I have a choice there of either I could try and tune out from that tightness, or I could force myself to get closer to the ground or I can actually let go. In the face of the tightness and that totally transforms what you're talking about with Pronto. Like it allows energy to move through me, but also I'm not resisting.

What is anymore in that moment, it's just sort of, this is what it is. My body is my body's tight. I'm a runner. I have a lot of hamstring tightness, but it's, it's [00:26:00] actually a befriending of it that I think really helps in some of these physical exercises can help with that. You can get that experience of that in the body, but then it's the same kind of feeling that you're going to get when the tightness and the gripping shows up around than emotional pain or emotional scarring.

Yeah. Yeah. Super cool. I love, I love the translation between, between yoga the, and the, work that we do with emotions.

Deirdre Fay: I love the connection we have around that Yes.

Diana Hill: Yeah. So mountain pose with your arms, and I think you said like 15 minutes, hold it.

Deirdre Fay: sometimes, sometimes when I'm leading people, I freak out because I can feel their freak out. You know, what happens if you hold it.

Diana Hill: Yeah, exactly.

Deirdre Fay: even the thought of like, I can't hold it anymore. Okay, cool. That's just the thought.

Diana Hill: Yeah.

Deirdre Fay: Can you let that spot rise crest and fall? You can drop that. Oh [00:27:00] no, I can't.

I have to keep doing it. Everybody else is doing it right. It's just more the same than you're just watching it. You observing it,

Diana Hill: I did a lot of Kundalini yoga in preparation for childbirth. And that's what she would have us do. A lot of in the Kundalini is like hold poses or do a lot of Koreas, which are like movements and notice it rise and fall. And she did that because she would say, this is what, this is what a contraction is going to feel like it's going to be intense.

And then it's going to be a wave and it comes and goes, and that's the same with our anxiety or panic or our grief. It comes in a wave. And then our head does all

sorts of things to tell us we can't handle it. And that's when we usually sort of locked down and get rigid, but to enrich a five or I think it was the word to use on Richard fi, um, is, is, is so helpful in those moments.

Deirdre Fay: Right. And, you know, I I'm exploring it now because I have arthritis in my hip and it's a shock not to be able to be as [00:28:00] flexible in my system and seeing all the, the beliefs that come up underneath. And that's retaught me about how we're never done. We're never done. Can I be in this moment so that I can meet it with as much kindness as much gentleness and let the beliefs just move through, move through.

They don't have to stay. They don't have to be, they don't have to define me, not easy, always, but I think that's the gift of life. How do I be with myself and whatever situation that life presents itself.

Diana Hill: yeah. How do I stay present in my body? In the moment in the process with gal out, getting like spinning out into my head and my story and all those ways that we try and avoid what is,

Another practice that you, that you teach is, uh, [00:29:00] around discrimination and externalizing. And you use things like art to do that. Um, physicalizing parts of ourselves. Can you, can you speak about that and, and, and why that's helpful? Yeah.

Deirdre Fay: I started seeing this so much in groups. And individuals too, but you see it really loudly. And in groups is people, um, think that their feelings are the only, uh, their reality. And they don't realize that what they're feeling is not necessarily the truth of the situation. So a lot of that was about externalizing. We didn't have that name for it then, but it's taking this internal experience and putting it outside. We talk about it and share work. Towing. Bell does a lot with this and compassion focused therapy taking what's activated in here and moving it up outside in some way, you can also do it with your hands.

So you feel inside and you're like, oh, I'm nervous. Okay. So what is [00:30:00] nervous if my hands were to mimic nervousness, maybe it's like this, that simple thing allows people to take it. Inside, put it outside.

So you have to tune in this, the flexibility and the playability and the mind that you're talking, but with that is knowing inside myself that I can shift it so that those are simple ways. Drawing is another great way. Every time I would lead a group of people say, I can't draw, but then you give them cramps and paper. And they're like, oh, okay. Color means it. It shifts somebody from the left brain into the right brain and allow something new to come up. And they're always surprised. And people then can relate to it in a different way. It brings up an inquiry about what's. I think inside again, another huge missing keys for people is nobody was interested in what was going on inside me.

Now somebody as a whole group might be so that's powerful.

Diana Hill: Yeah, I love the [00:31:00] words that you use around fascination, and then it links to curiosity. And when we have a stance of curiosity about something it's just of, you have more of an openness. Towards it as opposed to a shutting down. And I remember I used to run groups at an eating disorder treatment center.

And my, my co-facilitator was a psychodrama test for, for folks that don't want psychodrama is you actually act out, you like physicalize the different parts of yourself in this drama. It was very fascinating to work with her. And I learned a lot from her and some of the, the things that she did at the beginning of the groups would be things like she'd give us everyone a styrofoam cup, and then she'd have you sort of shape and reform the cup into what you're feeling in this moment and then talk about it.

And there's something about that. Like, if you, if you can observe it, then you aren't it. Right. So if I can make the cup, what I'm feeling in my body and then share it with someone, it doesn't feel so much like I'm consumed by it, fused by it all. Like that's all of who I am, but here it is out here in this form [00:32:00] of a cup.

So I love those types of ideas. And honestly, actually try it, sit down and draw out your future. And it's a pretty powerful thing to do if you're a journaler, maybe instead of writing in your journal, just draw for five minutes in the morning and see if it gives you a different experience.

That'd be curious about it. Cause I really liked that you, you bring that into your work.

Deirdre Fay: Scraped. And I love what you said about the cup and these are simple things that people can do on their own.

Diana Hill: Yeah.

Deirdre Fay: It's so wonderful. I think that's, that's one of the reasons why I came up with this whole thing is because people would. Scared to leave the office and be alone with themselves. And I was like, how can we find ways for people to have support?

Would you doing your daily journalists? Like how to help people have the support they need between contact points. So they'd not alone with themselves.

Diana Hill: I also, I really like that you [00:33:00] do breath work and I actually think breath work is. One of the key pillars of health that we have neglected for so long, but yet has been practiced for so long is understanding as a key pillar of health and also of, uh, taking care of our emotional selves. I'd love for you to share with us a little bit about you just called pranayama in yoga and how you use pranayama.

And then, and then we can also talk a little bit about the science behind it, because there's a tremendous amount of emerging science around pranayama and its benefits, not only for health, but also for mental health.

Deirdre Fay: Well, I started playing with it with people in some ways, just, you know, because in living in an ashram, you do a lot of pranayama. But how do you step it down? So somebody doesn't get afraid because what pranayama does is it turns up the dial. But if you can turn it up, you can also turn it down. So how do you creatively use it in a way that works for you?

So there's an idea in yoga, which I know, you know, Diana about [00:34:00] come back at the top, holding the breath at the top or holding a slightly at the bottom of that exhalation. So playing with it, like, okay, so you're anxious, what's it like to take a breath in gently breath in and gently hold it? Like you're holding a tender little bird right?

Between your hands. So just a little bit generally, and then let it go. Just notice what happens. Okay. You're still anxious. Just take a breath in, hold it gently. And then let it go. Simple. Awesome. What happens at the bottom of the exhalation? So you breathe in your exhale slightly and just see maybe that makes you more anxious. Maybe it makes you more depressed. It's so important to know how it affects you. You're the wisdom keeper of your own body, mind, and heart. So you get to experiment what works, what [00:35:00] doesn't work. You can do all, you know, the, so else take breath in hold for four exhale, you know, do all kinds of things.

It's almost doesn't matter. It's just, can you let your body teach you?

Diana Hill: Yeah. You know, it's, it's interesting because in terms of I'm reading this book called breath by James Nestor

Deirdre Fay: oh, that's, that's a great book.

Diana Hill: it's, it's a great, it's great. I mean, he covers all different things about breath. So the importance of breathing through your nose and, uh, the importance. Really slowing the breath down.

And a lot of these practices have been used for a very long time. So slowing your breath from an inhale of five to six counts and exhaling for five to six counts, which is part of like compassion focused therapy. They use that with soothing rhythm breathing. But I think what is interesting to me is doing this type [00:36:00] of breath work also just really helps you get in your body because oftentimes when we're caught in our, like in a traumatic experience or we're in extreme anxiety or we're in depression, we're so much in our heads and being able to have the awareness to, okay, I can go into my body and I can work with my breath inside of my body.

Even noticing like how I'm, how I'm holding my breath, doing an intentional hold. Interestingly helps you not hold your breath. Because when you get to the point of, I can't hold anymore, you exhale. And then you just naturally take a big, long inhale. So some of these real simple breathing practices are super, helpful for folks to get back into your body and also experience and saying it in a different way.

Deirdre Fay: And not being afraid of it. Like when I back in the day, you know, we'd say, oh, take a long, deep breath. And people like, ah, I don't want to do that. You know? No, just notice the breath that you have

Diana Hill: Yeah.

[00:37:00] **Deirdre Fay:** start there. And then what happens if you play with it and interrupted in some way and just see, see if you can control yourself.

And it just opens the scope and the possibility of what's what's there. Like I don't have to stay rigidified in this experience that I thought I had to have.

Diana Hill: Exactly not staying re-identified and I liked that term, Richard fide. How can we be more playful even with, with our breath. And, um, that's great. So another playful exercise that I actually helps you helps you not become. So rigidified that you talk about in the book is retelling your story from different perspectives and actually use this this past week, because I had an emerging. Slowly, he's a preteen, but he's emerging and there's some video game conflict that we get into. And I, um, and I had my whole story about it. And then I started trying to practice retelling the story from different things, like from the perspective of that, the, the actual video [00:38:00] game, and then from his perspective. But can you talk about that, that practice of telling and retelling your story and why it's helpful, especially with trauma.

Deirdre Fay: you know, I was so moved when I met Michael White, who has a narrative therapist from he and his colleague in New Zealand. You know, he would work with schizophrenia. And the most moving way. And that's where I got this idea from it is how do you tell us story from a different perspective and what that does is it creates flexibility to mind.

It creates a whole new Buick on rigidified. So if I'm in a trauma state, I am being hijacked from within. So I'm, it's like I only see this, I only see how, how life is bad or going to hurt me. But what if I'm a dust ball in the corner watching this? I do a whole exercise on imagine you're [00:39:00] 80 years old, 80 years old, and you're telling yourself about your own life and how you got from where you are to 88 and what was the process?

So just another way to have you see this possibility that you've not stuck. And so. I, and also I wanted to create more play because so many people get, so including myself, get so heavy around things. It's like, Okay. how do we lighten it? How do we make it easier? Um, um, maybe create a little space for play or fun or lightheartedness and see what does that like in the body?

Diana Hill: Yeah. Well, I'll tell you that when I did it with my son and I was trying to replay the story of the video game, the video game was saying things like, well, he just wants to play with me. He's just a kid. What's

Deirdre Fay: Well, my

Diana Hill: loosen up a bit, mom. So it's helpful, right? All of a sudden you have this fresh perspective in of my story, isn't necessarily the whole story, [00:40:00] which I think really can be helpful. Yeah. Yeah. We talked about it I try and talk about it. Especially, you know, lighthearted stuff with this, with them because I want them, well, I want them to have these skills growing up. Right? Some of the skills that you're talking about, aren't necessarily just skills that you need to recover from trauma. They're just skills for life. A life that is whole and yeah. Living better and, and, um, being embodied in the world.

Deirdre Fay: And you know, it always is so moving to me to hear mothers, like you interact with their kids and allow them and teach them and guide them and to see somebody becoming solid inside because the research it is that one in four of us pretty much in the Western world has a secure attachment, which means three out of four of us. That's shocking, shocking to me. And so when I hear and I see, and I [00:41:00] get like the gift that you give, I'm so grateful.

Diana Hill: Well, it's not without a lot of mistakes though, so I don't want to paint the picture of the perfect parent, because I think that's a dangerous one to paint that wow. Dan is like doing all these psychological flexibility skills on their kids. I, I mainly do them when I've made like a massive error

Deirdre Fay: But

Diana Hill: when I've like stuck my foot in my mouth and been angry and yelling. So yeah. Yeah. I mean, it is the beauty and I think that's also, you know, some of what you offer is just , be kind with yourself in this process. There's no really

Deirdre Fay: make mistakes, make mistakes so that you can repair them. Like, isn't that the gift

Diana Hill: yeah.

Deirdre Fay: not to be perfect, but to be like, okay, let's find a way through this.

Diana Hill: Yeah. The sweet moments when we do that with art with ourselves or with other people is, you know, we make mistakes with ourselves too, and that we can work on repairing the mistakes we make with ourselves.

And I think that comes up. You know, at least for me in working a lot with [00:42:00] folks, with eating disorder histories, how much shame there is around even just how they've dealt with their life circumstances. Right. And some, sometimes it's, I've harmed my body or I've harmed, you know, I've harmed, I've heard others because of, what I've gone through.

And that practice of compassion with ourselves I think is really, is really important.

I wanted to talk with you about mindfulness because the mindfulness strategies that you teach, um, I really like how you use both concentration strategies and observing strategies, but there's a bit of controversy around mindfulness and trauma because there's sort of this risk associated with, if I, if I go in and I'm mindful with my experience, am I just going to get deeper and entangled in my fuse, self stories and this, like, you know, storm that I can't get out of.

Can you talk about how you teach mindfulness and maybe some of the risks associated with it, how you deal with that with.

[00:43:00] **Deirdre Fay:** Well, this comes totally from my own experience being on retreat, you know, and this was way before we had a lot of awareness about meditation and trauma, but, um, it's about being skillful with it. So the whole purpose of mindfulness is to allow something to come up and pass through and move on.

But what happens is the drawback is if I'm so able to focus and be with something and name it and name it, and I lose track of myself, then that stuff is going to come up and it's going to open up everything inside and blow it up inside.

If you start naming something and paying attention, and then you need to focus on something else, that's the concentration practice. So you use it judiciously. So mindfulness can bring stuff up. It's whole purpose. Is to bring it up, but it's how do we titrated?

How do we build enough of a self inside so that we can be with it. But concentration is if I'm triggered, [00:44:00] I need to be able to go where I want to go. Instead of getting caught up in the trigger and that. A huge skill that people are. It's like, okay, I want to go there. I want to go there. I want to focus.

Oh, Diana, there's a yellow pillow there. I'm just going to look at the yellow pillow. I'm going to stay with a yellow pill. I'm just going to bring everything to bear that. Now, what can, the drawback of that is certainly the way it's often taught with Metta.

And my kindness is this about bringing towards love and warm thinking passionately. Goodness. But that could be scary too. So as you're focusing on it and all of this, your heart starts opening and your boxiness is like, and then all of a sudden you have to use as, oh, I'm triggered, oh my gosh, look, it I'm triggered here.

This is what happens. But here I am in my house all as well, dah, dah, dah. So using them back and forth as a way.

Diana Hill: Yeah, I love that. And I'm always translating things into act in my [00:45:00] head or yoga. I feel like there's all these different languages. Sometimes I feel like I'm trying to be multi-lingual and understand the different ideas, but what you're sort of alluding to there, if folks are act therapists is. Having flexibility of your attention so that you're not completely consumed by what's happening inside of you. You don't have all two eyes in, or you're not so like hypervigilant, you know, what's on the outside two eyes out, but that you have an eye in and an eye out and the flexibility to be able to move your attention and ultimately move your behavior where you want it to go. And yeah. Yeah. So mindfulness is a real helpful skill and you teach the different types of, of sort of you teach mindfulness practice, but you also teach the concentration practices of Metta, which is a loving kindness mantra practice. And I'd love to talk more about Metta because that's becoming more popular. I think in the west folks are using meta or talking about Metamora, especially [00:46:00] with like Sharon Salzberg and all of her work, but can you share with folks what Metta is and why you teach that practice and how it's.

Deirdre Fay: Such a great question. Let me just sit with that for a moment. Think it was because when I was going to meditation retreats, it was about cultivating, loving kindness for yourself. And Sharon was my teacher back then

Diana Hill: Wow.

Deirdre Fay: but it was also that all that stuff started coming up. Why I shouldn't be loved why I wasn't worth it, why all that starts coming up. And so what. Chris Germer and Kristin Neff have done since is bringing the whole idea of self-compassion so important because that stuff does come up, but self-compassion compassion practices met to, um, equanimity. Those are all part of the, what we call the Brahma, Horace, the heavenly abodes the mind, this is ability for the mind to rest. So bringing it up, [00:47:00] it's so important because so many people don't have that kindness. They don't have that capacity. They don't have that ability to just be kind to themselves. You know, you can talk about it as self-compassion. You can talk about it as loving kindness, in some ways they're there they're intermingled. They can use them in different ways, but being able to do that. So I started doing that because I wanted people to see the best in themselves and see the best in other people. So that especially as groups were starting and people were starting to come together. It would allow their hearts to be more available to themselves and to the other people. So that rather than being activated and scared to death, they could begin to see like, oh, people are good out there. People want to actually be kind to me see life differently. And that allowed a whole different felt experience you know, it was really a dropping into the body, into the heart versus just staying in the mind, being in [00:48:00] that activated systems.

Diana Hill: So Metta often has sort of really common phrases. Like may I live with ease? May I be healthy? May I be happy? There's sort of these kind wishes that you do for yourself. And then you offer to others. And then if you're really advanced, you offer it to enemies, which is always like, can we do that for your ex-husband?

That's really hard, but it cultivate sort of a different, um, I guess if you're using Paul Gilbert's model, it's like a different, um, mode of your mind, which is the compassionate mind, and that can help with the other modes of the threat system and the drive system when they're, uh, pretty dominant.

One of the mantras that you teach in becoming safely embodied is, , calm saw, or you do so hum.

Versions of the same, the same mantra.

And it's what I appreciate about you is that, , you haven't appropriated yoga. You haven't [00:49:00] done that thing. Folks do, which is like, I'm just going to like distill out the parts that I like of yoga and leave all the tradition behind you actually keep the tradition and the truth. And it's because you lived in an Ostrom and there's just a different quality to you in terms of your understanding and practice and teaching of yoga.

And so I was so pleased to see Hamza, which is the way I practice it Hamza in, in, in your book, because that was the first mantra that I was ever taught when I, when I went to ashram during graduate school. And my, my story around yoga was. I was suffering so much. I had to withdraw, uh, take a break from my PhD program and went to an ashram in Boulder to learn about yoga.

And that's actually part of what really healed me, allowed me to go back to school again. But when I went there, I, I was so in the headiness of school and I was like, I need, like, I need like a mantra. I need, I need the protocol of the yoga. Like give me the [00:50:00] really complicated thing. And my yoga teacher came and she said, okay, well I have, I have a mantra for you and it's breathe in and say the word hum, internally and breathe out and say the word saw.

And I want you just to practice that for awhile. And it's not even out loud, , but it's just breathing home and breathe out saw. And it just means, I know. So, I, I love that you taught that um, I'm curious for you about, about mantra, how you use mantra and, and what it was like, sort of writing about that particular mantra in your book.

Deirdre Fay: Oh gosh. I, trained in and I love the non-dual teachings and the idea of I am. It's powerful, but if somebody doesn't have enough of a self inside, that doesn't make sense. So what I [00:51:00] began pondering is like, how do you be at one with everything? The good, the bad, the ugly, the need, the happy, the joy.

I am. All of that. I'm all of that. There is No, separation. And when I can embrace all that, how can I be connected to all that as even when I don't like, but it's happening. Um, and it's the foundational bit of what I really believe is that trauma is a modern day, but he suffered training. We are being trained to transform our

suffering and to compassion just as you did justice. But it takes everything. And so we need practices that remind us, I am everything. I am all of this, even if I don't want to, how can I gather all of that? Allow it to come home, allow myself to be at peace with all of it, because it's [00:52:00] not just all the icky stuff, self, all good stuff.

Diana Hill: no, I think that's a beautiful place too.

Deirdre Fay: Mm

Diana Hill: am that you are, that she is that they are, that we are that,

Deirdre Fay: No, we are run

Diana Hill: we are one. Yeah.

Deirdre Fay: and you are such a gift on it. I really joy just keeps getting bigger and bigger every year and then more and more fullness than I so appreciate what you're doing on the planet and creating space for people.

Diana Hill: Well, I appreciate you do your dry. I feel like you're a sort of like the wise, the wise woman mentor out there doing, , a few steps ahead that I, that I, it's helpful to have someone to look to. It's doing this important work. And for folks that want to be part of your becoming safely embodied community, or want to learn more as a therapist about how to use these skills with their clients, what's the best way to do that. And how can they find you?

Deirdre Fay: There's two ways around trauma is we have a safe guide. It's a [00:53:00] 40 page. Information about being in the body and we call it the safe guide to healing, trauma and attachment. So it's dfa.com forward slash safe God or sinful. And then we also have, uh, an attachment profile. We call it the relationship profile and that's defeat.com forward slash profile.

The whole idea was there just to have you?

take a look at what is it that's going on inside? How do you fit in? And what's the positive, and what's the drawback of these profiles that we, these imprints attachment relationship imprints that we have. So those are fun ways to, to do it

Diana Hill: Great. Well, we'll link to all of those on our show notes and let's stay connected and, um, wonderful to see you again.

Deirdre Fay: a delight. Thank you, Diana.

thank you for listening to psychologists off the clock. If you enjoy our podcast, you can help us out by leaving a review or contributing on Patreon.

Yael Schonbrun: You can find us wherever you get your podcasts and you can connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and [00:54:00] Instagram.

Jill Stoddard: We'd like to thank our strategic consultant, Michael Harold, our dissemination coordinator, Katie Roth Felder and our editorial coordinator, Melissa Miller.

Debbie Sorensen: this podcast is for informational and entertainment purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for mental health treatment. If you're having a mental health emergency dial 911 if you're looking for mental health treatment, please visit the resources page of our web page offtheclockpsych.com