

Ep #16: Trauma Re-Enactment in Relationships



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Nicole Symcox

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Anything we don't heal from our childhood will repeat in adulthood, okay? This is why there really is no shame in getting mental health support because it's really just taking care of your business. It's really just taking care of your life. You take ownership of your mental health. You're taking ownership of your past, your present, and your future, okay?

Because these things don't go away on their own. They just fester, and they manifest, and you get stuck in these reenactments. Then you start to feel powerless like, "Why is my life story this way? I don't understand why I can't start a new chapter." A lot of times it's because we have unresolved issues from our past, and all that stuff plays into our mental health. So again, no shame in getting that fixed. It's just smart. Honestly, it's just smart.

Welcome to *Mental Health Remix*, a show for ambitious humans who are ready to feel, think, and be different. If you want to stop struggling with perfectionism, build better relationships, and connect with yourself and your potential, this is the place for you...

Here's your host, educator, coach and licensed psychotherapist, Nicole Symcox...

Trauma reenactment is a real thing, and it will show up in relationships as chronic patterns. So when people go to therapy and they heal the original trauma, your brain stops reenacting it, okay? Your brain stops being drawn to people that represent the original trauma. Because when you heal it in therapy, it is a way to "close the chapter," okay? So if we want to think about if this good enough wound was developed at five, unhealed, unresolved, not dealt with, and now you're 30 and you constantly have a string of relationships, interpersonal relationship ... So it can be romantic. It can be friendships. It can even be work relationships I have seen this play out in.

So anywhere in the relationship realm where this is repeating for you, I've seen people, once they heal that five-year-old wound, all these patterns stop, okay? Because the brain is always trying to resolve things it doesn't

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understand. It likes closed chapters. It likes clean files. And if you have a file "that's open," meaning an unresolved issue from five, then your brain's going to lead you into places where it hopes you will resolve this, and it's a trap.

Trauma reenactment never plays out well, okay? It just doesn't because your brain's replaying something it doesn't have the skills to correct. So you're going to constantly get drawn into these scenarios, and then you're not going to have the skills to really create a corrective experience for yourself. You're going to have to survive it, which is why you're going to stay in it because it's going to be familiar to you, all right? This is some deep shit here, my people, so I hope you're with me right now.

So this is the power in going back and healing your past. So when you heal that in therapy, you don't have to do it in relationships with toxic people. You're doing it in the room with your therapist. Then as that wound heals, you're going to be attracted to a different type of person, okay? You're going to be attracted into different scenarios because you're not looking for the answer to an old problem anymore. You're really staying present in the present moment, reacting, responding to what's in front of you, and being able to use your logical brain, all that smart stuff that you know. Because let me tell you, I know a lot of codependents that are smart, very, very smart, like you guys have all the right answers. You get stuck in the emotions of the thing, okay?

So when you heal the emotions of the thing, guess what takes dominant in your life, my friends? All those smarts. All those smarts that you know now are going to start sinking into your body, which is where your emotions lie, and then that's a remake, okay? That is your next chapter. You get to approach life in a whole different way, not from a place of needing to correct something in your past but instead embracing the truth of who you are and moving into your future the way you want it to be. But it always starts with you beginning that small belief inside of yourself that maybe you don't know how to fix this but you are going to make a choice for yourself

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not to let this pain get the best of you and find the best resources and help that you can to move yourself to the next level.

We relate to everything in our lives. This is why my core message to you is there is nothing separate from your mental health, okay? Mental health is like this umbrella term. But what's underneath all of those things are your relationship patterns, the way you think about yourself, the way you think about others, the way you interact with things around you. It even comes down to your relationship with food, how much anxiety you have, how much happiness you experience, right? Mental health is an umbrella term for the human experience, and that is not how mental health has been portrayed for all of these years.

All of these years, people have been made to feel like if you have a mental health problem or if you can't keep your emotions in check then you're crazy and no one wants to deal with you. And we're just going to put you away somewhere and not think about it. Now what we know is that emotions and our brains, our minds, the way we think, nothing of this is separate, my friends.

Even if you are a spiritual person, nothing about your spiritual life is separate from your mind and your body. You are one whole being, okay? And if you could see me right now, you would actually be seeing my nails doing a complete circle, okay? We are one being. And the more we embrace that and the more we embrace all of these different parts to ourselves and the purpose that they are serving, the better we are going to feel, okay? That was a little tangent that was not planned. However, I think it fits, so we'll leave it.

But let's go back to this. So codependency is a relational thing, okay? It's going to impact your self-talk, the way you talk to yourself, the way you see yourself. It's going to impact how much anxiety you experience, okay? Because if you don't feel like you're good enough, the world around you and people around you are going to feel big and scary, and that is really overwhelming and that is likely going to turn on anxiety. On the flip side, it can also turn on depression. So if I don't think I'm good enough for anybody

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or anything, I probably feel worthless and I kind of maybe start down this depression track of like, "Well, I don't really know what my purpose is," or, "I don't really know what I should put my energy into because I'm really not that smart and I'm really not that good enough," or however that narrative might play out for you, okay?

Now, if that's how you think about yourself, what kind of relationship do you think you're going to attract, my friends? You're going to attract someone else who has a powerful personality, who doesn't think that they need to consider your feelings. And because deep down you don't think they need to consider your feelings, you are unconsciously okay with it. Do you see how these really subtle unconscious bonds start to create? So it's like this energetic exchange that is going on. And a lot of times it's unconscious, so we don't understand it until we go to therapy and we figure it out and we're like, "Oh, that's what I'm doing. Oh, hell no. I'm not doing that anymore," right? That's the power in therapy.

So it can really draw you in to the wrong people who don't really value you, who are very self-centered and into themselves, and don't have a lot of empathy, and are a lot of times on some kind of narcissistic spectrum. So because you have this non-good-enough button, a lot of times you're going to people-please and placate to these people because you're trying so hard to get worth and value from the impossible, and this mimics the original wound.

This is some deep, deep shit, people. I hope you're with me because I'm realizing that I'm really going there today. So do you get how that all plays out? Okay. And I think education is power in this because sometimes what happens is we get in these unconscious reenactments. And as they play out, they sort of just reaffirm the old wound because we don't understand. But when we listen to podcasts, I think like this one, or we do some research, or we do some reading and we educate ourselves, it stops becoming such a mystery and it's more like, "Oh, I'm not crazy. I learned how to be this way at five," or, "This wound has led me into X, Y, Z type of places." It makes you feel less crazy. Makes you feel less unstable

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because you start to put the map of your brain together and understand the cause and effect of things, okay? And it's empowering to know that there's solutions for this, that there's active ways that you can participate in your own mental health to improve this if you choose to.

So outside of relationships, the other way it can play out is it actually can play out in your professional life. And I have to say I see this quite a bit less. These are more the people that go out and they really, really do well in the professional arena and they really, really struggle in interpersonal relationships, okay? Because there is a split that can be developed kind of early on where you learn to excel at work and you learn that relationships are quite challenging for you.

Sometimes we will see this. How it does manifest for some people in work is that sometimes you will find a boss, or a manager, or whoever has authority over you in that job who replicates the original wound. So if we want to be really simple, let's say your mom was narcissistic and you notice every single job you get you get a boss that reminds you of your mother. Or it can work the other way, too. And again, it doesn't have to be your parents, okay? When it comes to trauma and anxiety, there's a lot of variations. No two people are always the same, but there are some generalities that are true, which we do know primary caregivers have the biggest influence on us under the age of seven. So it is incredibly important the life events that occur under that age are a lot of times the foundation for which we build a lot of the rest of our life on. That's why it's so important if you have wounds there to get that healed because then you're not living out an old story anymore, right?

Sometimes in codependency, because you're so active, you're so good at doing things for other people, because you don't value yourself, what you do value is you value your ability to get shit done. You value the fact that you can do a great many things, and it actually gets you accolades from people that are in authority positions. But sometimes if they are kind of narcissistic, or they're self-absorbed, or they're non empathetic, you kind of feel used after a while, or you can feel unappreciated, or you can almost

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feel like your identity is getting lost in doing so much for other people. That idea sort of transcends from work and relationships as well.

I want to really encourage you that you are worth so much more than what you do. You are worth so much more than what people say about you. You are worth it. So whatever part of you is stuck in a story, or a loop, or a painful past, I would really encourage you in your state of residence ... Because therapy is regulated by the states, friends. You have to pick a therapist in your state. Find the courage and find the right person to heal that. Because the truth remains, you are 100% worth it. You are deserving of love, empathy, validation, respect, and you deserve your dreams. But if your pain is holding you back, that's going to be hard to see the road to get there. But the truth remains. Even if you don't see yourself this way, I do.

All right, my friends. This was a deep episode. If you want to hear more on this topic, I am happy to do a part two. But for now, I think I'm going to leave it there because I feel like I covered a lot and we got into some really deep elements of unconsciousness, and trauma, and relational histories, and how this changes. But the core root of what I want you to understand is that you are worth it. Whatever painful stories happening for you, find the power, find the resources, find the support to make the changes you need to really live out a new story, okay? Because a new story is available to you.

So to get this going, one of the tools I really like, journaling. When you have emotional, relational pain, I really think journaling is helpful because it helps you get more in touch with yourself, helps you stay in touch with your own voice. Because if you are codependent, you are probably a sidekick to someone who is really self-absorbed and is constantly telling you what to think, and what to feel, and how to make things better. And when we're in relationships like that, we can lose our own voice, and it creates a host of symptoms, anxiety, depression, just to name probably the top two common, but there's a hell of a lot more than it can create, okay?

So it's important for you to be in touch with what is your voice and what is someone else's, okay? Because you don't have to listen to someone else's [Mental Health Remix](#) with Nicole Symcox

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voice. You don't have to agree with what other people say about you if it's inaccurate, okay? And if someone is attacking your worth and value, I can tell you right now it's inaccurate, all right? And if that person is you attacking yourself saying that you don't have worth or value, that's inaccurate, okay? It's an inaccurate belief. But you're going to have to work through the pain of that to really be more in touch with something different.

This second one, and this one is a little bit more tricky. The second one is boundaries. Codependents tend to be the worst with boundaries across the board. And boundaries have to do a lot of times with learning our own voice, how to communicate it, and how to set appropriate boundaries. So this is a very active and deep process to really learn how to implement boundaries, okay? We have like fun sayings. Even in my episode I'm like, "No is a complete sentence." That stuff's all true. But there is a deeper level of boundaries as to why it is so difficult to enforce them. So I would encourage you to read books, or to join workshops, or to really take this issue on in therapy, but really learn how to set boundaries.

I did do an episode on boundaries. I think it's episode number four where I give some tools and walk you through how to set a boundary. But, boundaries are incredibly important because they protect your emotional energy, they protect your voice, and they make you feel respected as a person. And if you're in a one-sided relationship, I'm imagining you endure a great deal of disrespect. May be subtle, it might be aggressive, but you're probably left feeling like you're always doing and they're always receiving, or you're always putting out a fire, or you feel really responsible is one of the biggest ones, okay?

So when you learn boundaries, one of the biggest things you're going to learn is that you are not responsible for anyone else's emotions or their actions, okay? Everyone is responsible for their own thoughts, their own feelings, and their own actions. But narcissists like to blame you. Narcissists like to shame you. Controlling people like to make you think their problems are your problems and that is wrong.

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That goes into number three. I think that you might ... If you find yourself in these relationship patterns, to kind of track it. It doesn't have to be a full journal, but just kind of making notes of your patterns. When you start noticing the same pattern showing up over, and over, and over again, get curious. Why is this playing out for you over, and over, and over again, okay? There's something in that pattern that needs your attention and a way to figure out how to heal it and empower yourself so you can change it. It's very hard to change things when we don't even know what the pattern is or why it's happening, okay?

But this responsibility issue is a huge thing for codependents, okay? You feel so responsible for controlling all the chaos that people create, or controlling the environment that people are around. You feel overly responsible for things that aren't yours, and so boundaries are a way to put yourself in check. You are responsible for you, you are responsible for your thoughts, you are responsible for your actions, and you're responsible for your own feelings, okay? And just as I said before, and that is true for someone else as well.

So you may want to start, as a tool, for number three, if this is a pattern that you're getting curious about, you might want to take down notes every time you kind of have an interaction. And again, I don't want this to be like a depressive log. Don't keep a depressive log of all your perceived relationship failures. That's not a good thing, so don't do that. Strictly put on your science brain and get curious, okay?

It's just curiosity. It's like, "Okay, well, I noticed when I interacted with my dad again I was cleaning up another one of his messes," or, "I was taking responsibility for something that wasn't mine," or, "When I went to coffee with my friend, I ended up apologizing for something that I didn't even do." So kind of just noticing what's happening for you, how is it showing up, and maybe think about how do I want to approach this differently, okay? And your end result, again, might just be like, "I don't know how to fix this. So I'm just going to go to therapy and find someone who can really help me out."

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All right, my friends. So I know I said I was ending the episode like 10 minutes ago and then I went into a bit of a tangent. So hopefully that was helpful. And as always, I like to close out this episode with reminding you if strong emotions come up for you when you are listening to these podcasts, triggers, overwhelm, anxiety, strong emotional responses, take it as information, okay? You have to remember there is no shame in getting support from a mental health professional in your local state of residence, okay? It's probably the best thing you could do for yourself. So with that said, if you liked today's episode, please leave me a rating and review on Apple Podcasts. I would love it. And I will see you next time.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of Mental Health Remix. If you like what you've heard and want to learn more, go to nicolesymcox.com.

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