



EPISODE 953

The Toxic Effects of Isolation & How to Improve Your Connectability

With Guest Anna Runkle

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SHAWN STEVENSON: Welcome to the Model Health Show. I've got a question for you. Have you ever thought about how our thoughts about the things that we experience can actually hurt us, can make us feel terrible? We've all heard the sentiment of having a broken heart. For example, and for me, my first broken heart came from Shirley. Alright? I was around 11 years old. She was older as it tends to be, 16. I had the hots for Shirley, Valentine's Day, box of chocolates, heart, all the things. All right? She was like, oh, Shawn, you're so cute. Just hugging me. All right, give me all the hugs. My mother didn't give me, all right, and I thought she was my girl. Will you be my girlfriend, Shirley? Then church has the skating ring party. Shirley skating with older guy. Mm oh. It hurt me physically, physically hurt. All right. Just inside guts, just ugh.

Torn up. Of course, I wanna fight the guy. You know, like all the things. So just all these feelings that were injurious to my body, and it felt so real. Like my heart was broken, it was aching. That's the power of experience. That's the power of our psychology, you know? And whether this is a broken heart, the loss of a loved one, something very difficult that we've been faced with, that we have to overcome. So many different things can cause a physical injury to our bodies. If left unchecked. That's the, that's the key, that's the rub. Because in reality, we're built for this. We're built to be resilient, to adapt, to grow, and move through those difficult psychological events, and we can even become better.

But what if we get stuck in it? What if we find ourselves in a place where we are subjected to the most injurious thing, psychological condition for any human being, which is to be disconnected? To be disconnected from the love and support of other people, and to not be able to give that ourselves. We have a deep psychological human need to do that part too. What happens then? And so today we're gonna look at what is going on with our biology, with our minds, and with our experience. When we are disconnected, when we have experienced trauma in our lives, as many of us have, and we are keeping these experiences just built up in our tissues and in our psyche, and we're not able to truly connect, to help to metabolize the things that we've been through in a way that we can create some freedom.

Freedom of movement, freedom of expression, the freedom to connect. Because oftentimes those things that we go through, because I, when, when Shirley broke my heart.

I'm to be 1000 with you. I was like, I'm gonna, I'm for the streets now. I'm not going through this again. My heart goes out to no one cold hearted, all right? At a early age, but truly. The real me wanted that love, wanted that connection and that dedication, and eventually I found that, but I had to reattune and I had to heal from the experiences that I went through early in life. And so we've got an incredible guest here for you today. This is so rewarding for me because it was very helpful for me to be able to communicate, just to talk with this individual.

She has over a million YouTube subscribers, bestselling author, and the reason that so many people are resonating with her, connecting with her is because of this incredible spirit that she has, because she's been through some stuff and she's also sharing her incredible wisdom and guidance. And she's also done a lot of things to try to figure stuff out. But most importantly, she's directing us to one of the most profound ways for us to heal and for us to just live a truly rich and fulfilling life. And it's never been more important because so many people are feeling disconnected. She's gonna be talking to us about connectability. And so I'm so excited about this episode. And without further ado, let's get to our special guest and topic of the day.

Anna Runkel has more than a million subscribers to her YouTube channel where she teaches the principles and techniques that she used to recover from her own childhood trauma symptoms. Her approach includes simple self-directed exercises to calm emotional triggers and neurological dysregulation to begin changing the self-defeating behaviors that are common for people who have lived much of their lives Dysregulated. Anna's new book, connectability Heal The Hidden Ways You Isolate find your people and feel at last like you belong, is a powerful message packed with incredible insights, tips, tools, and strategies for you to connect and to live your best life. Let's dive in this conversation with the incredible Anna Runkel. I'm so happy to have you here.

ANNA RUNKLE: Thank you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: We have so much to talk about. I deeply related with your book, with your story, with your work. It's incredibly helpful, to say the least for us because a lot of us are

just running on autopilot, not realizing what's going on inside. And so I wanna start off with much like a physical trauma, a psychological trauma can create an injury as well.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So let's talk about that to kick things off.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. Well, weirdly enough, it can be an, it ends up being a physical injury. It affects you physically so much. So yeah, this phenomenon of dysregulation, it really only kind of hit the world maybe 14 years ago. And, the book, Bessel VanDerKolk's, the Body Keeps the Score came out in 2014, and that was the first time I ever knew a word for what I have, which is complex PTSD and the core symptom, which turns out to be dysregulation.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Mm-hmm.

ANNA RUNKLE: You probably hear people talk about dysregulation a lot, but they're usually what they're talking about is emotional dysregulation, which is one piece of the pie, but it's the piece of the pie that other people can see. A lot of dysregulation is you can feel it, but other people can't tell. You can hide it. Most of it, you don't even know what's happening. It's like what's happening in your hormones, in your immune system. You can't feel it, but you will experience the consequences over time. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's fascinating because again, we know and we can see, again superficially a physical trauma, but emotionally, psychologically, when something happens to us, and you detail this in your book, connectability how this alters your brain. It alters the way your nervous system is functioning. It makes physical changes in your body, which this kind of speaks to why it can be so difficult to change. And you talk about one specifically as a connection wound.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So let's talk about that.

ANNA RUNKLE: Well, I think it's common sense. Everybody's always known that a kid who's very neglected has issues and something that was well known. Kids who had trauma of any kind, there's a, you know, you could loosely lump it into neglect and abuse. And abuse could include things like witnessing violence or being a victim of violence. It could be at your home, it could be at school in the neighborhood. But the earlier it happened, the more it prints on your nervous system and the more chronic the experience is, the more it imprints on your nervous system. So complex PTSD is this thing, is the type of PTSD that can occur. It doesn't occur in everybody from just like repeated intense stress. The connection wound is this specific part of it.

And I, you know, they, if you look at a list of bullet points, like in complex PTSD, what are the main symptoms that will say, not very connected or, you know, but there's this feeling of disconnection. I have this funny perch, I'm a YouTuber and I put out videos and say, you know, I just feel really disconnected. I never feel like I belong anywhere. And then all the viewers go, me too. I go, really? Really? So it's this like a thing. So I have this like living like survey of what it's like to have what we have going on all the time. Obviously it's got selection bias. They already watch my channel, but I've learned, I've learned so much about myself and about what this thing is, and therefore now a lot of the experts watch this channel because we're doing such a good job of articulating, you know, what is this really like?

So there are, there are a lot of things that they didn't used to know were trauma related. Like things they call learning disabilities. Maybe there's some sort of like organic disability there, but a lot of times a kid who's neglected it can't do cognitive processing so well all the time. So a lot of people who have learning disabilities, they're very intelligent, but in certain situations like test taking, they couldn't do it. That's like a classic. I'm not, I'm, I can't diagnose this, but I'll just say that's worth another look. What's going on? Is that a trauma injury? I noticed that dysregulation was the first of three really main ways that trauma affected me. The second one was being able to connect and feel like I belong. The third one was self-defeating behaviors that I had a real hard time recognizing I was doing again, when I was doing them again.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Hmm.

ANNA RUNKLE: There was some kind of like block on my detector, you know, to tell this is a bad idea. This is very high risk. You should probably do this instead. And I would be bad at that judgment. So I, my first book is about that, those three areas and how important they are. Connectability is a drill down on the second thing, which is the feeling of being disconnected. And it turns out almost every person traumatized as a kid is walking around earth, feeling like everybody else has some sort of non-spoken language that lets them connect easily and walk into a room and be socially graceful or make friends with somebody or go on a date and read the situation correctly.

But people with trauma, and I would say it does seem that neglect is even more harmful than straight up physical abuse in this respect for this symptom. It just results in this feeling of disconnection. So I looked a lot more into it and, you know, you know about mirror neurons. I'm not a neurologist, but I've known about those for a long time. If let's say your mom was too high, drunk, depressed, mentally ill, not alive, not present, caught up in a terrible relationship, you know, a lot could happen. Has to work all the time. A lot of us grew up in these situations. I did. And that she couldn't really spend that time looking at you face to face, giggling, talking, imitating the little baby sounds you make, and enjoying you as you grew as you were when you were two or three going, yeah, you like trucks, don't you?

You love trucks and we got you a truck. And they just enjoy you being you. It affects your neurological development. Now, some people seem more resilient than others, but, and some people. You can just really see it. And I just, you know, from my perch as a YouTuber, talking to people as I do online and in the comments and people write me letters, like hundreds and hundreds of letters. I just learned about a few things that I'm not sure had been articulated so well before this. When you didn't get love, you can get this overdeveloped way of seeing love where there is no love.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Mm.

ANNA RUNKLE: And that's like shows up as the attachment to unavailable people, or even the obsession with unavailable people. Your eyes just got really big Shawn. Bad memory?

SHAWN STEVENSON: I'm just in it. I'm just in it. Yeah. I mean, it's so relatable. That's one of the things again that really jumped out about you. And I was so happy to talk to you. I feel like I know you.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, and your YouTube channel. And name, you know, is very appropriate. Crappy childhood fairy. Let's talk about that name.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: First of all.

ANNA RUNKLE: Okay. Well, the crappy modifies the childhood, not the fairy. Sometimes people write in, they go, Anna, you're not crappy. And I'm like, I know, I know. I meant like it's a crappy childhood. I'm the fairy of crappy childhoods. It was just a, I realized early on when I started doing this, I had felt the calling that when I had healed, I had a dramatic healing when I was 30 years old when I started trying these techniques that I teach everybody in the whole world who will possibly listen to me for five minutes, that I call the Daily Practice.

But when I learned it, I had such a dramatic change and I wanted to teach everybody and I, but my life was hard back then. And then I was a divorced mom and I had to work all the time, and there just wasn't time. And I finally got it together to write a blog and then a YouTube channel. But because I used to work in like public health and stuff. I really had that little public health voice. I used to write a lot of content and training for people in healthcare and patients and doctors, and it was good work, but I was really trapped in voices and things that they would say. And so I originally called crappy Childhood Fairy, your Healing Year.

And I was trying to, I was trying to write some content about it, and I was sort of thinking of myself as your public health guide to these symptoms that I happen to know about. And I got about two weeks into writing and I was dying of boredom from my own self. It was just like, who? The world just doesn't need something like that. And I kept joking, this sounds like a Tex box or something. It is just weird.

And so I had this huge shift and I started drawing cartoons and I needed a name. And I remembered this cartoon when I was a kid called Fractured Fairytales, and there was this little animated fairy and she would come in and she, she looked like the janitor lady in some sitcom or something, like, eh, what do you want?

And she'd come in with her little wand and I was like, her, it'd be like, that would be my avatar. And so it started like that. And my kids, I told you I was an uncool mom. Right? They're very embarrassing the way I yell in public and laugh at everything, which I mean, yell in a good way.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Of course.

ANNA RUNKLE: I mean, in a good way. I took them to a show and, and then I was, I liked it so much I yelled, but they, when I said I'm, I'm, you know, I've, I'm getting an audience on YouTube and I'm changing the name to Crappy Childhood Fairy, and they were teenagers. They were just like, oh God. And it is a very weird thing to do in your fifties to start a YouTube channel. And all of a sudden start sharing all your true stories about how, you know, messed up your life used to be, and how you changed it. And, you know, I'm happy to say like the whole family is so proud of me now, and so. And, they never knew me when. I was so troubled. So it's not that they're proud, you know, they're proud that they're proud that I have been able to make a living doing something that is this true to myself and that is this honest about what my experience has been like.

So many traumatized people. I used to, you know, try to hide that I was, I was often just trying to figure out how do you use silverware? You know, how do you, are we, we're doing that fork now. Got it. Okay. Because I just, I grew up in a commune, you know, with drunk hippies and nobody taught me anything. I just didn't have manners. I didn't know. Feral kid. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And we can show you, you talk about this as well, we could end up showing up like that in certain contexts.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I think one time you said like you were a, like a feral raccoon.

ANNA RUNKLE: Feral raccoon.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, in a relationship context, you know, and so it's like we, we, of course we have all these different iterations of ourselves.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: But just being able to figure things out. I think it is a, it's a duty of yours in a way. And I know you kind of feel it.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: To be able to share this stuff.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And it's really resonating. I think you've got like is somewhere around a million as of this recording?

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: A million subscribers.

ANNA RUNKLE: Almost 2 million subs maybe next month. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: It's pretty incredible.

One of the most important nutrients for human health. And this should be of no surprise, it should be written in the sky. It is vitamin C. It has so many benefits from supporting our immune system function to supporting our sleep quality and even supporting our mental health. Vitamin C is believed to be a bonafide stress buster and reduce stress by supporting

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SHAWN STEVENSON: It's so relatable. One of the things that related to me the most where I was just like, I, nobody's ever articulated this. You talked about in the book, of course people know about the concept of avoidance.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right. When dealing with trauma relationships. But there's also covert avoidance.

ANNA RUNKLE: I had to make up the word. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Talk about, talk about the difference between the two.

ANNA RUNKLE: It's a word I made up. I just noticed like in a lot of the sort of trauma sphere out there. There's a lot of people talk about it a lot, but avoidance is usually what your boyfriend has. You know, he's avoidant and that can be a lot of things. It could be, you know, actually he's not into you or you're not really with him, or he has an issue with his personality or his attachment style that's hard to deal with. But I used to really be with people who were avoidant, but mostly they were unavailable, is what it was not into me unsuitable, you know, or completely not available at all. And that's a fact, but I couldn't get over it. And so I would do that a lot. And one of my big aha moments in my healing was going, wait, if I'm always doing this, could I be the avoidant one?

Could I be the one who's never like choosing the healthy guy? And that's a, that's one of the great mysteries is when you grew up with trauma and you've got a trauma driven dating pattern going. Why is it that healthy people, when you get a shot at them, you know, why is it that they just seem so unsexy? There's, it's not like that. Now, there's a lot of, I think some of the experts who don't have trauma, a lot of what you are gonna hear described to you about yourself from them is gonna be what it looks like from the outside. And so I've always questioned that stuff. I always question these ideas like, you recreate your childhood because this time you wanna win the love after all.

And I would think that's the craziest thing I ever heard. Of course, I'm not trying to recreate my childhood. It wasn't that in that case, I think it's more like under stress, which all sort of getting together with somebody is, it's stressful, even if it's happy stress, but it's scary 'cause you could get dumped and you don't really know. And there's this, it's, there's brain function that starts to get very changed when you're a dysregulated person. Kids who had trauma when they were kids, high stress childhoods. In any stressful situation, left front cortex will

start to become inactive. So reasoning goes down, emotion goes up. It's a whole lot of other things going on in the brain.

But I like the simple explanation here, just you become unreasonable, very emotional. And literally what the study showed was that the person has a really difficult time predicting consequences. So like, let's say going home with somebody you don't really know. And then what happens is sex causes attachment. Even stupid sex causes attachment. And maybe later you realize this was a really dumb idea. I don't even like this person. I don't even know where I am. You know, this is uncomfortable, but the attachment wound, you're now like, some sort of physical thing has happened to you and you're just like, you gotta stay.

And if you have an abandonment wound, even thinking about leaving somebody you don't like, can bring up this huge flood of emotions. And in a, what the therapist, Pete Walker calls, an emotional flashback of abandonment, it just sounds so terrible. It's just like, I can't do it. I'm just gonna have to stay. So I had to make up another word for this crap fit. When you fit yourself to an unacceptable person or situation, just because you cannot deal with leaving, you can't deal with it. And years go by like that. And when I put that word out there, so many people were like, thank you for putting a word on that.

I'm crap fitting. I'm like, yeah, I know. I know the feeling. Yes. So it's really hard. A lot of this, the connection wound is this wound that makes it hard to feel connection and sometimes. The thing that makes you feel connection is drama. So when you're, when connection, it doesn't feel like much high drama feels like something. So these are some of my, like from the inside, from the inside, this is what it feels like. You know, it's intense. I'm really scared I'm gonna get abandoned. I feel it, you know, this must be love and I'm not making fun of it. But like, we all have this sort of like, filter on our ability to interpret our experiences.

And this is the trauma filter. Only certain things get through as being good or intense. And a person who's healthy, you're not feeling it. You just literally are not feeling it. They seem okay. And I think there's also an element of shame for a lot of us, when you regard like, oh look, there's a, there's a nice person. I that would probably be a good idea to, you know, oh, they even want to go out with me. But there's this anxiety around being around normal healthy

people that sooner or later they're gonna figure out how you have these cracks in your personality. You sometimes lash out, you sometimes get very like, weepy about, you know, with anxiety that you're gonna get left.

And, so covert avoidance is all the weird things we do to avoid actually getting to know people and avoid being close to them without ever even knowing that's what we're doing. And, I call it holding them at arm's length. And so that could be only dating people who are difficult, who are unworkable, who it can't work out with, and then feeling sad, you know, you want it to work out, but there's this unconscious thing you're doing to, like, I don't wanna be in a situation where that could really be devastating or really work out.

Or it could be like you are married, but you're never really present with your spouse. You're always on the phone. You, or you have friends and you make plans, but you cancel at the last minute. Or you always have this whole little, you know, like mask on, so to speak, of like, I'm such a busy person. I'm very busy. Sorry, I'm really busy. I can't be present for you. So when they're like, Hey, I need a ride home from the hospital, do you think you could help me? I'm sorry I'm so busy. So a lot of learning to connect is starting to just get honest with yourself so that you can wake up out of like all the little ways that you're protecting yourself.

What are you protecting yourself from? It's just stress. It's just stress. It's dysregulating you, everybody needs a way to manage it. Everybody has a dysfunctional way to manage it. Then we all have a, you know, the opportunity to learn a healthy way, dysfunctional ways of managing stress and dysregulation. Dysregulation is like when us traumatized, everybody gets dysregulated. Sometimes it's when you're just like flustered. You were talking to me about like trying to get to the airport and there was a traffic jam, you know, and you got dysregulated and you're all just like, and you wanna throw your phone?

Then you couldn't get into the game. You know, you had to go around and you feel like yelling. You feel like throwing something, you get flustered. You can't really see your options. Everything just starts closing in on you. And so people with trauma get that more, they get it worse. It's harder to come out of. And so the object of the game for all kinds of healing is first to recognize that you're dysregulated, then to practice reregulation just on the spot real

quick. And then say what you have to say and then make the decision. And if you know how to reregulate. You could say, let's think of something stressful.

Okay? Going to a party where you don't know very many people. You got invited to a Christmas party and you don't know many people. And for a lot of people that's nerve wracking. So their go-to thing might be, go eat a bunch of sugar, go drink a lot, go um, talk a lot, go, don't talk at all. Go sit in the car, come for five minutes or don't come at all. That's like, those are covert, avoidant ways of dealing with something that's a little bit stressful. But when you start getting into like learning how to ride that wave of people and being the art of being able to be yourself and to be attuned to other people, so you're attuned to yourself thinking these seem like okay people to talk to and then listening to them.

That's, this is very advanced stuff that's very hard for most people to do, but it's where connection happens. You have to have that attunement with other people. So in the book, I really just broke down like, here's a bunch of barriers to it. If you don't have boundaries, you can't really go to a Christmas party. 'Cause you know, you could get stuck in a boring conversation or, you know, somebody could, kind of get aggressive with you or something and you wouldn't know what to do. So actually being a good connector means you have really good boundaries.

You kind of know what you're okay with. You know what you'll do if somebody's aggressive with me, I have a few things I could say or do or get to safety. If I get stuck in a boring conversation, I have graceful ways of very politely getting out of that and moving on. That's a boundary. And if you didn't have parents who modeled that for you and then you coped with life and high school and everything that came after that by covertly avoiding social situations. You know, you, you just end up a little rough and you don't know how to do it. So it's kind of an etiquette people, an etiquette book for people like myself who have to be taught how to do this. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I know a lot of people already resonating with this and you know, I, as you already know, and many people are becoming aware of, a lot of this is just based on our programming, you know, the way that we're wired up our experiences, and so we are just

reacting. And also, you know, a lot of times, and I'm thinking about, you know, like Martin Lawrence, like we were talking about comedians beforehand, but just like some of these sentiments like crazy, people don't know they're crazy. You know, like the way, and I'm not calling us crazy, but the way that we're responding, the way that we're responding or reacting in situations.

We tend to, the great extreme to believe that we are right, that we're doing the right thing. And this is what creates a lot of conflicts and relationships, is that everybody thinks they're right.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And so having these skills built over time, as you just mentioned, good modeling.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: To be able to have healthy boundaries, but also be able to perspective take to be able to, you know, to reregulate when you become dysregulated, right? These things that we pick up, and this is part of the healing process, is awareness is a big part of this. And knowing that we can develop these skills because in conventional modalities of psychology, psychiatry, which can be greatly effective for a certain percentage of the population. We know today that for many people, simply going through and talking about the trauma, talking about the thing that hurt you, can keep you in that stuck state, can just continuously hurt you in new ways. Can you talk about that a little bit?

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. I was one of the pioneers to figure that out the hard way. Back, back in the day, so this is in the nineties, I'd been to a lot of therapy. It was just what you do because I struggled a lot with depression. I struggled with relationships. I often felt overlooked. I never had enough money to go to as much therapy as I wanted, but I would've gone to it like all the time, if I could have afforded it. But I grew up in a family with a lot of alcoholism and addiction. My brother, older brother died from heroin.

My mom died of alcoholism and there was a lot of, in our house, there was a lot of violence. We were very neglected. And so I had a lot of the problems that go with that, just kind of normal. And I insist it's normal. It's normal to have this set of symptoms. With that, I don't think that was totally well understood. When I was younger and, I was a pretty high functioning kid, like in my family, everybody had their little coping mechanisms, you know, my brother turned to drugs. I turned to like, I'm gonna be the best straight A student and I'm gonna, I'm gonna hide from the whole world how bad things are at home.

Like, you could not bring people over to our house unless they were from similar families. And, but it was a hoarder house and the drugs and alcohol were on full display, often sold there. It was, it was pretty, pretty weird. There was, so it wasn't always, not everything about it was horrible. There were, I had a nice stepdad. Thank goodness, that's a blessing. He kept things somewhat stable. He had a sort of an expectation that you didn't stay out all night, but nobody was really paying attention. So I was high functioning. As it goes, I got straight A's. I got out a year early. I got the heck outta Dodge. I moved to California, got a job in a pizza place.

Went to community college. You know, got for the, it's sort of a success story from there. Even though I come from a family with a great education and every opportunity because of the drugs and alcohol, you know, we were just like forever downwardly mobile to the very bottom. And it was really more like in my twenties that I started to see what the damage was. But I still didn't know what it was. It wasn't common knowledge. Then this book came out. It will never happen to me. It was like the first book about adult children of alcoholics. And the first time I saw a therapist when I was 21, it was presented to me. And, I don't remember it very well. It was, it was an important book and that it introduced this concept to the idea that, hey, the kids are affected too.

And there are a certain way. And I was sort of a classic case. I was really perfectionistic and anxious and at the same like getting straight A's and making terrible choices of men. And so my life was always just like really high drama, really struggle, you know, having to couch surf with friends. 'cause I had moved in with somebody and it didn't work out when I was young. And so that's, those were things that I always thought like, why am I some sort of fuck up

here? You know, why now it's just totally makes sense. It's just total normal trauma behavior. Totally normal. There were just red. It was, I had no red flag detector. I could see it later, but not when it was coming.

And that brain tidbit about like, your brain goes dark. It's like, that's the only thing that makes sense. I was never trying to recreate a problem. I really didn't. I wanted to get out of that family with all their problems. And so it was when I was 30, I was doing okay. I had, I had some good things happen. I finished college. I had, I did comedy. I had a nice boyfriend for about six years. It ended naturally, you know, it wasn't such a terrible thing, but right about when I was turning 30, this thing was happening where my symptoms were getting, they were making me selfish. I would say, I wanna cop to that.

I was, I had started out like this very nice girl, but there was something about the way that I had to harden my heart to the world. That I was harsh with people, I was selfish and pushy and had to have my way about everything. I think today they would be like, what a narcissist. You know, we didn't use that word so much then, but they were narcissistic traits and I had a relationship that I really wanted that didn't work out. Then my mom had cancer, and died. She was just about to die. And right before she died, I went out to coffee with a male friend and we got randomly attacked on the street by this, these four guys who I realized later were gang members because there was graffiti on the sidewalk where it happened afterwards.

So that's the only thing I could put together. They didn't say anything. They didn't take anything. They just like, with this full force of sheer intent to harm, you know, they beat us both unconscious and they kicked my face and my jaw, my ear, my teeth as hard as they could, four guys at the same time. And I don't know exactly how long I was unconscious. And I think then this is kind of the spiritual thing about that moment is around that time I was pretty depressed. And in that, those depressed thoughts, I would think I'm, everybody would be better off if I weren't here. I was starting to go there with that thought.

And when, if I had just not screamed, maybe they would've taken me there for me. Maybe they would've done the job for me of get me out of this world. And I had a choice. But actually I wanted to live. I wanted very much to live. And that instinct came up. And it's funny, if

anybody's ever been unconscious, you don't necessarily know who you are or where you are or what's happening, but there's this will to live, this will to become conscious. And it just came up. And I thought, I thought that if I screamed, it would be like in a dream when you have to scream, but you're like, ha, you can't get a voice. So I thought I better really try hard. And I got this scream out and the scream was strong and it stopped. It is And, and I was very injured, but I was okay.

And this changed my whole life. This event put me into, and no longer any ability at all to look good on the outside. I was a wreck after this. I had a broken jaw. I had, I'm sure PTSD, though they didn't, they didn't call it that back then. They knew about PTSD, but they thought it was just soldiers or something. But I had PTSD and I had all the classic symptoms. And this is what happens for people who had a traumatic childhood. You might do a great job of compartmentalizing all that shit for a long time, but something happens, or like three things happen and you just can't anymore. And you didn't even know it was there, but there's just all this grief and anger that comes out and anxiety about everything.

It's very strong and you cannot manage it. It's like a, I call it a trauma storm. You just can't get it together. I could not get it together and I needed to take time off from work, but I was at the stage of life when I couldn't, they, there was no such thing as paid time off in my job, and so I had to go back after a week and I was saying really inappropriate stuff on the job, threatening things that made everybody's eyes get big. So I'm always tuned in. I'm like, your eyes got big. What are you thinking? Well, I was so disconnected from people. I could only like look at expressions and be like, they must be shocked. Did I do something shocking? That was my only way of knowing it. I was so disconnected. And that's what complex PTSD and PTSD both, they really like, they sever this non-verbal communication.

See, I know now, and I think the science is coming. This is partly theoretical, but it's partly showing up as it's real. But our nervous systems, like, you know, your crew in this room, and you and me we're feeling each other, and if one of us walks in the room, we feel the vibe of the room. We're not always thinking consciously about it, but we're such evolved beings. We feel who's in the room. We know where we are. We know when we're safe. We know when something's off. We know when people are being dishonest. You know, you think somebody's

deceiving you or things are not as they seem. Or nowadays when I'm reading, people are talking to me and sometimes I'm like, did you memorize this from ai?

I have this distinct feeling like it's not organic thought. Yeah. You know, that's starting to appear on my, in my experience it's like, are you, wait, are you a robot? No, not really. But I can tell when people are talking from their heart, I can tell when somebody has imposter syndrome. You know, I can see that on TV when they have imposter syndrome. I'm like, they're, they feel worried that we don't believe them. That's my nervous system being able to read signs visually, but also like the vibe. And I've heard one theory that our nervous systems are basically just one little node in a great, vast nervous system that is consciousness. I'm like, I don't know how you measure that, but I'm pretty sure it's true. That sounds right. And that's why we have collective consciousness.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Mm-hmm. And this is measurable.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Measurable.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: So with this, again, a series of traumatizing events, to say the least and going in and talking about them repeatedly.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: What kind of experience did you have there?

ANNA RUNKLE: Well, so it's natural to feel connected to your environment and other people. So we may have had an injury, we also may have been raised wrong, where people didn't teach us appropriate ways to deal with anger, that sort of thing. But then there's this thing where the nervous system dysregulation, cuts off your nonverbal communication. So little

did they know that asking me to talk about my, I mean, literally after I was assaulted, I went to therapy three times a week and we talked about it three times a week.

Mm. And it would just like destroy me every time. And it really, like, it was bad, but it wasn't that bad. I got through it, you know, I got through it. It was nothing personal. It hurt, it healed. But the talking about it was taking me back into this bad thing. And then we talk about my mom and we talk about all the bad things that happened to me. And it would, again, it would like, it's like a force field that cuts off your communication with everybody else. Like a total disconnection and the con I think. I think that's one of the ways we co, we co-regulate. We can feel each other. We know like a dad who's regulated has a regulating effect on the children.

And a dad who's dysregulating, dysregulated has a dysregulating effect on the children. Co-regulation is something everybody's learning about now. So when you can't connect with other people, nobody's helping you regulate. Your nervous system is just kind of spinning into space. There's no place to kind of ground down into, and that was what therapy was like to, for me, very, you know, would really like cut me off. I get very dissociated. I couldn't feel my hands in those days. I used to have to write a check after each visit and I couldn't use my hands didn't work well enough to write the check and I couldn't remember how to write a check. And I look back and I know that feeling so well, but I know what it is now.

And it wasn't, it wasn't anything they could detect. And I know many, this is inter, you know, a lot of people know about this now. I wish that the curriculum for new therapists coming up would be a little more rigorous with it and make it entirely central because if people aren't regulated, they can't listen, they can't remember, they can't process information. So everything that happens in a therapy appointment, it's gone. And you come back next week. And I remember disappointing one therapist after another with the way I never made progress and I never seemed to like respect what we had figured out last week, you know? But it wasn't there. My brain was not in a condition I could take it in.

So I figured out that didn't work for me. And still me saying this here, you're gonna get hateful comments from people going, she's saying, don't ever go to therapy. And I'm not

saying that, I'm saying that until you can regulate, you can't benefit from almost anything. That talking about trauma can be very, very dysregulating. I've seen one study showed like 30% of traumatized people can't really benefit. You know, talking about trauma is you gotta do it sometimes, and there's ways to do it. You wanna know what the great earth shaking innovation is you can write it, you can write about it, and it doesn't do the same pathway. It doesn't re-trigger.

Maybe it does for people. I haven't met them yet, but you can write about it. You can even read what you wrote and you can bypass that circuit and now you can communicate what it was. And there's other things, there's other modalities that haven't proven that great for me. I get dysregulated very easily. I get dysregulated if people are even like sympathetic about something. I'm that, that was hard for me. If I tell you really factually, yeah, this thing happened to my family and you put a hand on my shoulder and you go, that must have been really hard. I'll just like, I'll just dysregulate. I'm like, why'd you do that to me?

That's why I just, people with complex PTSD can be a real pain in the ass because of that. And if we're in it, when we're in the, when we're having that sort of emotional flashback and dysregulated, we believe that you did that to us. We believe that you caused it and you can fix it. And then we get very like, come on, do what you have to do so that I feel better. And that just kills relationships because it turns out the other person, no matter how much they want to, they cannot fix this like, wave of unprocessed emotion. This just like pulling you down right now. They didn't cause it. They might have, you know, we hurt each other's feelings of course. But, that's what it is.

So, talking about trauma is can be, actually, can make things worse. In my case, it pushed me to the brink of taking my own life, talking about it. And just before it went that far, somebody showed me about how I could write about it. And she taught me kind of a prayerful format that she had learned in aa that I guess hardly anybody in AA does it. But she was with a group of people who were doing, like twice a day, they write their fears and resentments on paper. They ask God to remove them, and then they do transcendental meditation. It's not that wacky or anything, but it's not, it's not that common. But it worked. There were a lot of people who had been homeless before, dual diagnosis, you know, hard cases.

And interestingly enough, like I had great affinity with that. I was by that time with my head injury and everything. I was a hard case. And she showed me how to do this writing and within two weeks I didn't have PTSD or depression anymore. And my therapist thought that I had had some sort of like breakdown. Because I was like happy and I was saying, I pray. I pray now. She was just like, oh boy, you know, here she goes, I'm worried about her now. She was literally worried about me. But I think it's natural to be worried about somebody who dramatically changes that much. Like it must be delusional. Right. But it's been 31 years now and I've had ups and downs in my life. But that fundamental like change in my understanding of reality, never, never, never went away.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Wow. There's so much there. One of the things should be Captain Obvious, which there isn't a one size fits all approach to therapy.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: And you know, to encourage everybody to continue to explore. And to be honest too, if like something's not working for you, it's okay to move on. And this is one of the great things about you too, is. What, what you're sharing with people, you're, you're providing all these different frameworks basically, and different possible perspectives to take on and different things to try. But you also have your tried and true methods, which again involves this writing process and this meditation, and that is a powerful collaboration, and we're gonna talk more about that in a moment.

This episode is brought to you by the incredible team at Organifi and their phenomenal superfood blends. Not only does their bestselling green juice blend have the most powerful green superfoods, it also has a therapeutic amount of ashwagandha. A double blind, randomized, placebo controlled trial published in the Journal of Psychological Medicine had test subjects with a history of chronic stress to consume ashwagandha or a placebo. Over the course of the month and a half long study period, the group that received ashwagandha exhibited a significant reduction in scores on all the stress assessment scales compared to the placebo group and the serum cholesterol levels of the test subjects were substantially reduced in the Ashwaganda group.

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s : One of the things that I wanna circle back to that as I was reading your book, I'm just like, I feel connected. I don't let, let's dive in for the people. Let me just dive in here. But once you talked about covert avoidance, one of the things that happened to reading your book was like, it got me to analyze, like to go back in the DeLorean and like go and look at my past and like see like where was I because crappy childhood, like that resonated with me.

But I just feel like I'm good now. And you know, that covert avoidance was something that, and I've said this, it wasn't until like a couple years ago that I was able to say it because I don't see myself as that person. But I became very self-centered for a phase of my life because I come from an environment where it's, you know, violent. And it's very uncertain. And you know, something else I connected with you on was like. People who don't come to our house. Like there, I would spend the night at my friend's houses all the time. I'm talking like maybe 50 or a hundred times, like my various friends. But the one time, one time that I was having a friend stay over, shout out to Damon.

All right. So he was staying over and we were hanging out in our kitchen and my stepfather was drinking, you know, which again, he passed away. A little over two years ago, drugs and alcohol put him into assisted living and he changed his life and, you know, got devoted to his church. But, you know, the damage and the epilepsy really kind of took hold, but you know, a lot of years of hard drinking and drugs and he was drinking.

But you know, for us it's normal for Damon, not too normal. So my little brother was sitting over by like, basically where Dante is sitting right there in the corner. Alright. My little brother's sitting there and I'm sitting there with demon. Right. Damon's like sitting, you know, at the table. And I'm like standing up by our counter and Glen came in, you know, he said something, whatever, and we were just laughing about something else, but he thought we were laughing at him. So we came back, we will just say a minute or two later with a bat. And my brother was sitting where Dante is sitting, right? We had a plastic trash can, like one of those big, like oversized ones. And he went after my brother and swung that bat so hard it split this plastic massive trash can, like just cracked it right in half.

And thank God my brother dove out of the wake. He could have killed his son, you know? But again, he would've been mortified once he comes to this process and he realizes like what happened, but at the time he didn't care. And so when that happened, Damon was already outside. He's down the block, ran away. Right. And I'm just trying to grab Glen, like calm down, you know, my stepdad just like, what are you doing? Like what did you do? You know, trying to like get him to calm down. But he was going after my brother and so he goes outside 'cause my little brother went outside as well and he's trying to get to him where I'm trying to hold him back.

And my mom's now trying to hold him back and he crawls over. We have a porch that's, we'll say 12 feet up in the air, 10 feet. He crawls over the porch and lands face first on the ground. Alright. And I see Damon just down the block, just standing there like a deer in headlights. Like just, what is going on here? This was the one time I had a friend to stay over at my house. And this mayhem, this chaos took place and I almost lost my brother, right? So do you think I'm going to want to have people around? It's just like this, it becomes this like. It becomes this like shadow life, you know? Like this different life that I have.

And I became that person, like all the check marks in school. Right? Yeah. I'm doing all those things to try to quote, make it out, but it's very unconscious. 'Cause I love my family and I want everything to be okay in a workout, but I became so self-centered and so guarded. And so I just didn't connect with people. And the way that my life is today, I have these very rich relationships. And it's because of what you said, and I'm going to read this direct quote from

your book. You said the best chances to overcome any symptom of trauma, the depression, the dysregulation, the increased risk of health problems. And yes, the isolation is to strengthen your ability to connect. My connections help to heal me. You know, and I didn't know that I was possible because I didn't know that this was holding me back from connection.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. Yeah. I'm so glad you told me that.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. And the last part, just to fast forward a little bit, so, you know, I get into college and I, 'cause I took the DeLorean and I went into the future a little bit and just to see like, did I have friendships? Like I would basically model with my stepdad. He would have like one drinking buddy per, you know, cycle a number of years. But he really didn't mess with people. And so I just was like, that's why I am like this. So I would have one friend, but I never, I never talked about anything with my friends.

Nothing, none of the stuff I was struggling with. I didn't struggle. I'm just, I'm chilling. I'm Shawn. I'm making things happen, but there was so many things going on in my life, but I never talked about any of that stuff. And kept everybody at arm's length. I had lots of different girlfriends, different relationships, a lot, which I was using that to stay covert with my avoidance. You know, I just never let anybody get too close to me, you know, and I'm just, even me saying that, I've never said that out loud before, you know, but I just never let anybody get too close to me. And I didn't know that I was just, it was this covert avoidance. 'cause I didn't see myself like that. I saw myself as like, I've got all these relationships. Right. But I didn't feel connected. And that's the difference with your work. It's it's about connectability.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. Yeah. You're actually a great success story, every step of that story, because what you did to become guarded like you did, and to put on the good front out there, I'm Mr. Normal, I'm Mr. Social is good. That protected your spirit.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Hmm.

ANNA RUNKLE: You did. You put a, you put on a shield, like a superhero thing that would protect you for a space journey until you could get to the planet where you could breathe. And now that's the hard part, you know, that we face as we become adults is like, now how do we take this thing off?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah.

ANNA RUNKLE: And so it's very good that you did that. I think, you know, some of our siblings and friends who didn't make it, that's what it was. They just, they weren't able to do that. They weren't able to put on that thing. Hmm. So it's a, it's a blessed survival strategy, but it's complicated to end it and start to start again and learn all these things you never knew how to do before. And I don't know about you, but it, I didn't, it wasn't like this very, like, I think I'll change my life now. It's like everything was such a mess. Yeah. And in this, this book, I opened with a story. It wasn't that long ago. It was well into my healing. I was a divorced mom. I was in and out of the hospital for four years.

'cause there was a medical mistake on a surgery. And I ended up needing 14 major surgeries. And I had to go to the emergency room 44 times. And I was like, alone with kids. It was this incredibly difficult, complicated time. Their dad was around, but he wasn't in the house. He was, he lived nearby. Again and again in the middle of the night, I'd have to just like get neighbors, can you help? I've gotta drive myself to the emergency room. It was this really tough time and when you get out of the hospital, you can't just like take a taxi home. They won't let you. They make it be somebody who knows you. And 14 surgeries was about 11 more than I had people who would help me in that situation.

That was a reckoning for me. I'm like, what? What the hell? I'm like, I'm, you know, I have all these friends, but you know, they were just kind of like Fairweather friends, I guess you call them. Yeah. We were friends. We were friends when things were fun. When I put the email out, I really need food. Everybody. I can't, I just, I had to have like, I had to donate muscles to the rest of my body from my leg. They, you know, so I was, I had, my whole leg was cut open. I couldn't walk. And I was like, Hey, can somebody like pick up my kids at preschool and bring

up some McDonald's or anything at all? And then, you know, just pick up a little bit here and help me out.

'cause I, I could, it was all I could do to get to the bathroom really. And, a couple people said they would, but they, whatever they brought, they would just make a big mess and leave. They weren't the kind of people who get it, you know, like, help me out. Yeah. I really need it. And I didn't have parents, I didn't have, I had siblings, but not the kind who were gonna be there or could be there. And, my husband was gone, so that was just like the reckoning I had. And I think a lot of people are in that situation. They're when everything hits the fan and you really need help is when you can really see, and people like to talk about, you find out who your friends are, but what if it's like none of them?

You know, what if it's none of them? And so that's, that was this huge, I would call it like another spiritual awakening where I just realized that I didn't even know how to do this. And I did try going to a therapist again and I got that tidbit like, this is the problem, but actually changing. It was a very spiritual job actually, too, to heal in a way that when you don't even know how can anybody get in there and change your connectability? How can anybody get in there and change that wound that you have that your brain didn't develop properly? 'cause your mom, my mom, like split when I was a month old, she'd come and go.

She'd meet some guy. I think my dad and maybe my grandmother, there was a lady who would come in and care for me too. They all sort of cobbled it together as often as the case, right? It's not uncommon, but everybody was really anxious all the time. Like, is she ever gonna come back? Is she alive? Why'd she do this? And then the fighting, you know, where have you been and all of that. So I'm pretty sure I, i, that part of my development was disrupted and it may just be an organic thing that it was hard for me to feel connection. And I decided to go on faith that if, like, if a person who has lost a leg can get a prosthesis and carry on and have a great life, I'm gonna find a way that even though I struggle with this, I'm gonna find a way to learn it.

You know, who's had to do that as like, people on the autism spectrum where just the way they were made, they don't feel the same level of connection with other people and can't

always read the room on things. So they learn social skills and they learn to have a mask and they, you know, how to conduct themselves. So I like studied that like, and what do they teach, teach you? I know that I'm not autistic, but I have the same challenge. Basically. I have to learn how to do people and how to connect. And so in the book I lay out as a self-help book. 'Cause that's kind of, you know, I've just ended up, I took all my experience.

I'm like, all right, everybody, here's how I did it. And it's part, it's got worksheets to look at, but I figured out about nine things that really get in the way of being able to connect. And one of them is avoidance and covert avoidance. One of them is not having boundaries. We talked about that. One of them is like your life, if you grew up like you did, and I did. I don't know, it sounds like you might have skated out a little faster than I did, but my life was really populated with Fuckups and people who were, you know, negative to be around and who brought trouble into my life and who, if anybody, you know, decent came along, if they saw who I hung out with, they'd be like, oh, you know, it, it's like a barrier.

It's another barrier to being able to connect with absolutely anybody at all. And I would, I also would tolerate quite a lot people who mistreated me. I had a really, the crap fit phenomenon. I let them stay and had a lot of ways of. I don't know. Like I would read books. I would somehow misuse self-help literature to believe like they are cruel to me. But I rise above it and just put up with it. I could just, I could stay with the boyfriend if I had to, you know? 'cause I was afraid to leave and just, even though he was cheating, I'd be like, but he's been through a lot and after all I'm very modern and I don't know. You can always come up with a rationalization to right, to just be treated really badly and, but I was in pain all the time and so you have to stop.

You have to start being honest with yourself about what is mistreatment and stop letting it happen to you. And to do that means you're gonna let people leave your life and it's lonely and it's scary. And that means you're gonna have to start doing little things to have new connections that is lonely and scary and some other things. I think a lot of traumatized people. Maybe you relate to this, have damaged perception where you're always, every time something's weird, you're like, is it me? Am I being weird? Or are they, am I being weird? Or

they, and it's very paralyzing. 'cause if you didn't have damaged perception, you'd be, what the hell are you doing?

You can't do this with me. I'm leaving. Or you'd go, I guess I'm just feeling paranoid or jealous. I, jealousy is a good example. I'm feeling jealous, but I have full information to trust that I have no reason to be like, that's a judgment call we all have to make at some time or another. Right? But with trauma, you don't have it. You can't trust your judgment and all that. Normal people advice, like always trust your gut. You know, always express your feelings. It's like, oh, not so much for me. That's is a dangerous piece of advice because sometimes my gut is trauma informed. It's going off of some old information.

No, you can't trust anybody. Can't trust that feeling or, always express your feelings. Well, my trauma comes out as emotional dysregulation under stress. So my feelings will be like, you know, I think you don't like me anymore. I've gotta pack up my suitcase and just like, leave you right this minute. That's emotional dysregulation, so I can't trust my feelings. So there's this uncertainty we're walking around with all the time. So there's a fantasy though, that we're gonna get all healed and then we'll try to deal with people, but it won't work because the only way that you can work on this stuff, you can do a little bit all by yourself, but then you have to like go outside.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. You have to train.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. Yeah, you do. And you, and you're gonna sometimes like bump into things and make mistakes and feel embarrassed. But this is why I teach everybody the daily practice as the first order of business. It's a way to let those feelings out. You don't have to carry them for the rest of your life. Just like, yes, I'm ashamed. Okay. Yes. Release it, meditate, get up the next day and get ready to try again. You know? And that's, that is the object of the game.

SHAWN STEVENSON: The daily practice. Can you share that for everybody?

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. I can tell you a little bit what it's like.

But I encourage people, I have a free course on my website that anybody can take a short course. It takes a little while to teach the right way to do it, and it's important to do it correctly, but it's a writing technique where you basically are just noticing the distress, thoughts and feelings that you've got. We lump them into fears and resentments. You could come up with many more nuances about feelings, but it's good just to be simple. It's the anxious kind of thought and feeling. It's the angry kind and. You name them and write them out. If you're inclined toward God or a higher power, it's a prayer. It's given, it's given up. The whole spirit of it is that we're writing it so that we can release it, so that we can have it removed. And if it is a prayer, you can ask for guidance about it.

Like take this, take this mess now. Show me what am I to do? And gimme the power to do that. I had a friend recently tell me, her prayer was, if there's a door that needs to be open to me, open it and make it obvious. If there's a door that needs to be closed, just shut it in my face. Don't worry about my nose, you know, but stop me from going through that door. And so there's a, it is a spiritual approach that was very much a part of how I did it. And I wanna be open about that because I think we're often discouraged from. Going that way, or we think it can't work. But it was tremendously helpful for me. Made a huge difference, changed my life. But even if you don't believe in that, this still works and it's still you.

There's science to it. Writing is therapeutic, meditation is therapeutic. My book has deep studies, you know, to show you why we know this. So it, so it can help. So twice a day you sit down and you write these things and sign off. The sign off is important until you feel better. And so on a hard day, that could be an hour on a easy day, that could be five minutes. If you don't write enough, you will still be kind of jammed up in the head. We know that trauma makes it hard to process thoughts and feelings, so it process means it stops being this thing as if it's happening right now and is charged with emotion and adrenaline, and it becomes a memory that's inert over there.

You can recall it, but it doesn't get you all upset every time you think about it. So we're trying to process it. I do think this, I believe that this is an assist. It assists in processing thoughts and feelings so you get more space. Your mind is meant to be mostly space. You got a couple things on your mind, but mostly you're open to ideas.

You're open to observations, you're open to new things happening. An opportunity like, oh look at that beautiful park over there. Lemme go see what's going on. When you have a head full of, you know, negative stuff and unprocessed thoughts and feelings that you haven't been able to get over into the memory bucket, it's very hard to be attuned.

There it is. I think that's in a nutshell what's going on of why it's so difficult to notice, to read, to see the red flag, to, to feel the intentions of another person, to connect up to the, the group nervous system, the collective consciousness that you can't, you can't receive those downloads that when you're in good condition, you do, you wake up in the morning and you're like, you know what? I think I solved that problem overnight. I know what to do. That, that just doesn't happen for you. It's just trouble, trouble just piling up in your mind all the time. That's really hard. Then you're trying to relate to somebody and you're in some little conversational difficulty and you're like, I don't understand why we're not understanding each other.

And when you have a head full of unprocessed thoughts and feelings, they're from all sorts of things. And so how can you help but project it and be like, well, I think you don't understand me. 'Cause you don't care, 'cause you know there are people in the past who didn't, but that's not what's going on here. We end up doing it to the boss. We parentified the boss. We familify, the coworkers. Like nobody. Well, I'm the black sheep here now. It is possible to be the black sheep at an office, but you bring your own past to the office. It's going to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. It just ends up that way. So what you have not yet faced that's in here will have a way of coming out again in your experience?

And there's a lot of ways of saying that show up in different philosophies, but I think it's very practical. So the really good thing, so you do this twice a day. You write, you meditate for 20 minutes and people go, oh, half an hour. That's like crazy. I can't do that. And it's like, you don't have time not to do it. You don't have time to go through your whole life completely cluttered in the head and unable to connect with anybody or have new ideas. You don't have time.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Right.

ANNA RUNKLE: You can't be present. And I did it with two little kids, divorced, and it was the best thing I did. Very comforting to the kids. If they were very good, they could sit on my lap while I meditated. We had a special blanket for that. We just worked it into our lives. When I was a video producer and I had my own production company, it was always like in the contract, oh, and Anna meditates at five o'clock, and I thought that people would think I was a prima donna. No. They thought I was amazing. And people would be like, how do you meditate?

Where could I find out how to meditate? People thought it was cool when you just kind of own what you need. It has a way of communicating, self-respect to other people and they respect it back. That's been a hard one lesson for me. So you can make this work if you really want it. It's worth giving a try to see if it works for you and it's worth changing your life for.

But even if you just do it once, that's something. But you do it twice and you start to detach from this old idea that all my anxiety, all my anger, everything that's happening to me is this big unlucky curse that everybody just dumps on me and nobody gives me a break, and life isn't fair. That's the reality I used to live in. Oh, here it comes, you know, the mistreat. Here it comes, you know, I just know everybody's gonna be this way. I started to have a new experience. I started to feel that I had some agency in what happened to me and who I was around, and you could not tell me this. There was nobody could tell me anything. I had to experience it, and I had to be free to make my mistakes and go, no, I have to date that guy.

I know everybody thinks it's a bad idea, but I just know it's right. I have to do it. It would all turn out like everybody else knew it was going to, and I'd be right back that evening with my paper. You know, I have fear. I did it again. Fear, everybody could see it coming, you know? I had, I had somewhere for those feelings to go and I could quickly move through it, and that's what I never used to be able to do before.

I had this technique talking about it didn't help me move through it. Sitting with it didn't help me move through it. That's another philosophy that works for some people is sit with your feelings. I'm like, oh boy, that's like sitting in a car that's like going under the river, you know? Get out of the car.

That's, it's a different thing when you have trauma, but there is a way to process your emotions that then this is the ultimate level playing field in life is when you can be regulated, then you can participate in what other people do. You're not cut out anymore, and most times people are not against your participation. There's, there are cases of this, but I mean, I really used to think, I used to think, 'cause I grew up poor, that like everywhere I went people were like, oh, there's the poor girl trash. They weren't, it wasn't like that. It was.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Can't sit here.

ANNA RUNKLE: No. Have you had that? So it fades. It's not that nothing like that ever happens, but you don't have to wear it. Like, you're like, like it's your very soul. It's your soul is this beautiful, intact thing and it communicates to the world who you are. And I did notice that people started to treat me with a lot more kindness and respect when I had that going on the inside.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. It's powerful. Powerful. Wow. You know, one of the things that you said was about how we rationalize things. And earlier I mentioned like, we don't know that we're doing this, that's the thing. No. Like we are just automatically doing this to frame it so that we're right. And so what I would encourage people to do. 'cause it's one thing to be honest with yourself, right? How do you do that? Look at the results.

Just get honest about the results in your life. Right. And that can be like an inroads, but that rationalizing, it's perfectly natural, it's perfectly normal human behavior. And it can be extreme when we have experienced trauma. And so you offer so many different insights into like, okay, how am I showing up? How am I disconnecting myself? Like what are the signs and symptoms and practical ways of helping us to reregulate. And for us to dare I even say feel empowered because that was one of the things I was gonna ask you about. Like, how do some people make it out of those situations and you know, not just make it out, but like thrive in life. And because I know that it is, it's a unique recipe, you know, for each person of course. But I, there are some similarities, like when you said about putting on that superhero like suit of armor.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Like I almost just broke down in tears even hearing that because like that was in a way what I did. I'm just like, but still that's kind of like, not fake it till you make it per se, but like really embodying something until I became it. But that didn't negate all the coping mechanisms and rationalizing that I was doing. But for me it was, and this could be another inroads, but back to connectability, I went through those conditions. Yes. I went, I was in college, first person in my family to do it, like checking these boxes, but then I lost my health. Right. Just like everything was just terrible. Health relationships and the process of me getting well, and also it was through relationships that I had. Once I decided to get well, that directed me to certain resources.

Right. It was these relationships. Right. And once I started feeling better and I transformed my health, people started asking me for help at the university. I was going to, you know, with their health and fitness. And it was through service to other people. Right. Because I was so, I was so self-centered, but I didn't see myself as ever being that type of person. But once I started to help other people. It like unlocked me to where like, this is who I am, this is how it was, and I felt safe. Which I've never said this about out loud before as well. Like, I felt safe in serving these other people and helping them because I trusted myself and I was helping people that I felt comfortable with as well. And so it was just like this mutual healing relationship, you know, where we are all kind of, you know, getting better together.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: In essence.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. I regard what you're describing there as a very spiritual thing actually, because instead of like trying to, like, I'm gonna, I'm gonna look out for myself, which we have to, when, you know, that's why we were selfish because other people were not focused on us for us. So somebody's gotta blow your horn, you know, somebody's gotta, like, make sure you have everything you need. So that's also, it's a positive for a period of time that then has to go, but. When we move into the service of others, like that's really, I deeply believe every

person has a gift that is meant for the benefit of others. Like we have things that are meant for just us or just our family, but we have things that are for the benefit of, of all things. And until we discover them, we're gonna feel a little bit like, when do I get to the good part? When do I become fulfilled? It's the most fulfilling thing when you allow yourself to be of service in the unique way that you can be.

Like you did it through fitness. And that's spiritually what we're doing is we're entering into the healing power that's already there, but we're, we become like an agent of it. We we're, we go into the service of the healing power that's there and how could you not feel good about yourself when you're in the service of the good and it makes you forget yourself in a good way. That's a good thing not to not love yourself or take care of yourself, but forget that self-centered need like let let the ego go for a while and focus on others. It's such a pleasure. What I love, and you must see this too in your work, when you get to witness other people having that transformation and you see them have it, and you see that sort of love start flowing through them, they become in the service of the good.

It's flowing through them and it like changes people's countenance. The color comes back to their face. There's a light in their eyes. They have something to them. They feel good to be around. This is part of connectability too. Like a truly connectable person feels good to be around. I used to just envy people like that, and I thought it was just, oh, 'cause they're pretty, or you know, they didn't grow up on welfare or whatever. But it's more than that. And, it's, I mean, it's not that at all because you could be, you could have connectability under any circumstance and people have demonstrated that to us. We had this guy in Berkeley named Mr. Charles. He's gone now. He was an old man when I moved to Berkeley in the eighties.

He was this old black man and he had a giant yellow glove and he would stand out there at commute time and wave at everybody. I gotta cry thinking of him. He was just such a good man, and he would say, have a nice day. And everybody would honk and wave and otherwise we'd have been like, go, you know, he was just, yeah, I'm, I'm like teary. I'm always teary when I think about him, but he's one of the people, he was like a person who, he planted a seed in my mind because he lived in the HI saw where he lived. It was just this humble little house on

the corner with his wife. He was some retire, I forget what he did, you know, when he died they put, did a obituary and I read it.

He had, I think he had a civil service job. It's an honorable job, but nothing fancy. And, but you know, he was this giant of service to people. He just completely lifted up everybody every single day. So, there's a mural of him out there with a, people come out with the yellow gloves. Yeah, that's, I'm very emotional about it. He was very important to me, even though I never talked to him. But when I was at the worst point in my life, I used to see him. I used to see him and he was always there. I'm like, so it's possible. It's possible to bring good into the world under any circumstances. And I think that it's very important for us to look at what is my role to play in that.

'cause I'm positive it's supposed to be everyone. And the troubles that we have in the world right now are the holes of the people who haven't gotten there yet. So if you get there. I feel like, I feel like I'm in it right now. Like we're always in progress. I'm there, but my duty is then to help, like, you know, give other people a hand into this thing where they enter into it too. They enter into it too. And when you're in a, when you're in a space where there's a good number of people who are sort of there and there's no competition anymore, there's no, there's no envy, there's no, you know, it's, there's no utopia in this world. I grew up in a commune, and I'll tell you, it's never perfect.

We're all flawed and it just will always keep falling down. But there need to be enough of us to just keep pulling in the hands up again. And, it's not just about money and it's not just about it's definitely not just about politics. It, that stuff is just. You know, mostly how things get divided. You know, it's about connecting with people and caring enough about them and using whatever, whatever strength you have to help bring other people up into that better consciousness too. Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That's what you're doing for all of us. You know, and I appreciate that so much. Thank you for making the trip down here to see me and to hang out. And if you could, can you share where people can pick up connectability?

ANNA RUNKLE: Oh gosh. I think just about anywhere, except if you still have a bookstore in your community. Yeah. There aren't so many. And if you don't see it in your bookstore, you can always get a Amazon or online sellers all over the world.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing.

ANNA RUNKLE: By the way, the audio books are selling very well of my stuff. Have you found that for you? If people know your voice?

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. I mean, you know what's crazy? My first book Sleep Smarter, which came out, you know, about a decade ago. It was for years. One of the top health books on Audible.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: I mean, for years afterwards.

ANNA RUNKLE: Nice. Nice.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, so yeah. It's pretty special.

ANNA RUNKLE: I love audio books myself. I put my heart into the audio books, so yeah. Those are nice because of a lot of my audience is all over the world because YouTube is all over the world and they say, I'm in this country where we just don't have this. Yeah. And I go get the audio book.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. Yeah. That's amazing. So, you know, this is, it, right now you, as you mentioned, like today we're, I mean to say that we're disconnected is an understatement.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah, yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: You know, and so just that reminder and it felt really special for me today personally, and I like the impact on me to even make it more of a mandate to connect.

Right. To connect with more people. And also just challenging my old thinking and how I've progressed, but like, how much have you really progressed? You know, what can I share? How can I communicate? Yeah. How can I connect more with the people who are in my life that I love and I value and I cherish? Like what are the ways that I still might be having my covert, you know, coping mechanisms and you know, because the work never stops. You know, but as you mentioned. You had a transformational experience. Yeah. Like your bar changed. Right. And it's very, very difficult to go below that once you have that kind of revelation. Yeah.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. Once you see it, you can't unsee it. Yes.

SHAWN STEVENSON: That part. It's a happy thing.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Yeah. So again, everybody pick up connectability right now, everywhere that books are sold. I appreciate you so much. Is there anywhere else people can follow you? Obviously you tell about the YouTube channel again.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah. Come God, I'm still all crying about Mr. Charles here, but happy tears. Gosh, every time I think of him, he makes me happy. The website is called Crappy Childhood Fairy and so is the YouTube channel. You can find things there and you know, I would love it if people come, come take the free course, learn how to do the daily practice, see if, see if it also helps you feel better.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Well, I appreciate you. Thank you again for coming down to see me.

ANNA RUNKLE: Yeah, thank you.

SHAWN STEVENSON: Amazing. The one and only Anna Runkle everybody. Thank you so much for tuning into this episode today. I hope that you got a lot of value out of this. Wow. So powerful. You know, if you think that this could be helpful for somebody that you care about, please share the episode and wow. Just another affirmation for us to be proactive about connecting, we need each other. It's a part of our own healing process, let alone the opportunity that we have to support healing and. Living an extraordinary life, dare I say, for other people. You know, we have a deep psychological need to connect and to not just have people to be there for us, but to be there for others.

And oftentimes speaking, for many of us, we don't grow up with the tools necessary to cultivate those types of relationships. And so wouldn't it be a good idea for us to make it a mandate to learn, for us, to make it a priority for us to learn? How do we go about this? How do we heal ourselves that we're easily triggered by different situations and circumstances and end up pushing people away? You know, how do we really heal so that we are showing up better so that we can have more freedom and we can respond the way that we want to respond. Not about being perfect, but about being able to have a higher level of connectability because man, people are triggering. All right. It's often said that it is our relationships through which we really get to do the work, alright?

To learn about ourselves and to grow and to find a way again to connect. If you've got a lot of value outta this, please share it out with your friends and family on social media really does mean a lot. And we've got some amazing, amazing masterclasses and world-class guests coming your way very, very soon. So make sure to stay tuned. Take care, have an amazing day and I'll talk with you soon.