

Todd: Here we go. My name's Todd. This is Cathy. Welcome back to another episode of Zen Parenting Radio. This is podcast number 724 Why listen to Zen Parenting Radio because you'll feel outstanding. There goes my voice, and always remember our motto, which is the best predictor of a child's wellbeing is a parent's self-understanding.

On today's show, we have a good friend of ours, her name is Milli. She, I'm gonna give you some applause, Milli. And I just told Milli about seven minutes ago that she's gonna be at our podcast. So she's completely unprepared. But we, Cathy and I, decide Milli is an a friend. I, we first met you at the Zen Parenting Conference.

Were you at the first one?

Milli: Not the first one with, I was part of the the Kickstarter campaign. Okay. So I've been listening to you guys since like two years in

Cathy: Yeah. Your, so how long have you, so that is 11 years.

Todd: Yeah. So Milli's been with us probably as long as almost anybody.

Cathy: And she's part of Team Zen, which is our virtual community.

So OG member. Yes, absolutely. Read that thing that I sent you. Oh yeah. Milli, I think we came up with a way to describe Team Zen.

Todd: This is our new thing. Join the Circle, which is the Team Zen membership platform. It's an app with Zen parenting rated complete parenting content collection, plus live talks all in one place.

Cathy: Our complete parenting content collection because Milli, we so Milli's on Team Zen, like she says, she's been around forever. And we struggle to explain Team Zen because there not be, there's just a lot of little things on it that people, you know, it's hard to explain in a soundbite because obviously we have all the live talks, which, you know, you are part of.

And then we, but we also have these micro communities. And you are a part of those too, so I'm totally putting you on the spot. Don't kill me.

Todd: But like, what's your best, what's your favorite part of it? Of team set or one or your two favorite parts of team set? Oh, the community.

Milli: Oh, really? I mean, just the access to that community.

I mean, access to you guys of course but just having this like-minded community that becomes another type of family yeah. I have become close to some of these members. Right, right. That we've met, you know, at conferences and such.

Todd: And you participate in some of the micro communities, don't you?

Yes right.

Milli: So there's the micro communities within the larger community. So you're asking what's the, well, yeah, no I have to say the community and the fact that Circle now encompasses all of it. I can go to that one spot either on my app or online and get in touch with the people or find content. It's fantastic. So thank you for putting that Circle together.

Cathy: Oh, thank you. Well, we're glad you're part of it. And you're a leader in the community for sure. So we really appreciate you, Milli.

Todd: So, as far as calendar goes, I just wanna say we do have some things coming up that might be interesting. We have a differently wired families hosted by Milli. She on August 25th and Nikki Smith. And Nikki Smith. Thank you, Nikki, our New Zealand friend. There is a separation divorce one on August 27th and on August 31st we're wel welcoming Devorah Heitner. And she's the author of Growing Up in Public Coming of Age in a Digital World. And Screen Wise.

Cathy: Yeah, that's like the other part that we had never say, well, we may say it sometimes, but we always ha every month we have someone come on an author or an expert or you know, somebody who's in the parenting world and they come in and do like a q and a for everybody. And they're friends of ours and or we're, sometimes we're meeting 'em for the first time, but last month we had Hunter Clarke- Fields who has a new book.

And then this month we have Devorah so, and many more to come. There's just, it's, and like Milli said, it's just nice that it's on the app. Honestly, for me too, Milli. 'Cause we were struggling for a while with Team Zen 'cause we're like,

how do we access everybody in one place? We're sending emails, we're using Facebook.

So it's better now, isn't it?

Milli: A thousand times thousand times. And the fact that we get off Facebook, it's just the resource that is the resource I've told people about Zen Perine read. I'm like, now you just go to the one place. It's your one-stop shop.

Todd: And we did not bring Milli on to talk about Team Zen. We actually brought, I, I'm bringing a topic to the table and I thought Milli would be a good person to have the topic with, even though you don't even know what it is that we're about to talk about. Which is fine.

Cathy: It's like no pressure. No pressure.

Milli: Literally, I came over just to say hi to you because I happen to be in town.

Todd: Yes.

Cathy: That's what I'm laughing about. She literally said, Hey, I happen to be in Oak Park. Should I, you know, can I come over and see you guys? We're like, sure. And then we're like, Hey, we're doing a podcast. Come on, jump in. So timing was perfect. So if you visit us, you're forced to podcast. Our girls will attest because we make up

Milli: very aware.

Todd: Be but first, sweetie, you wrote a Zen Parenting moment. And I ordinarily probably wouldn't include it, but you started with a quote, a lyric.

Yes, there it is. What did you write about and why did you include this song? Well,

Cathy: I wrote about two things. I wrote about the fact that I do not like back to school time, and I never have, if you've been listening to Zen Parent degree for the last 13 years, or maybe even just two or three of the last 13 years, I am not a fan of this transition.

I love fall and once I transition, I'm a fan of where we are. But this shift from summer to fall has always been very emotionally difficult for me. And this one

this year is been a doozy because my middle daughter we dropped her off at college on Wednesday and I had a lot of anticipatory anxiety going into it.

I think I started talking to my therapist about this in April. And I really, it's a hard, I always describe it for people as a tunnel. You have to go through where I know she's gonna be okay. And I totally at peace with where she is in life. She's a very mature, responsible woman, and I know she's ready to go to school.

It's not about that. It's about that I you know, am I'm gonna miss her. It's a shift and I, you can't get. You can't be super psyched for them until you, for me, until you go through that tunnel of grief. And even though I think it's more extreme when your kids are going to college or moving out or doing whatever they're doing, working, moving to a new state, I think it's also hard when your kid goes to kindergarten.

I think it's hard when they go to middle school. I think it's difficult when they go to high school and then it's really difficult when they become seniors. 'cause you realize it's their last year. I know I'm not alone in this tunnel. I think there's a lot of us parents in there, but it's so emotionally how do, what do I say?

It's just, it's been a lot of work. And so I think in the last two days you would probably say I've been better. Wouldn't you say?

Todd: Very much so and just so everybody knows, we're gonna be talking about anxiety today. Okay. And I'm gonna give you guys, I'm not gonna, I'm gonna deliver a message I heard from Jack Kornfield and I broke 'em up into these bite-sized clips.

And we're gonna be talking about each of the 30-second clips, okay? Right. So it's in terms of anxiety. But first Milli, can you share how many kids you have and ages and all that stuff.

Milli: I have three, 16 year old daughter going to be a junior in high school. And then I have twin 11 year old boys who will be going to middle school for the first time. So Yeah. I hear you on the anxiety. This is the first time they're gonna school, going to different classes and

Cathy: it's just having different teachers.

Milli: Yeah. A whole bunch of different teachers. It's different

Cathy: and I think that kind of where it, it's never about will they make it, because of course they will. We'll figure it out. It's how, it's that we have to look at things different. We have to pay more attention. The thing that I was really talking to Todd about a lot is I had a big grief thing about being a mom in that I have always felt that I am the last line of defense for my kids. And whenever I would talk to people about my daughter's going to college, they'd be like, she's gonna do great.

She's gonna be great. She is, but I'm the one I'm the one who has to pay attention to that. So everybody's depending on me, they're like, well, if anything was, you know, went wrong, you would help her or whatever. But that falls on me now. Todd, you know, would sometimes get frustrated with me. 'Cause he is like, well, I am paying attention too. Which you are, by the way. This is, it was never a slight on Todd. Like, I was never like, you don't do anything. I do it all. That's not, that was never my point. It was that it feels daunting. Just like your sons are going to middle school.

You have to pay attention. What, how is it different? How are they reacting? And it's this hyper vigilance. That I'm not a huge fan of. And when you've been a parent for 20 years, which we have now, you realize that hypervigilance has been like on full blast for two decades and it's, when I say tiring, I don't mean like I'm over it, it's my work as a mom, but sometimes I'm like, oh my God.

Plus the grief of her leaving, plus the grief of her friends leaving and all these important people to her. It's just in, it's intense.

Todd: For sure. And you're on the front lines Yes. In a way that I'm not, that's how it feels and you're the last line of defense so like, I don't know the military metaphor, I dunno if it's working, but you are the safety net.

Yes. And you're also the one who's grieving the thing happening. Doing a lot of the heavy work. But if I were to like say what's the most frequent topic that we've talked about in all the Zen talks or even on the podcast, I don't wanna necessarily talk about your spec. Maybe we'll use your specific example as we go through these clips, but just anxiety in general.

I don't remember having discussions in the 1980s and nineties about anxiety. No. And then somehow this word became mainstream. And I suffer from it. I judge that most people suffer from it. We all have a different relationship with it, but it's like the most prevalent issue I think that we hear about.

Cathy: And can I just, you know, I'll be on your case about words. Is that always am instead of I suffer with it. I experience it well, and I know what it is.

Todd: Well, I think s I think there's times when I suffer from it and there's sometimes I experience it. Okay. And we'll talk a little bit about that.

All right. Okay. So Jack Kornfield was interviewed by a guy named Tim Ferris, who's got a really famous podcast called the Tim Ferris Show. And he breaks down, he's telling Tim about how he would advise somebody who has a hard time, I'll say suffering from anxiety. Okay. Okay.

Cathy: And do you wanna tell any more about Jack Kornfield? 'Cause

Todd: He's like a meditation guru. He is like one of the most famous ones still alive. As far, when I think of guys who are most into meditation, he's probably top on my list.

Cathy: And he trained as a Buddhist monk like he, you know, not only does he have the experience, and I think he, as you said, he was someone who brought, you know, all of this to the western world. One of the many teachers we had that like big influx of teachers who came, you know, and brought meditation and to, to the west you know, Jon Kabat-Zinn and, you know, but

Milli: it was probably one of the first ones I actually listened to. Kornfield or

Cathy: Kornfield.

Yes.

Todd: Yeah. So I want, I just wanna invite any, anybody listening to think about something that they're either anxious about right now, or that they have really been anxious about in the past.

Okay. So like, listen to Jack's words. Through your own lens, because I think it's a, and I don't think any of the things that he's about to share isn't things that we haven't said on this podcast Okay. Over the last 12 years. But it's, he says it in a concise way that I think it's like somebody might take this podcast and literally like, write it down and use it next time they feel overwhelmed with anxiety.

Okay. Got it. We ready? So this first clip is about 30 seconds, and just so you know, he uses this term called Mara. 'Cause he is talking about this whole old

Buddha story. And in this case, Mara represents anxiety. Okay. Mara. Do you know who Mara is?

Cathy: Yeah. I know the story

Todd: is well enough to say anything about it or no?

Cathy: No. But I remember a podcast I was listening to about that a lot of people name their children, you know, that's a girl's name, Mara. Oh, interesting. And that it, so you play this and then I'll look it up so I can give you a really good purpose.

Todd: All right. So here's the first 30 seconds. So Tim's saying, how do we, Jack Kornfield teaches how to deal with anxiety better.

Is that you, Mara, or I see you Mara and Mara looks and kind of sadly slinks away, if you will. So the first thing about anxiety is to acknowledge that it's entirely human. That there are cultural reasons for it, and that there are physiological reasons that we have fear and we have fear of loss and all of those things.

And to be able to name it and say, oh, this is anxiety. It feels this way in my body. Your hands sweat. Your breath stops your heart. And it's hard to feel it's unpleasant in the body. And then it has its thoughts. We'll get to those in a minute. And what you can do in naming bar, you can say, oh, anxiety, I see you.

I feel you. All right. Step one.

Cathy: So, to backtrack really quick, in Buddhism, Mara was represented as a malignant celestial king who tried to stop Prince Siddhartha, so, buddha from achieving enlightenment, by trying to seduce him with his army and a vision of beautiful women who, in various legends are often to be Mara's daughters.

Got it. So it's like a, you know, using the temptation. A temptation or just holding us kind of hostage mentally. So, okay.

Todd: So what I love about this first clip is that he's like, Jack is inviting us to name it. And for me that's like a separation. 'cause when I feel really anxious, I feel like I am anxiety.

I'm overwhelmed by this feeling, and there is no discernment between Todd or, you know, the essence of who I am and anxiety It's just anxiety. There is no

Todd. It's just anxiety. Okay. What, do you guys have any thoughts about the power in just naming it?

Milli: I was just gonna say, aren't, don't, some experts suggest, especially with younger kids to have them name this worry monster.

Give it a name so that it is something that you can then separate from themselves, as you say. Yep. You know, Fred? Priority monster. Oh, he's here. And, you know, this is how I'm feeling yeah.

Cathy: And to, because of Fred Yeah. To draw it, you know, what does Fred look like?

You know, and these are all things that we can do with kids when they're younger. So they really see it as separate from themselves. But then the, you know, the next layer is, you know, do you think Fred is trying to hurt us, or do you think Fred is trying to help us? Well, we're gonna get into that.

Todd: Oh, okay. Don't worry about it. Okay. But, and I appreciate Milli your prompt about naming it, but I also wanna just say, this is not a kid thing, like as an adult, like I should, and maybe the name of my anxiety is simply anxiety, or it could be anxious AI or something like that. But I think plus he also said in that clip that it's a human, it's physis physiological.

But it's also cultural. And I think the physiological is a normal piece. And the cultural is, you know, all the other baggage that comes around the way something is supposed to be.

Cathy: So cultural meaning that we get anxious because something doesn't show up the way the culture says it should. We're not achieving a certain way.

We're not,

Todd: yeah, I feel like the cultural is the baggage, whereas the physiological is Oh, some, there's a threat out there and it's making my, my, my palm sweaty or something like that. And then I also love the fact that he's like, notice of how it shows up in the body and it's unpleasant.

Well,

Cathy: that's what I wanted to focus on. So I, something that is frustrating to me because it's the truth and because I struggle talking about it with people, is

that when you are sad, Or you are, and again, anxiety can have different levels as can sadness. And we could

Todd: talk about, we, you could insert sadness, anger, frustration with an, it doesn't matter

Cathy: what we're talking about.

Right. Well, and we try not to ever say negative emotions because that's not true. All emotions have purpose, but the emotions that are harder to feel you know, the ones in our bodies that kind of make us go hook, you know, like, this is not comfortable. When people tell me, they'll be like, yeah, I was really sad, but I took a deep breath and I moved through it.

I'm like, well then I don't think you were sad. You were maybe had a moment of, I'm not saying they weren't sad, that's not fair. But sad hurts and anxiety is uncomfortable. And the, when you're in the midst of it, There's not a lot of higher thinking going on in the midst of it. Now you can have a good practice of, now that I'm feeling this way, I know I need to take a walk, or I know I need to sit, or I know I need to have a big drink of water.

Like, I'm not saying your brain shuts down, but I think we try and breeze through these things that are just literally uncomfortable. Like, you know, we were just talking about Cameron leaving and I was not. Well, I also knew that it was, it made sense why I was not, well, I wasn't nervous, like, you know, and I also have struggled you know, historically I've had depression.

Depression, and I've had anxiety that felt unfounded. And that can be even more difficult 'cause you're like, I don't know what to connect this to. But in this situation I understood. But it's not like I was like, yes. And then there was some, you know, a beautiful moment, like it sucked. And it took like talking to her one day where I was like, oh, I feel like she's.

There's some stability where I was able to take a breath and I'm still feeling that way. It's just not as heavy.

Todd: Well, when we were on the car ride home after we dropped off our kid at school, I was comatose. You were you were crying a lot, right? Right. So you were feeling those uncomfortable feelings.

Cathy: Yes. And I don't know, milli, are you a crier? We cried a lot during milk together, but I don't, oh,

Milli: I just looked right there. I can't see. I know, that's, I literally just went back to that conference. I know. I cried a lot. I'm not a crier maybe quite as much as you Yeah. But I definitely can be set off fairly easily

Cathy: and like there's different cries because like there is, so what I just said to Milli is about four conferences ago, we had a singer songwriter named Milk which people may know her now, she's become a lot more famous.

Come to our conference and sing, and I think the whole room. Was sobbing because it was so of the time and so poignant and so personal, and somehow we were all her story, even though her story was so unique. And she sings this song, I Can't Keep Quiet. And we have a sign in our podcast room that says, I can't keep quiet that Milli is facing.

Still a little click there.

She's amazing.

Todd: Out of all the amazing people we've had at the conference, hers was by far the most

Cathy: impactful, surprising like I, I knew she'd be great. I had seen her at a conference before, which is how I met her. So I knew she was gonna like, but I was like, geez, like, I'm getting goosebumps right now.

Todd: I mean, I mean, yeah. What was your experience of milk when she told her story?

Milli: I related to her story just personally as a Chinese American. I, we literally had very similar experiences. I mean, not some of the traumatic maybe experiences that she had, but, so there was that, you know, I related to her on that front.

But her music, I mean, I knew that I can keep quiet piece, but when she sang some of the other ones, there was one, I remember it had to, she was, she wrote about her dad. I think it was, right. And how you did the best that you could. That you knew how kind of thing. I lost it

I'm getting teary eyed just thinking about it because

Cathy: I think it was called Black Sheep. Was it called Black Sheep? You,

Milli: I don't remember what it's called. Neither. I just remember that lyric of how they, they are parents. We right now just do the best that we can and that we know how and so I think when I look back at how my parents parented me, I have to have compassion.

Yes. And if we have the awa awareness, we can take the good that we want to take from what they taught us, and then the things that we didn't care so much for, we can set it aside. And sometimes it comes out still. 'cause it's part of me already. And I have to be, again, be self-aware enough to know that, okay wait.

You don't wanna do that to your kids. And because you remember, don't you, Milli, you know how you felt when you were parented that way. Okay. But again, the compassion, like we're all doing the best that we can yeah. And that we know how.

Todd: So step one what Thank you for sharing by the way, Milli.

Step one was to name it step two. We're about to listen to. So that's the first thing. And already you start to step halfway back from it as the witness. So that already begins to liberate you a little bit. And then the next thing is you can also say, Thank you for trying to protect me. Because if you fight against the anxiety, what that is more anxiety.

Oh my God, I got a rid, I hate it. Whatever. But instead, it's almost like you take a little bow, okay, Mara, I see you. Thank you for trying to protect me. 'cause that's what it's trying to do. And you remember that statement from Mark Twain where he said, my life has been filled with terrible misfortunes, most of which never happened, right?

So these are the stories you met, sort of the advanced stories. Say, thank you Mara. I see you. Thanks for trying to protect me. How many of us say thank you for the anxiety? I don't know. I certainly don't. But I think it's a, an important step to. Work through the anxiety. I think it's so important.

Like, think about it. It's so paradoxical. Why would you thank this uncomfortable feeling in my body? But that's the only way to move through it, I think.

Cathy: Well, you know, remember when we used to talk many years ago about emotional vomit. You know? Yes. I used to, you know, because that was so it, for me, it really captured not only for our kids when they're and again, for anybody who's new to listening, emotional vomit is just basically when you

have all these emotions and they come out in a strong way, if it means that you like, have a big cry, or if it's that you get really angry, whatever, you're just releasing.

Because if you see emotions as energy and they're moving through your body, they have to go somewhere. So I have a really good, you know, as a body, emotions as a body work experience really help me because the reason why anxiety and sadness are so uncomfortable for me is I know I'm gonna have to throw up. And that I don't look forward to it. Just like people don't look forward to throwing up. It's uncomfortable. You're choked you're out of control and nobody looks forward to that. Like, so when I, you know, I just remember. A couple nights before my mom passed away, I remember being like, okay, you know, my mom was not in good shape at the end.

So there is a sense of relief for her. There's relief and there is, you know, a moving forward and everything. But what I couldn't, why I couldn't sleep is I'm like the amount of emotional, like there's so many layers I have to go through now, you know, so much emotional vomit. And we don't get to control grief.

We don't get to control anxiety. No. It comes up when it comes up.

Todd: So, and that's a problem. We start to try to

Cathy: control it. But when it comes up, sometimes we're not in a space to have that experience of letting it out. And we have to contain it for the moment, which can make it uncomfortable.

Sometimes it surprises us. And then Todd, I think you would say you get anxious when you don't get anxious.

Todd: Yeah. Something's supposed to be happening and it's not happening. I'm supposed to be, I try to control my emotions. Like I'm supposed to be sad right now. I'm supposed to be angry right now.

I'm supposed to be joyful right now so you get anxious. So then I get jacked up about not having feelings, which is a feeling.

Cathy: What's your thing? Or things, Milli, what's the thing that makes you most anxious? Can you tap into that? It with a word or an experience?

Milli: The thing that makes me most anxious, my, probably like you Todd, my inability to control something.

Todd: And of course it usually has to do with my kids right. Lack of control. Lack of control that

Cathy: makes sense. As so, and you know what? I think so just to kind of put our stories together, the thing I was talking about frontline of defense as a mom and dropping Cameron off at school and even, and I'm sending, I'm, I haven't even grieved my older daughter's going to Italy on Saturday.

I'm like taking grief one step at a time here. I have someone else to say goodbye to. And I think that I. That is what I'm experiencing is I can't control all this anymore and I gotta watch them and I visualize myself with you, you know, the balance beam thing you know, we always talk about this balance beam idea that when our kids are little, they're on a balance beam, we hold their hand, but then as they get older, we have to back up and let them be unbalanced

Todd: And fall.

And this week and last week, we've had to take multiple steps backwards.

Cathy: I'm almost in a different room. Yeah, you're in a different room. But I'm still trying to watch them Yeah. On the balance room because I don't want them to ever think support isn't available.

Todd: And even though you've shared with them a bazillion times, support is available,

Cathy: as my therapist would say, Cathy, do they come to you and they're struggling?

Yes. Okay

Todd: so like, let's check that off the list. Like check. The but is you're trying to tell your cellular memory, your nervous system to do something that's hard. Correct.

Milli: That's your automatic response.

Cathy: Exactly. It's auto. So, and did you, Milli, when you struggled as a kid, did you tell your parents Oh no.

See, neither did I. No way. So we're also working off of I didn't, yeah. And I was alone. And again, this is all very you know, Milli and I love our parents. It's

not about, they weren't there for us. It's about we didn't have that kind of, it was a different time. So then when I'm watching one of my girls struggle, it's, I'm running it through my system.

And I'm thinking they probably feel alone right now. Right? They probably feel like there's no, but that's my system. You know, I did things a different way with them. Where they feel, and they don't just go to me, they go to my best friend, they go to my sister, they go to you, they go to my aunt.

Like they have multiple outlets. But it's hard to feel that. I only feel myself.

Todd: Yeah. Well, and then that's probably, you're in your, not to go too deep, but that's your inner child somewhere, right? Correct you ready for step three?

Cathy: Well, first did, Milli, did you have anything else to say about step two?

Because you, I see you write things down.

Milli: Well, no, it's organized. It's very, but I like, I love that. Thank you for trying to protect me. Well that is acknowledgement right there, but also to, I mean, that's in a way, gratitude kind of spinning it in a way that how do I want how was I trying to say this?

That there is a role that you're acknowledging that there is a role for the, that anxiety to be happening to you right now. And it is a positive role. Right? Because it's trying to protect you so you just sort of spin it spun this negative feeling. It just reframes it into, it reframes it to sort of something positive.

So,

Todd: all right. That's how soft step three. Then the next thing is to know that there's something called the wisdom of insecurity, that it's actually okay to be insecure. My monastic teachers would say, it's uncertain, isn't it? We could ask them all kinds of things. Tell me about enlightenment. My teacher would laugh.

He said, it's uncertain, isn't it? He wanted us just to get comfortable with uncertainty. That's, and then what happens is when you realize that you can't know that you come back into the present moment. All right, so he talks about the wisdom of insecurity. What I got out of that section was just an acceptance of you talk about control.

Milli, an acceptance that this is something that I'm experiencing right now and that it's okay that I'm experiencing it. That's how I, that's what I got out of

it.

Cathy: Well, and that our control, when we want to control, we believe that we can make things certain. We don't have that power. I mean, I always forget the subtitle in my book.

Caring. Caring for Ourselves and our Children in an unpredictable world. So I use the word unpredictable, not uncertain but they're somewhat synonymous in that you, I was really at the heart of that book during c writing it. I mean, so that makes sense. Talk about uncertainty.

Unpredictable yeah. And the truth is everything is uncertain. You can put every, you can have the best laid plan and be so organized and have everything color coded and do everything. And there is no guarantee, no that it will end up a certain way. And you can also drop the ball in a million ways and things might go linear.

And according to plans. So, but that's super uncomfortable, I think, for everybody but it's also so heightened in parenting because I bet Milli, in the workforce you had, you were very organized. Oh,

Milli: extremely. And I still remember. The best piece of advice that a girlfriend who was a parent, you know, gave me when I became a parent or before I became a parent, was, you need to learn to be flexible.

Understand and let go of that control yeah.

Cathy: So you knew going in that you were gonna have that to contend with. To contend with you hadn't felt it yet. No. She

Milli: knew, right. No, but I was given that, that wisdom.

Todd: Yeah, your brain knew. But it's one thing for the brain to know. It's nothing to be able to do what the brain knows

Cathy: are you a one on the Enneagram?

Milli: You know, I'm a one wing, two, one wing. Yeah, that makes sense. That's what I've tested to be.

Cathy: Yeah so for people who don't know Enneagram A one, it, sometimes they call the perfectionist, but I don't really like that word. How would you describe a one?

Just there's an organization to it.

Milli: Well, unfortunately I do use the perfectionist. I don't like to label it that anymore. I say I have a perfectionistic tendency.

Cathy: Got it. I like it. I like it.

Todd: Well, and then to bring it back to Jack Kornfield, the per the what's the word you just used is the perfectionist perfectionism.

That's a part of you, right? So we could talk about anxiety or we could talk about your need to be perfect, but you should probably be thanking that one for wanting to be perfect. 'Cause it's trying to protect you. Like we can use this in any version of ourselves that shows up, I think.

Milli: Interesting you say that because I have now learned, say just with the topic of perfectionism, there's perfectionism that gets you going, that helps you.

And then maladaptive perfection, right?

Todd: Oh, yes, for sure. All of these can be maladaptive, right? Right, right. So, Yeah

Cathy: and Milli, I mean, again, I don't know, you know, we've known each other a long time, but I know just a little about your history. There was probably an expectation, not necessarily for you to be perfect, but to achieve, right?

Oh, yeah. Oh, sure. So, so there was a, you know, the perfectionism is also about, for many of us, like, I have to be this thing, or whatever that is. It could be grades, it could be, you know, a sport, it could be whatever. Because that's what keeps me safe, because that's what keeps me loved. So the perfection that often is coming up in adulthood was "helpful" to us.

I'm putting this in air quotes. It could have been, it could have been difficult for us as a kid, but we felt it was helping us. Because it, we felt like it was helping us get love. But then we're using it in adulthood maybe to get love and it doesn't work anymore.

Todd: Well, and I have my example of that. My parents used to fight, as I've shared on this podcast a million times, argue, and I used to get really scared. It was really uncomfortable. So the only way for me to deal with it as an eight year old boy was to shut down. To not emote. Now I'm 51 and there's plenty of opportunities for me to emote, yet I'm still behaving as if I open up, I will die.

Like I couldn't handle it when I was eight years old. So there's still this boy in me that's being stoic, being non-emotional because he thinks he'll die. So that one is like the eight year old boy is scared and is driving the bus when in fact there's this 51 year old version of myself that knows that I'm completely safe to emote in front of my wife, my daughters to be angry, to be sad, to be afraid, and I have a hard time even though I know it.

I have a hard time experiencing it.

Cathy: Well, just a slight tangent. From that for about you is we were having, 'cause I was having so much emoting for the last couple weeks, and Todd, you weren't frustrated with me about the emoting, but some of the things I was saying and he was like, no, you know, I'm here.

But then when he would give me I wasn't really advice but support. I, a few times said, that's not helpful to me. And then his mentality is, well, if you're not gonna, if this doesn't help you, then I'm gonna stop talking. I'm just gonna shut down. And I'm like, well, my, my comeback to my comeback, it sounds like we're like, but what I said to him is, it's okay that what you just said didn't help me.

But instead of shutting down, maybe be curious about why it didn't help. Like say, oh, that didn't help. So was it the words, was it the, did it make you feel more stressed? Like you know, what would be helpful right now?

Todd: So what happens to me in that moment? 'cause I remember exactly where we were. We were up in the bedroom I said something, it didn't land well you're like, well, that doesn't land. Well, I shut down, if I'm being honest. What happens to me in that moment? My scared animal shows up. Right? Like, I just get really scared. So when I get scared, I shut down. And your invitation, which is a good one and something that I wanna keep working on, is like, instead of getting scared and shutting down, Todd, get curious.

Why don't you lean in and get more curious about, okay, let's talk about what I, how what I just said didn't land well and how it landed with you. But instead I'm like, I'm out.

Cathy: Or shift the version. The big shift was instead of thinking about, what can I say? That, so I didn't say the right thing.

Well, what's another thing I could say? What's another thing I could say? My thing is shift away from what you wanna say. Shift toward what do I need to hear? So you're becoming curious about me. I think, and again, looking at Milli, I think women are really good at this. I think women are constantly, and again, I'm being very general.

I think men can be good at this as well, but I think we're always investigating, oh, I said something, it didn't land what happened there? Or Oh. Or we sometimes text later and say, oh, I didn't let you talk enough, did I? You know, we're constantly noticing what the other person is experiencing generally.

And I think sometimes you were like, but yeah, what can I say that is helpful versus what did she, it's like this very subtle shift.

Todd: It's a little weird though, because I honestly thought what I was saying was something that you needed to hear. Now it was the opposite of what you needed to hear, but I wasn't thinking, what do I need to say here?

I honestly was trying to say things that would help you. Oh, of course. Right?

Cathy: Yeah. You always do.

Todd: You're a good you're good. Like I'm not usually not saying things to harm, but I just, I can't. I don't know. I have chosen not to take that next step and lean in the way you asked. And that's something I want to do.

Cathy: Well, and one more thing sorry. Milli said we're having this side commentary here. This is remember when you were saying, when we sit around at a table of the girl, our family, the five of us? And sometimes Todd can't get a word in because we're very talkie.

And we're like, yes, and this. And Todd's like, I always wanna make a point and I can't 'cause there's no space. So I said, instead of feeling the need to make a point, Ask a question about what someone just said. So we don't need any more input from you in that moment. And if you really notice the conversation we're having, we're not necessarily bringing in new information.

J c will say, you know, and then I went to this place, and I'll say, what was it like? And then she'll say, blah, blah, blah. I'm like, what did it feel like? Like

I'm still curious about the things she brought in. I'm not bringing in anything new to the

Todd: conversation, but sweetie, but then I'm depriving you guys of all my wisdom.

Okay. All right. We ready for step four? Okay. Step four side combo. And then the next thing to do with anxiety is ground your senses. Feel your feet on the floor or maybe go out in nature. Stand there with a tree. Feel the roots of the tree. And imagine your own feet as roots into the earth. Notice the wind comes and the storms and all those things happen, but the tree is rooted and it can stay there, and you can be the same.

You can let the storms of thoughts and fears and so forth arise. So that's another practice you can do. How many of us do something like that? When we're being paralyzed with anxiety? I don't, I mean, I usually don't. I don't either.

Milli: It seems

Todd: so, I think it's super, and if I can discipline myself to do that, I think it would be so helpful.

But when I'm in it, I can't. Reme, my brain shuts down. I'm in the back, the reptilian brain.

Cathy: So what do you do?

Milli: I'm looking at, oh, I'm I'm with you. I know intellectually that's what I should do just ground. I could, I don't have to even go outside necessarily just to. Pause and be present and ground, but I don't, I just I try to get through and survive. That moment and then later on I might, you know, re remember to go and ground

Cathy: I think it's a big I think like I'm hearing him and he's Jack Kornfield, so I believe him that he does that. I'm not questioning, but that's something that I would hear a coach say to someone, and I would be like, do you do that?

Yeah I know it's a hard, as it sounds, so teachy, it sounds so, like, it sounds, it's like when someone's like, you're really upset, take a deep breath and you'll feel better. You, it's true, but it's a big ask and I feel like it becomes, so what I will say, I think if we can get. A piece of that, like something that I do, and again, I think this is about me having an understanding of the energy that's moving

through my body when I'm sad or anxious is that I may not go ground and do the whole yogic thing and become a tree, but I do go outside.

And I do. So like even Yeah. As Todd will, and I'm

Todd: sure Jack would say, yeah, that's, you're doing that. Like, do,

Cathy: or I'd roll down the window, like if someone sneezes in our car, I roll down the window because I feel like there's an energy that needs to move. Someone just released something big and I don't want it in the car.

Now everybody thinks I'm nutty. Or they're like, look, mom's gonna roll down the window, but the girls do it without me

Todd: now too I'm done thinking you're nutty because we've been doing this a long

Cathy: time, but doesn't that make sense? Like if someone sneezes in the car, Don't you wanna release that?

I mean, I'm looking at milli, I'm making, I'm putting down Do you roll down the

Milli: window? I have not done that yet, but I just might start doing it. But I will if someone, I mean, especially now in the day of Covid, but if someone releases anything, right. I do notice and I'm. I do shift myself. Literally. I, so I don't know.

Cathy: We become more conscious of that, right? We're very conscious of it we are like, did you wash your hands? And you know, people aren't wearing masks like they did, but there is a sense of coughing and sneezing has a different component. I've always viewed it as obviously germs.

That's the basic scientific level. But I also view it as being energetic. It's emotion. It's like something you're letting go of. And I don't really wanna absorb that back in.

Todd: Well, what I'm realizing as I, 'cause I listen to this podcast, I'm like, this is really good. And the reason I think I like it is because the way I like to learn is step by step. And the way you like to learn is like, I like bullet points. Cathy likes paragraphs. That's the best way I can describe it. So this is like a framework and I'm just like realizing as Jack is sharing his version of wisdom

with us. Part of me is like, I wanna write this on a Post-it note and next time I'm feeling anxious to do all these step-by-step things.

And I don't think you would ever do anything like that. Right sweetie? Like write it down on a Post-it note so that you could remember how to do it.

Cathy: It would be next to 80 other post-it notes about how to do it. It's an integration of a lot of different things. So no I don't go, I'm gonna do this.

I'm gonna do this. That's too schooly for me. I would be, I'd feel like I'm following someone else's pattern but I would put it in the back of my mind, like, Ooh. Like there's sometimes things I've heard that have soothed me so much in a moment that, you know, like I'll be really feel like the one thing that really soothed me, and I have it everywhere, it's from years ago, but is about fear being like, Part of your darkness that you are so grateful for and that you wanna hug and get to know it.

And we can say that about anxiety too, Mara. That's kind of the whole point. But there was something, I have pictures in this office up in my room and in my, the other office where Smokey is that, say that with little, like with a person hugging their fear like a, because this gonna sound so stupid, but fear scares me.

Do you know what I mean? I don't like to be afraid. And that's kind of my childhood is like, I felt like I was, maybe everybody did. Like, I don't wanna be too unique here in that I was afraid a lot.

Todd: Let me write this down. Fear makes you feel fear is scary. That's what we're gonna title this podcast.

Cathy: It's, and so then when you see like a little creeper. You know, in my mind of like, fear, but then you're like, okay, you're actually part of me and you're trying to help me. It decreases the

Todd: scary. Well, we're gonna talk about the parts in a second, and the parts, the perfectionist, the fear, the anxious one.

'cause I'm gonna pull another thing in here in a second. Okay. Milli, anything before I move on to the next one? Are you

Milli: No, but I am a note

Todd: oh, you're worse than I am. I know you well enough to know that you take more notes than I do.

Cathy: Just say she's doing so much work over here and I wanna be like, what would you just write down?

I'm,

Milli: no, I'm writing down what you say so that I can just be reminded of what Jack Kornfield said. Okay. No, I'm a note. If I was given a well, inspiration in whatever form, whether it's this or anything else I would write it down so that, to get somewhere

Todd: You have one big word document where you have all your lessons of life somewhere, or is it scattered?

Milli: I do have a couple of notes inside my phone Yes. That I add quotes to. And just learnings, from podcasts or whatever that I like to keep together.

Todd: Visit from time to time okay. Step five, here we go. Then you can question your thoughts, and this is more the beautifully spelled out by Byron Katie, for example, who has these practices of questioning your thought says, what if that thought isn't true? How can you know that thought is true? And if you look deeply, you can't know it, and you get to a place of realizing that. Your thoughts are tentative. They're a creation, and you say, thank you for trying to protect me. And again, you become the witness of those thoughts, sweetie, anything?

Cathy: Yeah I would say that one, I not only, you know, we, as you said, we talk about these things all the time. The thing I appreciate about that one is sometimes when I find myself going down a rabbit hole of thought where I think about something and then I'm like, and then this will mean this and this will mean this, and then I'll have to do this.

And all of a sudden I'm like, in this huge you can view it either as a tornado going up or as a rabbit hole going down. Either way it's not great that I actually have a much better practice of saying, I can scrap this whole thing 'cause I just made it all up like instead of them being anxious about that, I really am like, or none of that's happening at all.

And I can just put it aside. I'm not saying the whole anxiety goes away, but I think the ability, I think a big part of self-awareness. Is noticing when you're

reeling. That really just being like, how did I get to this thought? And recognizing that the first thought you had may have been based on something real.

Maybe you saw something, read something, your kid said something. It may have been based on it, but you really don't know and you've created a whole story. And I think the ability to say, I'm gonna scrap this whole story and you know, where I practice that the most. And I will be honest, I haven't meditated in probably six days, seven days, because it was too hard before Cameron was going.

'cause I was like, I'm already way focused, that when I would sit down, I would just cry. And I'm like, this isn't helping. But normally if I sit in meditation, that's where I notice

Thoughts, thoughts, thoughts, thoughts, thoughts. And I'm like, I, because I'm in meditation, I get to scrap this whole thing.

So you practice the ability to let go of that tornado then you try and take that into everyday life, which is a practice in itself. So I, that one, I think of everything you've said is the one that, to me, is really possible for all us beings.

Todd: Got it. So you like step five? I do.

Questioning your thoughts. I do. Milli, anything on step five?

Milli: I'm just thinking throughout all these steps self-awareness, which is what you guys taught me, what is it, 11 years ago? That I that this whole path of self-awareness, I feel like that is a theme through awareness and self-awareness, but just being aware.

Is Half the battle. Absolutely so that, because I have said out loud, okay, I am, help me step away from the ledge. You know, like I know I'm getting there to the ledge, and so being aware that I'm there at the ledge is literally half the battle.

Todd: Well, one of my teachers who wrote a book called 15 Commitments to Conscious Leadership, he said, you could throw my whole book away.

And the only two things you need to know is awareness. And acceptance. So if you can be aware of what is, and then accept yourself for whatever shows up,

anxiety, fear, sadness, and accept that there's no sense, there's no possibility of transformation without acceptance.

Cathy: Well, and to Milli's point, just to like really hammer that point, any of this work that we talk about, It's not possible unless you notice yourself. It's why that work of even pain, like, you know, this can start with body work. Like do you notice your hand tingling? Do you notice yourself, like we can be so lost in our thoughts. We can be so cut off from our bodies that we really think that everything that we're thinking is exactly what's happening or.

You know, when we start to push it out where we're like, the only reason I'm feeling or experiencing anything is because of you or we make it about someone else or the circumstance. Versus the story I was just telling all of you about, you know, my daughter, when, you know, if I'm worried about her not telling me something, I'm stressed because of my history. It's not because of her.

Todd: And it requires curiosity, self-reflection, yet to even notice this, to even notice that this is not about my kid. This is about me when I was 10.

Cathy: And my clients will always say, but could it be about your kid? Well, sure, but not to the level of terror that I'm feeling the terror in my body is my history.

Right. So you get a stimulus.

Todd: Yes. And the stimulus is we're dropping our kid off at college. Correct. But if the reaction is 10 times what the stimulus is, that's when there's an opportunity to be like, oh, this might not just be about this

Cathy: thing.

What is our AA thing? History is,

Todd: Your issues are in your tissues.

That one that,

Cathy: but there was another one that I always said, Shane is listening right now. Going, Cathy, it's this, you know which one I'm talking about. Torical. Hysterical is historical. Historic. Hysterical. Hysterical is historical so like when, and we're not calling women hysterical. This is any human being when you feel like you are up to 11.

It can be triggered by the event in front of you, but the experience you're having is coming from an experience. It's something in you where you are now re-experiencing something from your history. And that is, and that goes on and on. Like I have thought a million times I have tackled that.

I have dealt with that. And then another thing comes up and my body still, it has the same system where my first reaction is my history. And that the work of even just noticing that to Milli's point is. I would even give it 75% of the, if we're gonna call it a battle, because if you don't notice it at all, then people are like, what are you talking about?

Todd: Sweetie, did you say if they go up to 11? Oh yeah. All the way up. You're on 10 on your guitar. Where can you go from there? Where can you go? Where?

Milli: I don't know.

Cathy: Nowhere. Exactly. What we

Milli: do is if we need that

Cathy: extra push over the cliff, you know what we do? Put it up to a line 11. Exactly. One

Todd: louder. Why don't you just make 10 louder and make 10 be the top number and make that a little louder.

Milli: These go to 11.

Todd: So that's all right, final step. You ready? Ready. Step six. Then a few more very simple things that you can do. You can find where you feel the anxiety most strongly in your body, and once you feel it, you can feel into its elements. Is it hot or cold? Is it hard or soft? Is it vibrating the earth, air, fire, so you really get close into it?

You can ask it what stories it tells, 'cause it'll have a story. And then you say, again, not only thank you for trying to protect me, but you wrap it with kindness, with loving awareness and say, thank you. I know you're worried. I can respect you and hold you with kindness and compassion, and you know that's not who you are.

This is a part, it's something, it's common for human beings. You say, I respect this, and who I am is honoring you and so much bigger than who you are. And

you feel yourself literally being both the witness, the grounded one, the I know you Ma. I see you Mara, and you become more the Buddha, rather the one who's caught by all these things.

Cathy: Yeah I historically, you know, I love body work or somatic, you know, understanding when it comes to feelings. And I used to, when the kids were really little, everything was in my sternum. Remember Todd, I used to feel like so much pain in my sternum it was pain like you couldn't touch it.

And that was usually grief coming out. Who knows? I don't wanna act like I really understand everything. All I know is where I can feel. The pain now, interestingly, the grief that I've been experiencing the last couple weeks is my back. It's my shoulders. So that's kind of new for me. 'Cause I tend to be a gut chest person. Like, it's either in my stomach or my heart. So the back has been new for me. And I don't question it. It's just that's where I'm feeling my, where do you get your, do you, where do you feel in your body, your fear or whatever.

Milli: Probably in my shoulders and

Todd: chest. And I'll pivot from fear over to sadness, which is one that I've judged myself quite a bit as not having access to. And I was, I feel very blessed to say that I experienced sadness through tears a few days before we dropped off camera. So it didn't happen when we left her in Iowa City. Instead it happened three or four days beforehand and I felt it in my throat.

It started there and then went up to my face, and then I just started. Not wailing, but really having a nice good cry. And it felt so like when it was happening, I was so happy.

Cathy: So, but I wanna like, and I totally hear you. I don't wanna like,

Todd: are you about to criticize my

Cathy: crying, sweetie?

I'm like, but did you do it this way? No, I think it's beautiful that you were crying, but sometimes this is what I was talking about where you're like, it felt so good. It did. Okay. See, I don't feel good.

Todd: It's 'cause you do it all the freaking time. I'm envious of you because you have this openness about you.

So the, you know, like if I'm walking through the desert and I'm looking for water and then no water on day one, no water on day 10, no water on day 50, and then on day 60 there's some water. I'm happy. The same way I've cried, what, once a year in the last few years I've used to judge myself a lot more critically, but I still do a little bit.

So when it was happening, I was like, was it. Was I joyful it didn't, I don't wanna say it hurt, but it's

Cathy: like you're talking about two different things. The mind is saying to you, I'm so glad Yes. That I'm crying right now. But it does and I get you. You're right. I cry all the time. And so the release, but I think I get frustrated about I was sad and it felt so good.

I'm like, no sad. Doesn't feel good. Didn't, you didn't, can later feel Yeah. It didn't

Todd: feel good from the place. It was happening in my throat and my tears that did, that felt uncomfortable. Like a vomit. It was a little bit of a vomit. There's another part of Yeah. My brain, my body. Something that was like, this is good.

This is purposeful.

Cathy: So Milli, if you cried in front of your kids, would they be like, what's going on? Or do they, what

Todd: type of frequency are you crier in front of the kids' mouth? I'm not, I don't,

Milli: you know, I, unfortunately, I feel like unfortunately I don't cry in front of my kids enough.

Todd: A nice judgment there seems self-judgment.

No,

Milli: just, I mean, because I. First of all, I wanted to say that I know, Todd, that you were just grateful that you were able to tap into Yeah. That part of you. And that's what you meant by feeling good. Really. No way. Did it feel good? Yeah but that you were just grateful for it. Right here. You want

Milli

Cathy: to be here all the time.

She's gonna be like Todd this is what you meant. Exactly.

Todd: Go ahead.

Milli: Because the times that I end up feeling sad or not just it, they end up not being times when they're around there have been times where my eyes tear up a little bit and I'm thinking of something and I will even say out loud, oh, I'm, you know, I'm thinking about your granddad.

And I'm, you know, I'm just feeling a little sad sometimes. You know, one kid, actually, my one son who is pretty empathetic, he will say, mom, are you. Are you sad or are you he might notice, you know, the wet eyes or something, but no, most of the time they don't, you know, my kids don't notice. So I don't know what, you were just wondering why if I'm able to do this in front of my kids or I would like

Cathy: to more Yeah.

And I don't even know if we need to be like, look kids, I'm crying like it's not a show.

Todd: I would, it's modeling, but you want your kids to do it.

Cathy: It is, but it also needs to be authentic to us. True. Like, if people were like, I need to cry and show my kids, I cry. No. Then you, the, there's much more of an honesty about, I, I struggle to cry or, you know, do you know kids, you know, some of, a lot of times when I cry, I don't do it around you.

And I know that it would be okay if I did. Like there's, there is no way we're supposed to do anything. I was just wondering if Milli was like a crier with her kids because of something that's happening with her kids. Or if it's more about you are struggling with it on your own, like, and you have your own cry and then they come back home from school or whatever. I

Milli: think the things that I end up getting emotional about, It, you know, it comes at a time that, you know, where I'm usually alone 'cause it's gotta be quiet right. And I'm reflecting so well, they're just usually not around.

Todd: So, well, and I'll say, yeah, there's no should sweetie, but if somebody is, I'll just make up an example, prohibiting themselves from crying in front of, I'll say a dad is, doesn't want to cry in front of his son because he thinks it's weak.

I would be like, that's probably not the best modeling.

Cathy: Let me say this though. You know how I'm gonna use the vomiting thing again. Do you guys like vomiting in front of people? I don't like, you know, sometimes someone's nice enough to hold back my hair, whatever. But it's kind of a private personal, like this feels a really outta control. Crying is the same thing. When we were at lunch one of our last lunches last week when it was all of us and, you know, And I didn't like that. It was one of our last lunches. 'cause I had been counting down all summer, being like, we have so many lunches, we have so many brunches, we have so many dinners.

So I didn't worry about it. And then all of a sudden we're literally on our last one and we were at first watch right. And I didn't have any plan to, but I started to cry. And it's not like crying is, it's not a movie, it's gross. You're like, Ugh. You know? And I did feel uncomfortable for everybody that I was having that reaction because everybody stops.

Right. It's like you just threw up at the table

Todd: it makes sense. Like everybody stops. So you're stopping the conversation from happening. Just so you know, I'm completely okay with you crying, whether it's in the kitchen or at a restaurant. But that doesn't mean the other four people that were at the table with this did.

And I doesn't mean I am. Because I think sometimes when we're like, Cathy, you cry all the time. I do. But it's sometimes like a commercial and I have tears and then we move on. A real grief cry. Oh, that's different. Is super uncomfortable. And you feel vulnerable. And and I'll even use these words that we should weak.

Cathy: Like I can't contain out of control. And you are just like showing your insights to everybody and then it's hard to bring it back because then everyone's like looking at, you know, it's why we don't. So Todd, I agree with you that we shouldn't feel. Embarrassed, but I, for the criers out there you know, there is a piece of, it's, there's a reason why we get uncomfortable.

Do you know what

Todd: I mean? I do. Sorry. Are you crying?

Cathy: Crying?

Todd: No. Crying in baseball. All right, so the last thing, and this might be, this might take your time. Excuse me. Poor Milli. She's choking on Cathy's speech about crying. I'm gonna vomit it. She's gonna emotionally vomit. This might be a preview for next week's podcast.

I also listened to an interview with Richard Schwartz.

Cathy: Richard Schwart. Gimme more information. IFS.

Milli: Oh yeah. IFS

Todd: And I feel like I, Internal Family Systems. I have not yet read his book, but I think it's gonna be the next book I read. I'm actually reading Outlive right now with Peter Attia. But he I think he wrote a whole book on Internal Family Systems. And the way I experience the little bit that I know about his teaching is that there's these parts of us that we've talked about, the anxious one, the perfectionist, the joyful one, the angry one, the critic and his whole teaching as far as I can tell so far, is that there's all these little parts of us and it doesn't encapsulate any of us.

And I just wanna play this clip that he shared, and I think it's would be kind of a good way to kinda encapsulate everything that we've talked about today. Great. All right. Bring this out

Cathy: because speaking of someone who's. Came very close to taking his own life. This is a very

Todd: big lens swap for, so just so, so Tim got coached or got, went through a process with Richard on Tim's podcast.

Okay. And he was really impacted by the line of questioning that Richard led him through and said, this is really powerful. Really good. So now Tim's just kind of follow, doing a follow-up question after his process, or someone

Cathy: who is suicidal or suffering from suicidal

Todd: ideation.

Cathy: So it really does help to know that all these things aren't you.

They're parts of you that often are just trying to protect. So for me, there aren't alcoholics, there aren't, you know, I'm against all these monolithic labels because yes, you've got a part that tries to protect you by getting you drunk all the time, but it's just a part of you and it's one of your firefighters.

And then, Most people don't realize that if they took away your drinking suicide is the next one on the list, the next one on the ladder, and that would be jumping in if not for the drinking. So then you gotta honor the drinking part for keeping you alive.

Todd: So I just love that clip because it's like, why would anybody be thankful if I'm an addict?

Why would I be thankful for my drinking? And what he's saying is maybe the drinking is protecting you from doing something even worse to yourself.

Cathy: Well, that's kind of, you know, when we talk about addiction, it really is a reframe in that every addiction that we have was coping. Coping. It was right.

It was defensive. It was a coping mechanism. And a lot of times when it's something we stuck with, it was working. And again, someone always say it's not working because the drinking was causing a problem with your relationships, or the drinking was causing you to get up late for work. But that's a lot better than suicidal ideation. In some, you know, or that's a lot better than dealing with the fact that I was abused. That's a lot better than dealing with the fact that my parent is berating me like we're talking about levels of being able to survive and so then when it's why. When, you know, when I talk to my social work students about addiction and rehab the thing I always say is rehab is just like a, that's a, there's a detoxing component and there's also tools that you're learning, but you haven't started until you get home.

Because that's when you have to incorporate it's one thing when you, it's the same thing as if we take it off addiction and we talk about being on an inpatient unit or a partial hospitalization. You're learning the tools, you're surrounded, but then you have to come home and integrate those. And sometimes we have, you know, connections where you go back and forth to the hospital so you, you don't have to do it too quickly. But you have to learn how to incorporate these things and they aren't, you know, it's funny, I'm, I was just telling Milli upstairs that I'm watching Painkiller which is on Netflix about opioids and you know, all these people who became addicted to opioids because their doctors gave it to

'em because this Purdue told the salespeople to say it wasn't addictive. I mean, it's just this long line of blame and these people who, they're addicted to these pills and everybody's like, get off 'em, get clean, get.

And it's like they, they can't. You know, there's a, there's this first, there's the level of using them and why it's for pain and then it's now my body can't survive without this, without it so we could say that with a lot of coping mechanisms, Todd, your body feels like it can't survive without shutting down.

Todd: Yeah. And that's why I need to instead of judge myself or ostracize the numb one or the stoic one, say to it that it's here to protect me. And he used in that clip, the term firefighter and I think what he means by firefighter, there are these parts of us, it's

Cathy: an IFS terminology

Todd: that come to.

Put out a fire. The problem is most of the time they come in a sideways fashion or not the best. It's not, it's usually not the best way to fight that

Cathy: fire. Well, there may not be a

Todd: fire, there may not even be a fire fight. It's just, it thinks there is it made up story. Yeah, exactly. So anyways yeah, and I just wanna keep exploring Richard Schwartz because I think that I really appreciate how he helps people.

I think it, it falls in line with how I wanna show up.

Cathy: I think IFS has been a very good, people have been pulling pieces from it forever. But I think just the understanding that we're parts Yes. Just that is it gives us, it's very similar to what. You know, when we talk about Buddhism or when we talk about mindfulness, is that this is just a thought.

This is not you. When we talk about emotional agility, you know, Susan David's work, this is just a feeling. You know, I am feeling sad. It's not I'm sad. I am sad like, it's trying to separate, remember that we are, and so then people say, well, what's the core of us? Where do we begin?

And here's the mystery, right? This is where it gets a little, you know, dicey, you know, like what is the essence of

Todd: us that Well, and I, that's what I was gonna use the word essence like we are, when we are born, we're essence, we're love, we're God, we're universe or whatever. And then we just start carrying these bags right?

Through our experience of being human. What? And what

Cathy: is that? What is love? No. Todd. What is love? Love. He's gonna play it. No, we know he is. So do you feel like I wanna have you talk, but do you feel like you can talk with your throat?

Milli: I think so. Okay no, I can't. I can't. Okay. No, the firefighter analogy I thought was, it was interesting, but actually I was taking notes throughout that.

I feel like a lot of these concepts come back to awareness, acceptance, curiosity. Curiosity and gratitude.

Todd: Absolutely it's great. It's a great roadmap for living boom and boom.

Cathy: And you know, the gratitude one, you know how we were saying before about, you know, in the moment we're, you know, we're grateful that sadness comes up or whatever comes up.

Gratitude is something you it's helpful to practice in the moment it, when you're having anxiety or whatever, and you can say, I am grateful for this, but I think gratitude can also be a hindsight practice that still strengthens it. It's kinda like a hindsight practice. Practice becomes like lifting weights for the next time that it occurs.

I'm saying this only because again, when I'm sad, I, it's very hard for me to be like, yeah, but I'm grateful, I'm sad. I feel like there's a little bit of a bypassing in the moment, whereas, let's be sad and just, have this out, have this vomit that's so uncomfortable. And then as you usually, especially after we have a good cry, we feel a little lighter.

And then being like, you know, that's when I can jump to, you know, grief is love like grief is, that's the love I feel for my daughter. I don't, you know, I miss her or, you know, you know, sadness is, or anger is my way of recognizing my boundaries have been crossed. All those things. But it's hard to some, I feel like gratitude is really helpful for me at night when I go through the day.

How do you use it?

Milli: No, but just like you said, I think it's after the fact. I think there's no way that in the moment that I am be, I'm grateful for the sad, for the fear for the whatever. So that's why I think I went in that order too, is like, first thing is you're aware Yes. Of that sadness, the fear, the anxiety, then you accept it. And then you get curious about why you were fearful or

Todd: Yeah, what are the, what does this emotion have to teach me? Yes.

Milli: And then in the end, you know, whatever it is that you know, that you're grateful that it showed up, whether it's there to protect you or It's there for you to, I don't discover something else about yourself.

Right. Or that relationship. And, but yes, definitely the gratitude comes to me. It comes later. You're, I'm not grateful for it

Todd: in the moment necessarily. Well, that's interesting. Like, the way I teach emotions, the model that I was taught, which is great. All these emotions, sadness, fear, anger, joy, let's say you gotta feel, you gotta notice them, you gotta feel them.

You gotta express them. But there is some wisdom on the other side of each of these emotions. And sadness. Something needs to be let go of fear means something needs to be known that is not known. Anger is, there's a boundary that's been crossed. Joy means something needs to be celebrated, like but we need to, I need to go through it and then get curious about what it's here to teach me.

Cathy: Well, and this is what, you know, every, you know, you all know I'm infatuated with talking about or reading about, or understanding cults or high control groups or even cliques and how, you know, human behavior and how we get involved.

And the reason why I am so interested, besides my own personal experience is one of the things they take from people is self-trust. Meaning that you're basically told this is your fault, or what you're feeling you shouldn't be feeling, or this, there's a gaslighting component. This can be true in an abusive relationship too.

So if you lose self-trust, those four things you just said are very difficult because you are like, well, I don't really have an awareness. Tell me what's happening. You know, you don't. That's, I had to work kind of back from that,

like, you know, being in experiences where I was depending on, you know, people.

To tell me, you know, this is what you're experiencing in body work. This is what you're feeling. This is what you can do. This happens with people who get way into astrology. I believe in astrology and the bigger picture of it. But if we're following a guide that somebody else is giving us, then these four things that Milli said, they're very hard to tap into.

'cause you don't, you're like, wait, am I feeling this? So what I find is when I. Listen to people's experiences who have come out of high control groups or have been very focused on a religious group or like I said, an abusive relationship. Their work is really to gain back that I trust what I'm feeling.

Because if you don't, then you can't. All of these things, you can't be grateful for it. 'cause then you don't even trust that what came up was a good thing for you there's such a core component there. No doubt. You know. So anyway, all,

Todd: so we are gonna close shop here. I wanna say thanks to Milli, she for joining us today.

I'm gonna give you a thank you guys. Boy, what a surprise. Thank you. Milli. I wanna,

Cathy: initially we were like, we'll bring you on for five minutes.

Todd: Yeah. We're just bringing you in for little thing. I want to thank Jeremy Graff. He's a baldhead of beauty. If you live in Chicago and you need any type of home improvement project painting, remodeling, give him a call.

6 3 0 9 5 6 1800. Don't forget about Team Zen. If you wanna see Milli on Team Zen, join Team Zen. That'd be our new tagline. Come meet Milli. Come meet Milli. 25 bucks a month. Cancel at any time. And as far as the title of this podcast, sweetie, it's either gonna be Six Steps to Lessen Anxiety or Fear is Scary. Fear is Scary. Quote a quote by Cathy Kasani. I know it's a deep one. And instead of our regular music taking us home, we're gonna let milk sing a little black sheep. Nice. So thank you, Milli. Oh, thank you guys. This was fun. We'll see you guys next week. Thank you.