



The Natural Healing Podcast

with Dr. Setareh & Salvador

Episode 54: Discover Emotional Freedom with LaDonna Silva, LMFT

Speaker1: [00:00:00] I'm really excited today because we're joined by a dear friend and colleague of ours, LaDonna Silva, and she is a licensed psychotherapist in the South Bay area of California, working in private practice with individuals, couples, families. And she also runs groups. Her specialties include working with trauma, grief, relationships and the LGBTQI+ community. Ladonna runs consultation groups, has taught at several local universities and loves teaching and presenting. She studied at the Process Therapy Institute for many years and trained in the internal family systems model. She's passionate about the healing process and supporting others in finding their internal freedom. And you really have a gift for that just through who you are, I think. Ladonna, we're really excited to have you here.

Speaker2: [00:00:58] Hi, LaDonna.

Speaker3: [00:01:00] Hello. Hello to you both. Thank you for having me.

Speaker1: [00:01:05] Thank you for joining.

Speaker2: [00:01:06] It's my pleasure.

Speaker1: [00:01:30] Welcome to the Natural Healing Podcast. The show designed to guide, inspire and empower you to elevate your health so you can achieve your goals and dreams. We are your hosts, Dr. Sattar and McAfee.

Speaker2: [00:01:44] In Salvador Cefalu.

Speaker1: [00:01:46] A husband and wife team of acupuncturists and owners of a Center for Natural Healing, an integrative wellness clinic based in the heart of Silicon Valley.

Speaker2: [00:01:55] We're here to make the ancient wisdom of healing practical and accessible for your modern lifestyle. The donor. We often like to start our interviews by asking our guests, how did they get started in the work that they're doing? Could you share a little bit about that?



Speaker3: [00:02:17] Absolutely. I met my first therapist when I was 20. After a family, secrecy of sexual abuse was revealed. And, I fell in love with her in the room, not not sexually, but in this kind of motherly love, because she held such a wide open space for me to explore so many parts of myself and experiences I was having with this big family secret that was out. And it clicked probably six months or a year into my therapy. I have to do what Marsha was doing right. This was so pivotal in healing and seeing how my whole world started opening. I found my voice. I liberated the secrecy that I had been holding in my body and in my life for many years of my childhood and young adult life. And she invited me to be angry, which really wasn't something I learned how to do in my own family system. It was all kind of suppressed. So my whole system just livened in that journey with her. And I was with her for many years and it just planted the seed. And then probably about ten years after that journey started, I ended up deciding now it's time to go back to school.

Speaker3: [00:03:51] So I ended up back in school to finish my bachelor's in psychology and then transferred into a master's program, which was really in line with what I decided I was at that time in my life really interested in. And that was more of a holistic studies model that was very experiential, that included somatic psychology, which was the body. And so much of my trauma was about also healing my body and my relationship to my body and all the ways my body heals held trauma for so many years. And then the master's program also had a component of transpersonal psychology, which to me was just the expansiveness from Freud to Jung and opening up so much wider the spiritual life and all that that brought to the therapeutic world. I just knew I was not going to be a cognitive listen and only think about things in a way of just telling our story or just thinking about our story and our cognition. But I wanted the inclusivity of the body and the higher powers, the spirits, the all the the beautiful aspects of us as complex human beings.

Speaker2: [00:05:02] And now as a therapist, is it allowed? Like, do you actually is there touching or you like probing the body to try to instigate release on a somatic level like them?



Speaker3: [00:05:15] Yeah, I wouldn't say probing because that would probably feel quite intrusive to most of my clients, especially those with trauma. What I might do, and certainly what I have over the years, is worked with ways that a client might say. I've got experience in my chest. I feel what we're exploring here in this part of me is really tight or squeezing me or pushing on me. And so there has been at times where I have put a pillow on that client's area, including perhaps their chest or wherever it be and pushed. Is this the sensation you feel just helping the client get in touch with their body and always with permission and always with the idea that in an experiential way. Where can we go with this work? And ironically, it's it's often such an interesting part of this somatic experience, and yet we don't often have much connection to it. I know the two of you know this because you work with the bodies. Right? But psychotherapists, in my opinion, can't exclude the bodies experience in the room, so. Oh, absolutely. Anyways, yeah, in many ways I will include the body and it's not always through touch, maybe the client's touch. Go ahead and put your hand there where you're noticing that experience right now and.

Speaker2: [00:06:43] You can have the client themselves make contact and.

Speaker3: [00:06:48] Or just follow it and focus in staying there with it, bringing presence and attention to it, and, and then seeing where it goes. It goes can go many places in many different directions.

Speaker1: [00:07:00] So I'm curious, LaDonna, when you were doing your own work at this very young age, dealing with this trauma and working with this very powerful therapist, it sounds like what was it about her work that intrigued you the most? What was it that kind of called you into that path?

Speaker3: [00:07:20] Her fearlessness. She was so brave in my in my young adult experience, she sometimes would be angry. And I was so afraid of anger at the time in my life and didn't really have a relationship with anger. So if for me, like getting silent and little was more likely how my system would respond to anger than than stepping into and experiencing actually very justified anger at the time that I knew I had, but I was so afraid of. So I think in her brave exploration with me, not really with any limits of where I could go, being so real and honest and authentic and our relationship, which



was just such a beautiful model. And then she invited me to bring people into my session. That was so terrifying to imagine I was going to have these real conversations. And yet she's like, Why don't you bring them in? We'll explore what that's like in the room. And so I wanted to learn as a young woman, after all this came out, my mom was really emotional and really never asked how I was doing and even wanted to really even know what happened. She just was so overwhelmed by her experience and all of her emotions. All she would do is cry.

Speaker3: [00:08:43] And I got that. That was my mom's way of process. But I was really missing her and her care. And what I told my therapist is I really want to learn how to sit with my mom. And let her tears be OC. So I don't have to do anything. I don't have to fix it. I just want to learn how to be with myself while I'm sitting next to her and while she's having all of her own feelings and experience. And so, I don't know, it's like 22 or 23, 20 maybe probably in my early twenties, somewhere in that range. And and so I brought my mom into therapy and she cried. She was perfect. She did exactly what she does or she did because she's no longer here. Well, in many ways she is, but not in this in her body. In this time, she cried on the couch. And I just had this real experience of what it was like to actually hold my own system, not getting what necessarily I needed, but how to actually give that self, that part of myself, the attention it needed while sitting with my mother next to me. Right. It was a huge growth, huge opportunity for me.

Speaker2: [00:10:01] Your therapist really seemed to be a powerful person in terms of holding space.

Speaker3: [00:10:06] She did. And she did it. So, yeah, she's still alive. Actually, she's in her eighties and. And I still have a relationship with her. Not, of course, in a therapeutic way. But I reached back out to her when I went back to school and said, guess what? Because of you, I'm following this and had a sweet had a sweet reunion with her. And so we stay in touch. She's in her late eighties now.

Speaker1: [00:10:33] And that point you made about being able to be with yourself when something is very turbulent around you, I mean, that just hits home for me personally and I'm sure many of our listeners, because we're often taught you have to take care of other people's emotions or you have to somehow manage somebody else



when they're reacting a certain way instead of, like you said, Salvador holding space and just letting them be who and how they want to be in that moment and not judging them, not feeling like you have to do anything to change them.

Speaker2: [00:11:06] Or be callous. You know, you don't want to just.

Speaker3: [00:11:09] Shut.

Speaker2: [00:11:09] It down.

Speaker3: [00:11:10] Yes, exactly. Well, I think it was the perfect training. My own therapy and my own journey in therapy was really the perfect training to do what I do today. Right. Is to hold hold myself in a way that no matter what shows up, how it shows up, who shows up, I can still hold myself present. Right. And it's really easy to lose ourselves in this work. It's really easy to lose our connection to holding space with an open hearted, loving neutrality and curiosity we can get just as invested as parents would, right? We could just get really caught up in. How are we going to help? What are you going to do? How are we going to fix? Are we somehow needing to fix or care? And care is part of it. But to not see that client's ability and resilience is a really big part of the therapeutic relationship. So I want to be able to hold that as I have learned how to do for myself. And that's not always easy, even today, 30 years later.

Speaker1: [00:12:13] Yeah, but learning that lesson with your mom at such a young age is so profound because obviously it's much more difficult with people that you're closest to. Doing the work clinically is a different level. You'll of course, have more challenges with certain clients than others. But being able to take mastery of that, I mean, your awareness at that age is just amazing to me to be able to develop that and see that and hold that space and then carry it for all the years that you've been working, because that is the space you hold. Just being in your presence, just so you know, you are like that, you are that. You do have that ability to just honor where people are and invite all the feelings in and at the same time be able to express all of your own feelings. So I think that's really a gift you've carried on.



Speaker3: [00:12:56] Yeah, thank you. Thank you. I think that's a big part of this continual life and cycle of just staying really open and honest with myself and tending to whatever is happening. And that's a practice that ebbs and flows. And life is difficult at times and and sometimes with much flow and ease. But writing that out really in an open hearted way, no matter what parts of me are activated or show up or grieve or, you know, that's a journey and that's a lifelong journey for all of us, I believe.

Speaker1: [00:13:32] Definitely.

Speaker2: [00:13:33] Well, you seem to be doing it rather gracefully, because my experience being around you always leaves me with a sense of ease and peace. And you just. You have a lovely presence.

Speaker1: [00:13:47] Yeah, a very open heart. You can definitely feel that all the time.

Speaker3: [00:13:51] Thank you. Thank you. You know, I. I want to share another part because I think this is what it speaks to when you just share that. So thank you. I appreciate that. And sometimes I think that's why clients sit on the couch and they go, wow, why am I so open? And I think it's nice that we can bring as therapists is exactly what I felt. Marcia brought in the room for me is just this tremendous open space with a lot of loving welcome or an acceptance.

Speaker2: [00:14:20] And there's not a sense of judgment. There's like an acceptance of the, you know, what's ugly and what's beautiful because it all is this is all these are all aspects of life. It's one is not better than the other. This is life.

Speaker3: [00:14:36] Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Big part of my voice today is having found my voice and speaking so honestly and and also really coming to a place also where I want to bring the loving acceptance you mentioned, even with those that have harmed me. Right. Because to me, that has brought peace and love to my own heart, that it can also honor the love I had for people that hurt me. Hurt me. Right. So you could still see my tenderness around that because. Yeah, because that's brought me a lot of peace. And I hate using words around what that's supposed to be or if that even is meant to happen for everybody. But I truly believe know some people like to call it



forgiveness. I just feel like it's part of healing and it's possible as part of our healing as we can actually come full circle to also appreciate the things, especially for people we've had traumas with that have been in our lives. How do we also appreciate the the things that I actually enjoyed with this individual, my life?

Speaker2: [00:15:50] Right. It's such a mixed bag. I mean, the wounds.

Speaker3: [00:15:53] Are.

Speaker2: [00:15:53] Confusing. It's almost like like you said, it's it's how we often feel towards our parents. Right? Often we have wounds from our parents. And yet there's this deep, loving connection. And sorting that out is often a lifetime ordeal.

Speaker3: [00:16:08] Yes.

Speaker1: [00:16:09] But that's why we talk about letting go, you know? But it's not about letting it all go. It's not about just forgetting everything. And it's about learning to just, like, extract the essence, the good parts, and then forgive or make peace with the parts that really damaged you and hurt you. Because obviously you don't want to spend your whole life carrying those wounds with you. So the work is to be able to live whole within yourself, despite all those things that have.

Speaker2: [00:16:37] The gifts that came with that, the wounds brought into your life.

Speaker1: [00:16:41] And yeah.

Speaker3: [00:16:42] Sometimes those are easier seen at different times in our healing stages, of course.

Speaker2: [00:16:47] Oh, for.

Speaker3: [00:16:47] Sure. And I think that people really can appreciate at times the ways we heal are so unique to us. Right. And I know there are some general ways we can lean into healing, but I do think much of our traumas are sometimes with parts of



traumas are certainly what happened to us, but it also matters what we did with it. So so sometimes those traumas are deeply held and beliefs we carry about ourselves or the criticism inside of ourselves that says we should have done something differently or we were too weak to speak up or we should have pushed back, or all the ways we harbor and the shame we harbor and carry under the pain that we don't really want anyone to see and don't imagine anyone else could relate or understand, right? So there's many parts of us that I think carry pain and traumas and unraveling those experiences inside is the gift of healing. And it's and I always see the resilience and the ability to do that. And sometimes systems are much more complex than others and it takes a lifetime. And sometimes people. I do believe it's possible, though, for everybody, including people that harmed others.

Speaker2: [00:18:13] So yeah, there's so many layers. You know, you have the social structure and the religious constructs that we have to work through. Absolutely, let alone our individual challenges to let go. But you're talking about the shame. You know, it's like we get so caught up in what others might think of us.

Speaker3: [00:18:33] Well, and for marginalized communities. Right. And living in a white supremacy culture right there, it's complicated and it's deep. And so there are many layers for many different identified individuals. And certainly the communities I work and I don't make assumptions. I know any of that until they sit with me and we explore together so that genuine curiosity is really not curious. Like I have to figure you out, but an open hearted curiosity, which I think is what you both sweetly named.

Speaker1: [00:19:12] Want to know the single most important thing you can do to strengthen your immune system? Improve your gut health. More and more studies demonstrate the important relationship between gut health and healthy immunity, as well as the ability to have consistent energy and mental clarity. Ahara Botanics is our personal line of products, including probiotics to support gut health, digestive enzymes to support digestion and nutrient absorption, and proteolytic enzymes to support healthy joint and muscle function, tissue recovery and circulation. Visit aharabotanics.com and use the promo code Healthy10 to get 10% off your first order now. That's aharabotanics.com wxith promo code healthy10.



This reminds me of this idea of emotions that socially are not accepted that we have to deal with in our lives. The same way that you're dealing with shame when you go through some sort of trauma. I think there are some emotions. And you touched on anger a little bit earlier when you were working with Marsha and how she kind of gave you permission to express anger. And can we talk a little bit about that or can you say about your experience of especially I want to get into I know we're going to be talking about grief quite a bit, but maybe we can touch on anger and then move into grief because I think those are two emotions that as humans and just working with clients and patients, I see people struggle with the most.

Speaker3: [00:20:47] Yes. Yes. So I think I'll use the example probably of the most difficult place I've ever had to sit with. My own was really towards my mother, right? It was always accessible with therapeutic help to access anger about what others had done, but to love my mother and also allow myself to be angry at her. I didn't need her in the room to do that work. I could actually explore that inside of myself and with my system. But I think that for me it was a really at a younger time in my life, it was she was in hospice and I just. Actually pre hospice. I just remember the unravelling of what it was like to see her struggle as my father died and she was in her eighties and really lost. And that need she had of me as a little girl and a young woman came out even stronger. And I just remember feeling like like a little lost in it sometimes. And I ended up feeling upset because it was so hard to hold her struggle and take care of myself at the same time. And so I really had to make friends with sometimes the frustration that would come up. But it was coming out in ways of irritation and impatience with her that I ended up feeling awful about, right? Because here she is at her most vulnerable time.

Speaker3: [00:22:23] And I ended up really mad at myself. Right. It didn't feel good to be mad at her for being so vulnerable. And part of me was mad like, you should have done your work, you know, like, why didn't you model what I'm doing in my life? And having done that, then maybe you would be less needing of all of us and you would actually have a better sense of what you're what you're going through or something. I just didn't want to feel that tug so strongly. And then guilt and responsibility for it is really what it carried in my heart. So I remember making friends with the part that was just so angry and getting to know that protector inside of me that just felt frustrated. And it was really just trying to protect me, right? From feeling responsible, from carrying guilt, from



feeling the powerlessness and all the things that that would kick up deep inside of me. And I was a really, really powerful work inside of myself so that I could find more loving patience for her in the moment. But what also got clear is I'd have to say sometimes in a very clear but direct way, Mom, I'm not available right now, but I'm happy to call one of my sisters to be there with you.

Speaker3: [00:23:43] But I was in my career and I didn't always have the ability to say, Oh, client in the waiting room. Sorry, I can't see you right now. My mother is in crisis, so I had to find ways to Mom's calling me sister. Can one of you pick up the phone or check in on her? So it was a way of asserting my own requests and needs and caring for my system to in caring also for my mother. So it felt like a more inclusive way of holding myself and caring for myself so that I didn't have to resent and that self care mattered so much. I think when we're not including ourselves in their formula of care, we resent and we end up irritated and frustrated with our partners, with people we love, people we care for. And I was probably the deepest experience around that that. That I had. So anger is a is a protection and valid and it's necessary and very real. Right. We have reasons at times to be very angry and my own general sense of my own request of my own system. Sometimes I have another part that holds me to that standard a little too much, which holds me back from saying anything is I want to do it in a way that I won't then harm myself after with criticism.

Speaker3: [00:25:15] So if I'm feeling angry, can I bring it in a way with language that stays still curious about what's happening? Willing to share what I'm experiencing and staying open to the response I get from another individual that I'm choosing to share it with. And I don't want to walk away from those experiences really mad at myself for saying something I don't feel good about. Right. So it's a dance, right? And to me, it's a dance I've chosen to learn. And I can't say that I always have the ability to speak it. Sometimes I'll walk away from something and feel the anger after. And wish I had access to that experience in the moment, so hoping I could have found words much sooner. It sometimes isn't as accessible and I'd like to think I'll continue growing. And that may shift someday or not. It's just I'll go back to it and I'll have to sometimes go back to something and say, you know, something I heard upset me and. Are you available to hearing it now? And there's a part of me that felt angry and I. I want to see.



Is that something we can talk about? So to me, it's an ongoing relationship with myself, with clients experiences of anger that we need. It's one of our many healthy emotions.

Speaker1: [00:26:33] Yes, exactly. And I love that you called it a healthy emotion, because I think there's so much around that that people don't really accept. And I often like to say that anger is fuel. And growing up, anger was a very unfamiliar emotion to me because it was. You know, part of the system that I grew up in there were I was not the loudest voice. And so it was easy for me to suppress that anger and not experience it. It just isn't one of the emotions that comes as naturally to me, and I've had to learn over time to be able to express it. And of course, when you first learn to express it, you don't find the most effective expressions. And that's something that you have to kind of work with and learn how to process. But that's why I think we have to learn to use it as fuel. It's like when this energy comes into your system in this way, how can you channel it in a way that can be constructive for you to be able to process and express it to even the person that you're angry toward, but at the same time use it as creative energy in some way to get it out of your your physical body just to kind of release it symbolically as well.

Speaker2: [00:27:44] I often think of fear as a way that we try to override feeling fear.

Speaker1: [00:27:51] You mean anger?

Speaker2: [00:27:52] Fear. The anger over.

Speaker1: [00:27:53] Fear.

Speaker2: [00:27:54] Underneath it is really a fear, a fear of something. And it's like a defensive posture that we could kind of like feel some strength within ourselves. But underneath that is that we feel vulnerable and insecure.

Speaker3: [00:28:09] Absolutely. And that makes a lot of sense, doesn't it? I don't think anger is always a protection. I think it's an experience. We often will have these surges of feeling like you're describing Satara and and Salvador actually that that there is an experience I'm having and I'm feeling a surge of anger. And can we how do we hold



that? Right. And sometimes in our culture, certain genders are it's more acceptable, right? That men are angry and women aren't really accepted to be angry. And if we are, then we have we name, call and identify women in a particular way. And yet it's so much more acceptable in some culture and male culture. So it's not always true, but in many cultures and I'm speaking really referencing ours in particular. So yes, it's an interesting relationship I think is always really what I come back to is what is our relationship to the emotions we have? And that very much speaks to how we also relate to grief. So. Yeah.

Speaker1: [00:29:19] I was going to say exactly that is that reminds me also of grief. Why do you feel through your experience that we suppress that or that we don't take time oftentimes? And I'm, of course, speaking generally, and I'm especially speaking of more modernized, fast paced worlds like ours. I know some cultures have a great honor of grief and especially, you know, the greatest grief, of course, comes through losing a loved one. And there is a great honor of that process. I know, like in my background, Iranian culture in the Muslim world, there is a lot of ritual that goes with grief. In many cultures they have that less so here in our society. I think people just kind of move on.

Speaker3: [00:30:09] Yeah. So I think working with trauma, I certainly also work with grief and clients that have faced oftentimes complicated circumstances of loss. There is grief under much of our work as therapists and in my own life and in so many clients lives as they come into my office. I think a couple of things that I want to point out that kind of respond to your inquiry. Loss. Loss of the innocence of a childhood. It's with trauma. So grief comes in. Loss of maybe an innocence to our sexuality or an innocence to safety. Loss of innocence. Loss of safety. Excuse me. So to me, the themes of grief often rumble around in much of much of the therapeutic work. When I think of grief and loss in a way with loved ones. You're right. Our culture does not know how to honor, how to slow down and be with and what we give like three days of bereavement sometimes. Companies are actually trying to offer more, which I really think is so necessary because that busyness we get in trying to plan services and ceremony and whatever it be that we do and all the things we have to manage, whether it be with the individual's property or belongings.

Speaker1: [00:31:38] That just doesn't even touch.



Speaker3: [00:31:40] That much busyness. Right. And the most difficult sorrow and struggle comes in the quiet after. And that's actually when we need ritual and when we need community, when we need the brave space to be with our systems and. We don't often know how to do that in our society and our culture, I think as a general sense. So how do we do that today? One is slowing down and much of the biggest resistance I hear to slowing down or the biggest kind of ways our systems tries to keep us from slowing down is usually because they're afraid they'll somehow our systems will fall into the grief or we'll get so lost in the tears, lost in the pain, flooded by the sorrow, not able to manage the heartache and the sorrow that we hold. So our systems do everything possible sometimes to avoid it, to keep us protected from getting to too close to it. Right.

Speaker2: [00:32:51] Some people are better at that than others. You know, you see some people that they're able to put this veil of like everything's normal, everything's fine. I happen to not be that way. It's just the opposite. When I'm falling apart, it's on the surface.

Speaker1: [00:33:09] And we also live in a capitalist society. The you need to be productive and grief when you're really in that. Yes, it's a value. Success comes from productivity and financial gain, etc., etc., etc. And when you're in a period of deep grief, how can you be productive? That's when you really need to slow down and internalize. And the social atmosphere doesn't hold space for that.

Speaker3: [00:33:37] Right? And to be with those experiences we're having is not often welcome. It's like if you've grieved almost as people describe it, it's like I feel like I have the plague or the disease or COVID. Now, new added words like all.

Speaker2: [00:33:52] Of us, what we.

Speaker3: [00:33:52] Person. Yeah, nobody knows what to do with me because I'm leaving and everybody kind of tiptoes around me. They don't know, do I say something? Do I not say something? But we're avoided when we're curious.

Speaker1: [00:34:08] Unless that's a very good point.



Speaker3: [00:34:10] Unless we're with others that are actually grieving, it's often like we don't know where we belong, where our people are. So grief groups are so powerful ritual around grief, so powerful those moments where we just make room and welcome grief. And so that's part of one thing I have practiced in my own life and invite clients to when they're grieving very intentional. So in my last big encounter with grief was in 2020 and I was on the go helping and doing a lot of things, rumbling around with the clinic. I was helping as a director and it really took the year anniversary of his death. This was one of my dear mentors and my second Marcia. I would say in many ways, mentor, dear friend and colleague. It really took his anniversary for me to actually slow down. And I had been slowing down and feeling it, but I had to set some very intentional time for grief. And this is what I'll invite clients to do as well is. Can I sit very intentionally for me in the mornings with a little bit of an altar? And it's like my grief time. Like, my sister knows this is what we're here to honor. And I would give myself a half an hour, 20 minutes, however long I had in the mornings, to intentionally give it its time.

Speaker2: [00:35:46] Yeah. Honor. Honor. It is nice word.

Speaker3: [00:35:48] Yeah. And sometimes it felt like I climbed up my stairs to my little sitting space with, like, £100 on my back, like, dreading the walk. Sometimes. Sometimes I would go. And, no, this was where I would feel connection. Sometimes I would feel like I had to crawl up the stairs. Felt like sometimes I'd have to stop in the kitchen, cry on my wife's shoulder before I could go upstairs. Right. But I never not went upstairs. And there's something about that honoring that was really pivotal. And I remember at six months, another party was in my business trying to like another part was like, it's been six months. Aren't we done? Come on, get out of this. No, we're not sitting up there anymore. You know, like it wanted my meditation and my time to be more open hearted and light hearted again. And I just kept saying, Hold it. When it shifts, I'll know it's. This grief has to be honored. I know you're worried about always staying here. And what we know enough about grief is it will get the time and attention and the space it needs to help us heal. And so that's what I do in my office, right. Is how do we make. Room and space.

Speaker1: [00:37:15] Doing ritual is so important for these situations. It's great to just designate the time and space for sure.



Speaker3: [00:37:24] A very important part.

Speaker2: [00:37:27] Last night we were watching a series called Tehran, and there was a part of this episode where there was a death. And these. So they're Muslim. And they gathered for the service and. The women were just wailing and said to us, Oh, yeah, this is this is what it's like. They just carry on like this for a long time.

Speaker1: [00:37:56] Yeah, part of them. I mean, I've been to one really Muslim. Funeral. And that was when we went to Iran many years ago. And my cousin, my father's cousin, unfortunately, suddenly died in a car accident. So the gift, which if I can call it that, of that experience and of that visit, was that it allowed me to fully experience a service like that in a setting that I wouldn't normally be in with because I'm not religious at all. My family's not religious, but my extended family, there's a lot of religion. And so I got to experience the very extreme form of this ritual and this this service that they put together where the men and women are separated. And the women I mean, there was a pretty accurate depiction in the show because, like Salvador said, they're like wailing and this grieving and this crying and this complete, like, vulnerable. Letting go is almost like it's an invited part of the ritual.

Speaker2: [00:39:00] Yeah, it's a catharsis. It made me think of this. This lecture I heard many years ago, and I can't remember the details, but this man was from a village, a native culture. It was like Central America or something around there. And he talked about how if a person had a great loss and they were just shut down emotionally, they literally have these women who were who were sent to their home of the grieving person, and they're like the wailing women. And they just they express it. And only that if it's suitable, they will feed the grieving person lots of alcohol to the point where they're just vomiting, just so they could just, like, get the poison out of their system. And it's just like this. They're initiating this catharsis, whether the person does it themselves or not. You know, it was really kind of a fascinating this is tradition. It's like you have to go through the grieving process. Otherwise that poison is just going to fester into some disease. You know.

Speaker1: [00:40:10] It is poison when you don't process it for sure.



Speaker3: [00:40:12] Absolutely. And I think I just listened to your recent podcast about stagnation. Right. It's like any trauma and stagnation of the body. Like when I came in to see you. Right. I it was the beginnings of sitting in this period of time. It was like two months in. And I just remember like a functioning, like people knew I was tenderhearted and I was still able to work and do my life, but I was carrying weight in my heart. I felt the weight and the heaviness in my heart and I knew I had to give it attention because physically it was weighing on me, holding me right in a way. And I knew if I didn't give it attention in the ways I love holistically and also internally with the practices I do and my own therapy, it would get stuck or it would cause more illness and struggle in my body because it wasn't getting the attention needed.

Speaker2: [00:41:15] Yeah, I mean, we always say in Chinese medicine, they say the root of all diseases is is emotional.

Speaker3: [00:41:21] Yeah, yeah.

Speaker2: [00:41:23] It's all about opening the heart to. Yes. And how we have to work through these layers that are blocking us from opening our heart to first loving ourselves, you know? And so we could even extend it to the world and to others in our community. You know, it made me think of this morning I was reading how Aaron Rodgers I don't know if you know, Aaron Rodgers is a professional football player. I think it's the last two seasons. He was the MVP of the league. And you know what he said today or recently? He attributes his recent success to having experience ayahuasca, I guess South America with a shaman, and how it allowed him to expand his sense of self love. And through that, he was able to have better relationships with his teammates.

Speaker1: [00:42:20] Oh, that's beautiful.

Speaker3: [00:42:21] And what a success story. Right? Like, could we just allow tribal medicine in the medicinal world of psychedelics as well be accepted in our culture? Right. We would have so much more.



Speaker2: [00:42:34] But it's really about opening the heart. However you have to, whatever it takes to get there, you know.

Speaker3: [00:42:38] Facilitates that, especially with trauma.

Speaker2: [00:42:41] So Aaron now is a spokesperson for. For self-love and opening your heart.

Speaker3: [00:42:51] Isn't it?

Speaker2: [00:42:52] I mean.

Speaker1: [00:42:53] It's really self care that brings that self-love. You know, in Chinese medicine. The Earth element is the element of care. And we often think of care as the care we give others. But where it begins is ourselves. Because if we don't give that care to ourselves, it just stagnates and doesn't allow us to give, which is where you see like Earth element when it's out of balance. Is the tip the prototypical person would be somebody who either is always meddling in other people's lives because they can't pay attention to their own.

Speaker3: [00:43:23] Right.

Speaker1: [00:43:23] Or that they just have nothing to give. They just can't care for others whatsoever because they have nothing to give. So cultivating that self care and knowing that you first have to pour it into yourself in order to give it back. I don't think it's something that we just have to conceptually think about. It's actually something that naturally occurs when we do enough of it.

Speaker3: [00:43:45] Yeah. And as long as we're working with often beliefs or parts of us that actually resist self care, there's ideas that it's selfish. I hear all sorts of things in my office, right? All the reasons or beliefs we carry that say it's not okay to actually take care of ourselves or there's not enough time. We have all sorts of reasons and parts of us can certainly convince us it's maybe we don't deserve it. But yes, I wholeheartedly in the pandemic I was running three consultation groups for therapists because here we



are living through the pandemic and caring for others. Right? And now on a screen which we're not used to, most of us did not work telehealth and on computers. I didn't go into my work to be on a computer, nor did you write. So these circumstances are fine. But I didn't want to sit in my office all day on my computer, seeing my my clients with only just their head. Right? Like there's so much more going on. I have to see all that's going on in the room, feel what's going on in the space. And it still beautifully effective. But I was my system was really missing the connection in the room, you know, so so many therapists really struggled in that journey. And some still are some some are really questioning whether they can continue in and continue doing this work because because it took quite a toll on many, many therapists and we're all.

Speaker2: [00:45:20] One plus.

Speaker3: [00:45:21] And busy.

Speaker2: [00:45:22] I was going to say and and business boomed because so many people started having so much struggle during.

Speaker3: [00:45:29] Socially, very emotionally. Yeah. And we're a lonely culture and our, our pandemic really amplified loneliness.

Speaker2: [00:45:39] The anxiety also the the fear around COVID is tremendous stress.

Speaker3: [00:45:45] Absolutely.

Speaker1: [00:45:50] We all need support and community. And as a listener of the Natural Healing podcast, we want to extend a special invitation for you to join ours, visit a Center for Natural Healing, for it's welcome to be a part of our global online community. You'll get a free five step guide to Fatigue Relief, along with exclusive weekly insights and health tips that we only share via email. Join now at a Center for Natural Healing Ford's welcome. We look forward to seeing you there. For those who are still on a journey to open their hearts and really get embodied and aren't fully aware



of everything that's going on, how do I know if I'm sad? How do I know if I'm struggling with grief and I need to process it?

Speaker2: [00:46:39] That's a nice question.

Speaker3: [00:46:41] I think if we're often reminiscing or thinking about somebody that maybe we've lost or that's died in our lives, or we're still talking about them as if they're still here. Those are things I often end up curious about, like we're still living in a in a place where they're still here. And in many ways they are. Right. I think there's a process in healing that we can still be with those that we've cared for and that have cared for us and that we love. But sadness shows up so differently and interestingly uniquely for everybody, right? So sometimes it's anger. Sometimes I'm just mad at the world. Sometimes I cry at the drop of a pin. Sometimes I have fuzzy head and brain and I can't think. These are the ways that shows up, right? I want to isolate. I want a divorce. I want to leave everything. I don't want to be by any. I just want to isolate and be all by myself. I obsess about my mortality and how I might die. To me, those are all places that would probably point to some curiosity around grief, around sadness. I'm not sure if your question about sadness related to grief or not.

Speaker1: [00:48:03] Yeah.

Speaker3: [00:48:04] But I also wonder if we sense sadness clients. And us as individuals. Sometimes sadness. We want to be like off at a really far distance. So I might even be curious and ask somebody because I'll often I'm guessing sometimes this happens for the both of you. You'll just be with people and you feel a sense of sorrow. I know. I feel that. And pick up on that often. And I sometimes might ask like, do you notice sadness around? And. Many people will say, no, I don't know what you're talking about. And I might just say what's interesting, because as I'm sitting with you, I'm noticing some sorrow and it just makes me wonder if there's any sorrow that needs your attention. I think grief can show up and sadness can show up in many different ways because we could use substances to avoid sadness and sorrow. So it really very system manages differently.

Speaker1: [00:49:21] Let's say that I've decided that I do have grief. Where do I begin?



Speaker3: [00:49:27] I guess I would be curious if you have somebody you know that you would feel comfortable exploring or sharing that with, or if you have a way or a place that you go, that creates a safety for you to get curious about it. So sometimes for clients, if they're maybe with or even with friends that don't see a therapist, right. I might say you have a place you like to go where it just feels like you're cared for. Can you go there and be with this grief and give it a little attention? So maybe it's the beach and that spaciousness of the ocean just allows you to get in touch with it. Or going to sitting by running water or creating a ritual space and a picture of this individual or a picture of something that represents whatever it is you're facing. Sometimes our systems need to have a little bit of like a time set around that, so it feels like there's a safety around it. But I get really curious sometimes people feel like, Oh, I could never process in a group. And yet groups are often such a graceful and surprisingly easy place to show up. Sometimes with grief, we go into individual sessions and it's like a little harder to access. But when we go into a group that's experienced or has loss, then then the grief is welcomed because somebody in that group is likely going to touch their own experience in that moment. And it's like our systems are our systems say, Oh, it's accepted here.

Speaker1: [00:51:11] Yeah, permission.

Speaker3: [00:51:12] And permission and there's a welcome and there's an opening. And that's part of why I'm actually shifting my practice from individuals to groups. I felt post-COVID. The lonely experience of so many is really for communal space.

Speaker2: [00:51:31] Yeah. Yeah.

Speaker3: [00:51:32] And my heart also feels happy about doing that because I won't have to turn as many people away. I'll say I have a group. Yeah. And I won't have to refer others other places. I'll welcome them to group space and the power of group. I think it's just remarkable, right, because there's so much opportunity and group healing.



Speaker1: [00:51:57] Yes. And it's a beautiful way for people who are still uncomfortable, maybe with doing therapy one on one to begin, because in a group session, I'm assuming the way that you run them, you're not obligated to even speak.

Speaker3: [00:52:09] No, but I trust even if you're there in silence, you're doing your work.

Speaker1: [00:52:14] Definitely.

Speaker3: [00:52:15] Your feet. You're you're witnessing. You're experiencing. It's touching you in ways that are therapeutic and healing. Right.

Speaker2: [00:52:27] Well, you don't have to speak your grief. I mean, like you're saying, it's about being with it. And for me, what was coming up as you were speaking is to maybe hear the message of what that grief needs you to become aware of.

Speaker1: [00:52:46] Yes. Yeah. And from my experience in leading like group coaching sessions, it's always amazing to see when one person chooses to speak how the collective heals from that person's experience.

Speaker3: [00:52:59] On the witness witnessing, right?

Speaker1: [00:53:01] Exactly.

Speaker3: [00:53:01] Witnessing is just profound. I was in retreat in March in Costa Rica, and we had a few individuals that have families in Ukraine and in Russia. And I still feel so touched when I think about it. I felt like our communal space of holding was so. Intentional and with such depth and beauty that it allowed them to go so deeply into what they were hungry for in group space through through the isolation of COVID and the far distance of their families being halfway across the world, their powerlessness that we could hold this communal space with them. And I ended up deejaying a little bit and I played a Ukrainian prayer and we cried together, holding these women in the middle of the circle, just holding this beautiful space. They sang around the fire on the last night and we just held them. I still so deeply touched. It was one of the strong



influences for me to come back and and make these aha moments of making some changes work again have to be in the.

Speaker1: [00:54:22] Ripple effect, the ripple effect of that work. It's like we may not even see it, but you can feel it and know it that when you do work on that level in a small group setting, you are doing the work for so many people who don't have the opportunity.

Speaker3: [00:54:39] Yeah. And I think, you know, we talked a little bit before the interview like how comfortable you are telling your story. And I think the power of sharing story allows others to hear their own sense of hope in their own traumas and lives.

Speaker2: [00:54:57] That's the beauty of it.

Speaker3: [00:54:58] I have been told numerous times by people with gratitude, like when you share how you've moved through your trauma, it gives me hope that I could face mine as well.

Speaker2: [00:55:11] That's right.

Speaker1: [00:55:12] What's possible?

Speaker3: [00:55:14] Have to find the right space and the right place to do that so I can feel held to do that for myself. And so for me, I've also been challenged. Like, Why do you keep speaking your story and sharing your story? And it's not because I live in the world of abuse, it's because healing is possible. And those that offend also deserve healing. They carry their own traumas. And for me, the only way we're ever going to shift this culture of polarizations is how do we hold curiosity about those hurting others and those being hurt, and how do we create ways to find communal space to to acknowledge and help repair some of this? Significant pain that we're continuing to cause each other. Right. So those are big wishes and big asks, but. I want to believe it's all possible. And. I just imagine one step at a time, right?



Speaker1: [00:56:23] Yeah. And the process of opening your heart as our teacher, Geoffrey always says, is you open your heart, you invite in endless possibilities.

Speaker3: [00:56:31] Yes.

Speaker1: [00:56:33] The power of miracles comes when the heart is open.

Speaker3: [00:56:36] Yeah.

Speaker2: [00:56:37] And, LaDonna, you certainly. Empower others just through your willingness to to be empowered as you share your story. I mean, it's yeah, I think that's a wonderful thing to witness.

Speaker3: [00:56:52] Thank you. Sometimes that's complicated in my own family system. Sometimes there's a younger part of me that fears it's really still uncomfortable for certain people. And if I was to ever really get to name my invitation to them, is it it doesn't have to be right. This that this story of our family doesn't have to carry shame and continuous pain. Right. It could carry healing to in place of that pain. And so I guess I've never put words to that, but. I always imagine someday one of these interviews is going to be listened to by people I love that I care about. And and again, it's really just my invitation that they that they tend to their pain, that they may still carry in the burdens they carry about what's happened to our own family. So.

Speaker1: [00:57:47] And maybe sit with their discomfort for as long as they need until they can move through it.

Speaker3: [00:57:52] Yeah. Yeah. And they. And they.

Speaker2: [00:57:54] And all we could do is heal ourselves, right?

Speaker3: [00:57:57] Yeah. And me, it's about.

Speaker2: [00:57:58] That ripple effect.



Speaker3: [00:58:00] Yeah. And for me, it's also about how to hold them lovingly, even if they don't like that. I speak like that. I get that. It creates discomfort and I'm still going to love them. Right.

Speaker1: [00:58:12] And when you watched your mother cry right in that room and just you're able to witness an old space?

Speaker3: [00:58:19] Absolutely. And it's never in spite of anybody. It's really for a deeper invitation to help and invite others to to heal so we can all live with less burden and less sorrow. Less, less.

Speaker2: [00:58:33] Because we're all in this together.

Speaker3: [00:58:36] Absolutely.

Speaker1: [00:58:37] So is there one last thought or take away that you'd like to leave with our listeners?

Speaker3: [00:58:45] Well, I just love the way. The holistic practitioners I work with complement therapeutic work. So I guess I'm just doing a pitch for. I know you've had Denise Alberto on the show and I'm a fan of hers in my own for my own system has been gifted as well as by your services. And there's something about this integration it feels like it speaks to what we're talking about. Is this village right is that that our systems can be witnessed with with a loving village of care as we're working at caring for ourselves, we could also be cared for. And there's something about being cared for that also supports healing. That's something about that. I don't know why that feels so important to acknowledge, but. There's something as a caretaker that I think I've often played a role in, and that the gift of allowing myself to be cared for. Has been just as important as caring for others as well as caring for myself is how do I let in care?

Speaker2: [00:59:57] What you're making me think is that maybe. In times where we feel lonely and in despair. To recognize that we're not alone. Yeah. Like I was just saying, we're all in this together. You know, everybody has their pain. Enroll. Well, I don't know about everybody being there to support each other, but in that idea, like you were



saying, the village and that was really the beautiful thing about it, the village and the family. The family concept of support that came through that. And in this crazy world that we live in here in Silicon Valley, it feels different than that. You often I can imagine where I'm from this area, and there's times I still feel that way.

Speaker3: [01:00:42] It's really easy to get caught up in.

Speaker2: [01:00:44] It isn't right. I can't imagine if you're an immigrant and you don't really have much family here, you really feel isolated. But yeah, it's important to I guess you get to that vulnerable place where you could allow it in, where you could make the connection.

Speaker1: [01:01:01] So LaDonna, where can our listeners find you and the work that you're doing currently?

Speaker3: [01:01:07] Yes. So I could be found on my website, which is w w w dot LaDonna Silva and that's probably the easiest place. I don't put a lot on there. There are certainly ways of contacting me. I also am there's a couple of things on YouTube, but primarily my website I think is the best place to connect.

Speaker1: [01:01:33] And we'll definitely link that in the show notes.

Speaker3: [01:01:36] Oh, great. Thank you. Thank you.

Speaker1: [01:01:40] Now we want to hear from you. Visit a center for natural healing, for its emotional freedom and let us know in the comments. The greatest takeaway you received from listening to our conversation with LaDonna Silva.

Speaker2: [01:01:56] And thank you so much, LaDonna, for joining us today. It was a pleasure spending time with you again.

Speaker1: [01:02:02] Yeah, it's always a joy to be around you and be in your presence. So thank you for your time.



Speaker3: [01:02:07] Thank you both. I really loved the ease and the natural flow of our time together is really beautiful to spend the time.

Speaker1: [01:02:15] Thanks for joining us. Bye bye. Hey, if you haven't already done so, be sure to rate and review us on Apple Podcasts. This ensures that we can share this invaluable information with more listeners just like you.