

SPIRIT & ——— RECOVERY

***Warning. This episode includes conversations about trauma, addiction, abuse, and other subjects and situations that may be triggering for some listeners. Our intention with this series is to educate and inspire. And while mental health professionals are being interviewed, this podcast does not offer personalized medical advice. If you need help or are in crisis, please seek medical attention and advice from a professional. Thank you for listening, and we hope you enjoy this episode of Spirit and Recovery on INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE.*

EP53:

Divination, Courage & Recovery

With Colette Baron-Reid

Colette:

From states of euphoria and joy to grief and trauma, the human condition asks us to bear witness to it all. Yet how we respond, how we react, and how we internalize these events and memories can be extraordinarily unique and profoundly impactful, especially where trauma is involved. But if we surrender to Spirit, we gain the most amazing partner in our healing journey. Spirit and recovery go hand in hand.

In this limited series, we'll explore healing modalities, philosophies, and soulful practices that are designed to support recovery on all levels. Let's navigate these waters together with compassion and love. There is wisdom waiting to be shared. You're not alone. We're in this together.

Hi there, and welcome to INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE, a podcast brought to you from the corner of Fringe and Main. I'm your host, Colette Baron-Reid, and this is the very first episode of our limited podcast series called Spirit and Recovery. Now, if you're an avid listener of the podcast or if you've read my books, then there's a pretty good chance that you know about the addiction that I had to drugs and alcohol, and that, to the grace of God, I have been living clean and sober one day at a time for over 37 years. I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't created and leaned on a deep relationship with Spirit during that recovery, and still today. It's a profound experience to be here with you and a humbling one, to be honest. Here I am today, over 37

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years later, one day at a time from where I started and, now today, able to create this series and be here with you having this conversation.

Now joining us today and leading this interview is Connie Diletti, my executive producer. Now, if you've listened to this podcast, you know she's a familiar voice and a great one. But if not, you're in for a treat. Over to you, Connie.

Connie:

Aw, thank you, Colette, and I appreciate you trusting me with this role [inaudible 00:02:44].

Colette:

Of course, I do.

Connie:

Thank you. Thank you.

Colette:

My pleasure.

Connie:

Okay, let's get started. Within the 50+ podcasts episodes that precede this one, you've shared some stories from your childhood and some glimpses into what it was like growing up for you and being in your family. So as a starting point today and in this conversation, through the lens of Spirit and Recovery, what was it like being a child in your home, and when were you first introduced to alcohol?

Colette:

You know what's really funny? I think that it wouldn't have mattered where I was or who I grew up with, because I think it was less about the environment and more about how I was born rather than the environment I was raised in, because I was raised in a very loving environment, very loving environment. My experience with alcohol came, I think, when I was 12. I had my first drink, which was called Slivovitz. I'll never forget it. My dad gave me one. It's plum brandy. It's

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100 proof or something. And preceding to drink, and again, nothing to do with my parents or the environment, but I always felt too much, always.

I always felt everything. There was no boundary between me and anyone else. I knew things about people I shouldn't know, without prior knowledge. I had dreams about my mother's background, my father's background that I couldn't possibly know about. I was a walking boundary-less being, and I never felt like I fit in anywhere. I felt like I was never safe, and it had nothing to do with... I was safe with them. There was nothing in my exact family to suggest I shouldn't be safe, but I never felt safe. Was that because of the ancestral patterning of my parents going through World War II, especially my mom? Don't know, but it doesn't really matter, because what happened when I had my first drink was, all of a sudden, all that went away. Literally, one drink.

I can smell the room. I even know which room it was. It was the living room. I even remember it was in front of a very specific desk my mom had that had a leather inlay. I remember the moment it went through my mouth. It was a burning. I didn't particularly love the taste but, boy oh boy, did I ever feel smart, grounded, together, as much as a smart, grounded, together 12-year-old should ever feel.

Connie:
Right, yeah.

Colette:
And I wasn't scared of anything. That was what happened. Right away, it was medicine. It was like, "Oh, this is magic."

Connie:
And so you felt something positive?

Colette:
Very.

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Connie:
A positive, yeah.

Colette:
Oh, yeah. Very, very, and I wanted more right away, and my dad noticed that, right?

Connie:
Yeah.

Colette:
And actually, I've never remembered, in my house, alcohol bottles, because my dad had a booze cabinet that didn't have masking tape on it to tell my father how much booze was in the bottle. And I'm pretty sure they put it on there because of me-

Connie:
Really?

Colette:
Oh, yeah.

Connie:
Okay.

Colette:
Because why would anybody do that? I've never met anybody that does that. I just thought anybody did that because I never saw anybody else's booze cabinet.

Connie:
Right, right.

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Colette:

But they were making sure this is where it is today, and then if it was any lower... But I think there was concern right from the time that I was 12. So I actually started having trouble with it by the time I was 15, so just three years later.

I hung out with the kids in school. It was funny, because my parents were very, "You have to be with people from good families," whatever that meant. They were very, very socially conscious to put us in a what they thought would be safe, which would be a very wasp environment. My parents had heavy accents, European accents. And in this particular school, this is upper-crust Canadian society thing. And I think the only reason we got in was because of my dad's title, which was baron, which meant nothing, because it was really... I think because they were very impressed by the fact that it sounded good. I don't know, because I think it's a bunch of BS today. But anyhow, we were allowed in there, and we were very, very clearly let known that we were not Canadian enough ever. That was to my face.

So I started hanging around with kids who smoked. I was bad. I was a rebel. I thought that was cool. So anything that looked outside the norm or outside the law, not the law, but the law of my-

Connie:

Of children.

Colette:

... neighborhood, of children-

Connie:

Children laws. Yeah, yeah, of course.

Colette:

... of the school, I wanted to do that. So I was very much a rebel, and alcohol fueled it. It was funny because I got in the worst trouble with those kids from the supposedly good families. They were, "Oh, you can go to their house, sleep over." But meanwhile, they're the ones that were doing the drugs and the drinking and throwing up in their parents' cars.

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So the bottom line is, is I can't blame any environmental influence, although I'm sure it certainly does bring in something. But I think I was born with this allergy to alcohol and born with the predisposition to addiction. So I'm accountable. I can't blame myself, but it is what it is.

Connie:

So when you were 12, and you took your first drink-

Colette:

Yes.

Connie:

... and you had a response that was positive, at what point did your interaction with an outside substance, whether it was alcohol or drugs, when did it become negative? Because so far, you're explaining that it gave you a sense of kind of escape. You were cool-

Colette:

Oh, it became negative as soon as I kept going.

Connie:

Yes. Okay. Okay

Colette:

Oh my God. As soon as it became too much. There was no valve of having one drink. My parents could make sure I didn't have more than one or two, but every night they had Martini Rossi and their cigarettes. There was smoking, there was drinking, but it was always very controlled.

I had no control right from the get-go. If I could have drank a whole bottle, I would have. And we used to get our little friends together in our parents' cars and off we would go. So it became problematic right from the beginning. I can tell you, look, right from the beginning, even though I was seeking the first feeling, which was I am now whole-

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Connie:
Yes.

Colette:
... it never stayed like that. But when I drank, I was socially no longer awkward. I could dance. I could do all these things that I-

Connie:
Inhibitions were-

Colette:
Exactly.

Connie:
Okay.

Colette:
My inhibitions definitely dissolved.

Connie:
So what would you say was the journey then from being a teenager who was engaging with these substances to release inhibitions and to be more socially engaged to then going into adulthood? And even though, like you said, you had an awareness that this was harming you in some way or that there was something, there was a couple red flags for yourself.

Colette:
Oh, there was more than a couple.

Connie:
Okay, talk-

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Colette:

So, well, let's go concurrently. I think when you're abusing alcohol and drugs, I certainly on my end, I also had severe depression and anxiety. So there was this vicious circle of, "Oh, if I have a drink, I won't feel like that." And I'm only a kid too, at this stage. It's like the facade was so... It looked super clean and you never weren't allowed to talk about anything that would potentially make you appear different, which was my mother's desire, absolutely. You are not going to stick out and you are going to get straight As. But meanwhile, I was in turmoil, internally in turmoil. And I wonder if sometimes, because my mother was pretty convinced that we were molested by our babysitter, a neighbor, when we were kids. I've no idea. I don't have a memory of that, but certainly, there was an implication. And then I don't know.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? I don't know. But I can tell you nothing good comes out of it, because then I don't know if it was because I had alcoholism that I was depressed, or because I was depressed and had this thing happen, then alcohol made me feel better. Who knows? But the bottom line is is that then I had an eating disorder too. So I had a lot of rage. I did not know how to manage anger at all. And my parents this and they were upwardly mobile Europeans that were trying to fit in that really couldn't anyway but did. And my dad did really well in academics, and working hard was your number one priority and marrying well and having babies and all that kind of stuff. But definitely going to either law school or medical school.

Connie:

Right.

Colette:

So there was a lot of pressure and also I didn't know how to manage. And of course, the generation my parents came from, my mom was very stoic. She just pull up your bootstraps and keep moving. I never saw her cry.

Connie:

Right.

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Colette:

So there's a real sense of I better figure this out myself, but didn't know how. And so I became bulimic when I was 14. So that was the vomiting thing. Actually, the first time that I remember I did that was when my geography teacher told me in front of the whole class that I wasn't really Canadian because my parents were immigrants and I was the first person, because they were talking about being Canadian. Of course, they don't mention colonialism in the route that it really is about. But it's like we discovered Canada. Well I know that's not true today, but basically, because we weren't British, we didn't have any connection to that, it was a very big thing. And I remember feeling so ashamed that I was not the same because everybody would look at me. And at that point, I think we had a couple of Jewish kids in the class and some other token people that they let in. Because this is 1960s.

Anyway, so I remember going into the bathroom and sticking my finger down my throat and throwing up. I bought two Joan donuts filled with cream, cream donuts. I'll never forget it. I even remember what they were. And in I went, locked myself in the stall, ate them so fast and then threw them up.

Connie:

Right. To manage the overwhelm of emotions that were coming up, you had an external substance and then engaging in another harmful behavior like you said, to throw it up. Right.

Colette:

So who knew which was what. By the time I'd hit recovery when I was 27, the events that occurred as a result of the subsequent behavior and choices that one makes, that I made, based on the inability to manage my feelings and also the fact that I had this ability to feel the world and bombarded by information that wasn't my own. There was no structure around that. I prefer not to use the word psychic because there's the connotations of that used to be way more difficult years ago, not so much now. People actually like the word, but for me, it was like I was an intuitive and I could feel these things and there was no container for anything.

But then when I went to university, again, I had a lot of trouble at school. I went to law school and I had an overdose then ended up having to make up the year in a summer school at another university and I was gang raped there. When I say that, I get we're going to have to have some

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disclaimers here about this trauma, but I can see the direct relationship between drugs and alcohol and accepting a ride from people I knew I was unsafe with and that kind of risk taking that I would never do if I was clean and sober. So the choices we make, it was never to choose self-harm. For my case, it was curiosity like, ooh, these guys, these bad guys, maybe they're cool. I liked anybody that was an outlaw.

Connie:
Yeah.

Colette:
Oh bikers, yay, let's do that. And then of course, after that, then you drink more, then your self-esteem is in the toilet and then you make new choices. So I'm really adamant about not being a victim because I'm very observant and I can really witness this right now. Of course, it was devastating at the time. Of course, I couldn't have kids as a result of it. I had a really bad infection. And then I had another series of violent things that made sense to me because it was what I knew. But I was looking for a different end to the story. Oh, another potentially violent man, I wonder if it'll be better this time and that person won't hurt me.

So I went into a bit of a psychosis, if you will, around that, my early 20s. And then I had the great fortune of meeting someone because I was into music. That was the other thing. It was very acceptable to be wild because I was a singer-songwriter. So that was the other piece that made... I found myself in environments and around people working in bars and things so that you're around it all the time and it didn't look so unusual. I say it today, I had the great fortune to meet someone who introduced me to the express train to hell so I could get clean and sober early, which was cocaine.

Connie:
This was 27?

Colette:
No, no, no. I got clean and sober at 27.

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Connie:
Okay.

Colette:
Yeah. When I was 27.

Connie:
So when did you get the fortunate, express train-

Colette:
The fortune, the great fortune... to do that when I was 20. And a year later, it was like, oh wow. I feel... That would also, oh, I no longer feel bad about myself. Oh my goodness gracious me. I feel just like God.

Connie:
Okay.

Colette:
And then of course you have the crash and you have to do it again. So I don't want to bore anybody with a drunk log, but-

Connie:
Well, hold on a second. It's not boring, but I feel like if we may interject one thing at this point-

Colette:
Sure.

Connie:
... at 20, on the express train, what was, if any, what was your relationship with Spirit like at this point?

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Colette:

Okay. Spirit was always in my life. So that was the other thing. I think I was trying to fill a God-shaped hole my whole life with substances outside of myself. And I always believed in God. I just thought at that point, God was following me around with a fly swatter going, "That's a mistake. We better get that one," because I couldn't understand how these things could be happening to me.

Connie:

Right. Yeah.

Colette:

But I never gave up on the idea that there could be some kind of redemption, and I never stopped believing. I just really thought I was a really bad person who then became a dirty person because of the things that happened to me, which made me then unlovable. That was kind of the-

Connie:

Okay, that's where it-

Colette:

That was where I landed.

Connie:

Okay.

Colette:

I'm unworthy, unlovable, not smart too, failing at everything. And I traded my self-worth and self-esteem for moments of feeling good that never lasted. So maybe this time it's going to be different. It was like this insanity of doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result.

Connie:

Yes. Okay.

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Colette:

And it's funny because I think about... It really makes me humble to talk about this because I am one of the lucky ones. I really am. When I think about where I came from, certainly, I was raised by great parents who didn't have any... This was not their plan, and I know my behavior really hurt them a lot and I think of having had to make amends about... It's very complicated. The story is very complicated, but what became very simple for me is when I hit bottom.

Connie:

Okay. So at what point in the timeline was bottom, and what did that look like?

Colette:

I was 26. So just before that, it was the winter, is actually right now, I'll be honest, which is great because we're pre-recording this and people should know this. We're recording this. So it's actually exactly at this time, 37 years ago right now, and I always get more-

Connie:

We're recording this in December, 2022. Yes.

Colette:

We're recording December and yeah. I am really connecting to this story because I'm going to be 37 years clean and sober January 2nd, one day at a time. And I do feel it more today that we're recording it now because I've just realized the date.

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

This would have been around the date. Oh, I might cry.

Connie:

Aw.

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Colette:

Around the date where I had that bottom and I realized I was going to die if I didn't... And I didn't know what to do. It wasn't like if I didn't do something, because I had tried to do so many different things and nothing worked. I promised and I made so many promises that I broke, because I had gone into a treatment center when I was 22 and basically didn't learn anything. They even told us only out of the 35 of you, there may be eight of you that are going to survive.

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

And I'll never forget that.

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

I'm like, "Aah, that was very helpful." But I was just like, I just wanted to talk about the boyfriends that hurt my feelings, and I didn't want to hear about the recovery steps I had to take, but I was ready. And I think the bottom for me was a bottom where I actually saw the truth of who I was instead of the being a legend in my own mind that other people around me fostered while I was sitting there passing the free base pipe.

Connie:

Okay, yeah.

Colette:

And it was out in front of a mirror and I hadn't basically bathed or slept for about a week. And when I was standing in front of this mirror, it was a drug dealer's basement. It was early in the morning because I would go home in the morning, and I would look at myself in the mirror and I finally saw myself. My gums were bleeding because I had... My skin was atrophied. It was almost like pockmarks but it wasn't.

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Connie:
Wow.

Colette:
My eyes, the whites in my eyes were yellow. And I have gold colored eyes. So if you can imagine, I look like Rosemary's baby.

Connie:
Wow, because your liver was trying to process-

Colette:
Oh yeah.

Connie:
... help you detoxify, right?

Colette:
Yeah. And I saw myself for the truth. I was like, oh my God. And instead of help me, I'll never do it again, which was kind of the way I used to say, "Help me, oh my God," now it was like, "I'm going to die. I give up. I give up." And in that moment, I had a spiritual experience that, to this day, I know saved my life. And even though it wasn't perfect, because after that, I actually used a couple more times, which is why my dry date is January 2nd because I was still awake from New Year's Eve.

Connie:
Right.

Colette:
So I didn't go to bed until the... Yeah. I didn't go to bed, but I couldn't get high again. That was the other thing. Nothing worked. I couldn't get drunk. I couldn't get high. After that spiritual awakening in that guy's... When I was like, I heard too, it's over. I thought I don't have to do this again. And then I kept trying because I didn't have another choice.

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Connie:

Well, you did what you knew, which was using.

Colette:

What I knew and nothing worked.

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

It was like I could drink a whole bottle and nothing would happen and nothing. It was the universe was like, "You're totally done now, so you're going to figure this out." So I ended up being the first client registered in a treatment center for women in Toronto. My friend and boyfriend at the time did an intervention with me, and the rest is history. I went in there and they told me that I was going to be spending a lot of time in church basements. And I just said, "No, I don't want to do that."

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

I really need to be deprogrammed. I've been hypnotized. I said some crazy shit to them. I laughed now and they're smiling at me. I said, "No, I'd like to be an outpatient," and they're like, "No, I think inpatient is good." And I was like, "Okay."

Connie:

You're still trying to outline and control, right? Yeah.

Colette:

I'm trying to tell them how it's going to go. Like, "Oh no, no, no, no, and I have to be able to see my boyfriend and I have things to do. I'm a singer songwriter. I'm going to be famous," and la, la, la, la, la. And they're like, "Mm-hmm." And the only good thing about doing all of that is that I

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was always really thin. I never had a weight problem. But I'd rather be a little voluptuous and be healthy than ever have that again.

Connie:

Yes.

Colette:

So anyway, I ended up in this treatment center for women. And listen, this is my story. It's not the same for everybody. When we decided to do this series, we knew that the recovery, because I had recovery from addiction and recovery from trauma. So there's different layers of recovery that I've been through that I can address. But I ended up in the 12-step program and it saved my life. It saved my life. I had this little old lady named Marguerite who is my sponsor, and she was just like Aunt Clara from Bewitched. She was a kind of dotty old lady. Well, she wasn't actually that old, but to me, she was like... I think she was my age now. But anyway, she would wear these big moomoos and repeat herself very gently to me until I thought it was my idea. And then I would call her up and say, "Guess what?" She'd be like, "Oh, yes dear. That's lovely. That's wonderful. That is such a great insight." Meanwhile, she'd been saying it right? Saying it, saying it...

Connie:

Yes.

Colette:

Basically, I followed her around a little duck. And I remember all the counselors at the treatment center came to my one... We had a one-year celebration.

Connie:

Amazing.

Colette:

And a couple of them cried, and another one said to me, "You were the one we voted least likely to succeed."

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Connie:
Oh. Wow.

Colette:
Because I was so mentally unstable. One of the doctors said I had schizophrenic psychosis because I could hear voices. I was trying to explain it like, "Well, okay, listen. So these voices." Well now, of course, I'm a medium so it's like they're dead people.

Connie: Right.
You need a metaphysician-

Colette:
It was okay.

Connie:
... actually on the crew as well.

Colette:
And then it was-

Connie:
Yeah.

Colette:
I'm trying to explain my experiences, and they're writing it down: anxiety disease, manic depression, hypomania-

Connie:
Wow.

Colette:
All these lists of things that I was the diagnoses, which is really not that, but that's fine. I have to say the very fact that I've come from that and here I am today. But the best part, the best part

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was that I had structure, and the structure was about shadow work. And the layers of what I was a capable of going through. Which is why I love the fact that those 12 steps... And again, keep an open mind. Some of you guys are going to listen to this show and go, "I'd never do that," and you don't have to. Just try to identify if you have a problem and you're listening to this show today, just see if you can identify with my feelings and all I'm going to tell you is how it worked. How did I become who I am today? And it's because the structure enabled me to have a conscious contact to my higher power on a daily and I could live one day at a time. Because anybody could handle a day.

Connie:

Well, this is the thing, literally to my next question. What does it mean to be living a clean and sober lifestyle? And how did the 12 steps support you in that?

Colette:

It's really important that there is a very specific thing about 12-step programs is anonymity. So I am not speaking for a program. I'm not even acknowledging that I am in a program. But at the time, I will talk about the fact, the fact that-

Connie:

The structure that helped you.

Colette:

The structure that helped me was about a core value of accountability, a core value of trust, a core value of forgiveness, a core value of action, and a way in which to redefine what happened and what purpose that could serve. So much like I have a card in my spirit animal, oracle. I remember my dad, when he taught me how to read Turkish coffee cups. He said to me, "Nothing is ever wasted because the vulture can take in the carcass, something that is diseased and unusable, and turned it into something usable like fertilizer." It takes away all the bacteria and anything negative when it digests it, right?

Connie:

Right.

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Colette:

So it became I could take the worst thing that happened to me in my life and by sharing it with others, I could help them. And by outlining what I did to take the steps to move away from that place. And it was an evolution. It wasn't an overnight thing. For the past 37 years, it's still peeling onions.

Connie:

You say one day at a time. The skin is one skin at a time, one day at a time. And to your point that you just mentioned, that we know people can be... And I'll just use it in air quotes because I know some people say misuse, some people say addicted, but there can be substances, there can be behaviors like-

Colette:

Oh sure.

Connie:

... like shopping, like eating, like-

Colette:

Sex addiction.

Connie:

... sex addiction. Right. Gaming, the internet itself. Just scrolling, social media, sports. Whatever. But what do you wish more people knew about addiction and about spirit as a partner in recovering from that?

Colette:

Well, addiction is not moral. It's not an immorality and it doesn't mean that you're less of a person. That's really important. I like the disease model in that you... Or in the allergy model. You're allergic to the substance, that you don't have the capacity to metabolize it and it's an escape. It's an escape. It's a symptom of something much deeper. And that it is possible to live free of the burdens, of the memory, of the... If certainly if you have a conscience, you have to clean up your past. You absolutely have to. You have to face it and you have to release yourself

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from it. And when it is possible, you have to make direct amends to people. And sometimes, it's not possible because they say except when to do so would injure them or others, including yourself.

So you can clean your life up and you can live sober, meaning... Clean and sober doesn't mean without dry because you can be a dry drunk. Sobriety is the willingness to do whatever it takes to keep that wholeness, to do the shadow work that is necessary so that you don't cause harm. Certainly, we do unconsciously. We don't mean to whatever. And to become productive members in society whatever that looks like. You can be that.

Connie:

That's so fascinating. So clean and sober as a concept of sobriety being consciousness, being aware.

Colette:

Yes.

Connie:

And clean and cleanliness being good.

Colette:

Yeah.

Connie:

If we can simplify it like that, but that's very fascinating and interesting.

Colette:

Yeah. Good orderly direction. That's God. And also to know that it's progress not perfection. That was also something... I gained a lot from my experiences in those church basements. I literally believe that I owe my entire life to 12-step programs. I really do, and therapy. So because I had all the different traumas that were... There's only so much I can get to from one program. And so then I went to other ones that were specific to those things. For me, the things like EMDR, tapping. Tapping is great, but I don't avoid anything, and I've made mistakes even in

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recovery, even in the person that I am today. I'll see some unconscious behaviors come up again and realize, wow, I thought I had cleaned that up because we're just people. And so I think that's the other thing.

I think it's really, really important to recognize that we are human and that when you... A clean and sober life is the reclamation of your humanity with all the full catastrophe of it and willingness to be present to all aspects of your life and willing to clean it up and not to clean up things that are not yours because that's also part of it. The deep sense of codependency and people pleasing and behaviors that we become very maladapted. Things that worked for us to survive early on, once you get clean and sober, you realize, oh, I can't behave like that anymore. Then you have to deal with it as it comes up as you are able because nothing is solved overnight.

Connie:

What a great point, Colette. It's so interesting. Okay, we're going to take a little pause. More with Colette when we return. We'll be right back.

Welcome back. We're here in conversation with Colette about spirit and recovery. Okay. Colette, my next question, I think you maybe even started touching upon that relationship between addiction and shadow work.

Colette:

Yeah. Okay. So there is a seduction, a seductive quality to the internet right now, for example. And I can tell you that our culture is a culture of addiction. We become obsessed with the way people look on Instagram or the way, oh, my life doesn't look like that, my real life. So there must be something wrong with me. I see a lot of young people going through that right now, seeing what it looks like, and it's not the same.

Connie:

Psychologically and biologically. It's a trigger enriched environment because we're set up with scrolling dopamine hits.

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Colette:

Yes.

Connie:

It's like the neurotransmission feedback loop.

Colette:

Yeah. You get rewards too. Oh my God. Look at all the likes. I'm very conscious and very boundaried around social media because it's a time sucker. Look at where we go out. Everybody's got their faces looking at their devices.

Connie:

Yeah.

Colette:

Nobody looks at each other. Even my husband and I sometimes, and we're pretty good at leaving our phones at home when we go to dinner and whatever. If we don't, there we are, and then we're pretty... I'm very conscious of it, but it's not just that. It's like we are looking for ways in which to feel good. As we receive information of stories that makes us feel powerless like the climate change, like-

Connie:

War, yeah.

Colette:

... social justice, war-

Connie:

Famine. Yes, of course.

Colette:

All of these things that feel too big for the individual to handle, then, oh, where's my escape? Oh, I feel good doing that, because you do. You feel good. I don't gamble just because I can just

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really get right in there. So I'll take \$20 to a slot machine if I go to Las Vegas. I work too hard for my money, but I'm not... Because I know that ooh, that feeling of winning. It's like-

Connie:

That awareness though that you're talking about is that anybody can be aware of their behaviors and everyone, the human condition, we all have opportunities to engage or indulge in something, and when we are, especially when we're feeling a certain way. You identified powerless. We get this infusion of news. We get this infusion of events and things beyond our control. It is, in a way, natural to want to soothe ourselves in some way.

Colette:

Yeah. It's a self-soothing thing. Me and ice cream, you should see me. Mark'll, he'll know when I'm past the halfway point on a dessert. He'd be like, "Should you keep going with that?" Because...

Connie:

Oh, yummy.

Colette:

... soothing thing or a tasting thing because it's not-

Connie:

yeah.

Colette:

... right? It goes into a different zone for me and I'm very conscious of that. Food is my thing. I cannot have a very specific type of chocolate chip cookie that has coconut and pecans in it.

Connie:

(laughs)

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Colette:

I cannot have a bag near me. I will eat the whole thing. I can't. I just won't. I've become really aware. That's the worst thing that happens to me now. I eat too many chip coffees. It's not a big deal. But I'm also aware of being out of the moment, being in the soothing, looking for something outside of myself when really, being present, not trying to escape what's really going on, not trying to escape reality and having a reasonable relationship with soothing things, which are good. It's good to be soothing also, but it's not good for us to be doing that all the time when we end up making it harmful.

Connie:

Harmful.

Colette:

There's a level. There's a line to cross.

Connie:

There's a line, a distinguishing. And being aware of that is that clean and sober. So how would you define recovery? And this might be a funny question, but is a person, would you say we're always in a state of recovery? Are you ever recovered or?

Colette:

Yeah, it's a weird conversation because I believe I'm a recovered alcoholic drug addict because one would like to believe that we are past that, but I'm also not safe to pick up a drink. I don't even play with that because somebody said to me, "Why do you call yourself an alcoholic?" Because I know where I went and I've seen it. There has been evidence in front of me when a person goes back out and picks up a drink, they very quickly go to the place they left off and most die or land in an institution or kill themselves. So I can't play with certain things and I never will be able to and I'm okay with that, but I only do that one day at a time. I don't say for the rest of my life, I won't do blah or blah. But spirit, you had asked me a question earlier, and I didn't quite finish it.

Connie:

Yes.

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Colette:

Spirit and recovery is I am always in conscious contact to a higher power, and I don't do this alone. I am clean and sober by the grace of God. I got a second chance at life that I didn't deserve. I didn't win a prize because I was a good person or whatever. I had to become someone new, and I'm continuing to become someone new in order to serve. And because I got that second chance, I don't take my life for granted one iota, and it is in service to the divine. It is my thanks back, the way I live today, and it's not perfect. I make mistakes. I've made poor judgments. That's just human. But where I can and where it is appropriate, I will clean it up. But yeah, God is number one. My primary relationship is to my higher power, period.

Connie:

Because we're in the Wooniverse-

Colette:

That's because we're in the Wooniverse-

Connie:

I got to ask a couple more questions here.

Colette:

Yes.

Connie:

I'm going to turn it to a couple more magical aspects of your recovery because you have talked about this. So I wanted to start pulling a couple threads out. So divination.

Colette:

Oh, that became a big piece.

Connie:

Let's talk about where did divination start entering into your recovery, and how did spirit and divination then continue the journey with you?

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Colette:

So here's the coolest thing. So I had obviously had my own tarot deck. I had my first tarot deck when I was 17, but then somebody gifted me a tarot deck in my twenties. But I was seeing it as the typical mystical, esoteric, exotic fortune telling device.

Connie:

Yeah.

Colette:

Okay. It wasn't what it is for me today until I was in my first or second year of sobriety and I went to a therapist. She was a Jungian analyst, which is why I became fascinated with Jung. But she was a psychotherapist who used Jung and she used a tarot deck called the Handl tarot, H-A-N-D-L, tarot as part of our therapy. And I'm like, "Wait a second. What are those?"

Connie:

Wait.

Colette:

"What, are you telling my fortune? I'm here for therapy." No, no. She didn't ever talk about it and I didn't-

Connie:

No, I'm not, but yeah.

Colette:

... and I had never seen that deck so I didn't equate it to tarot until I looked at it. I went, "Wait, that's a tarot deck." You called it. She says, "We're going to do something unique and different. We're going to pull a card and we're going to talk about what comes up." And so I was like, "Oh good. Pull a card. Oh, I know about cards," in my head, but I didn't see tarot deck until I looked at the box.

Connie:

Wow.

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Colette:

I'm like, "Wait a sec. That's like a tarot, stuff I know. You can do it for this?" And then I was like, I jumped right in there because all of a sudden, the thing that I was most drawn to, which were the mystical arts, it was something I was obsessed over since I was really young and anything to do with divination. Only now, this was me learning how to stay in a conscious contact with my higher power using the same card deck.

Connie:

Wow. Very profound.

Colette:

That was witchy way, you know what I mean?

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

It was like, "Wait a second, I could do that with two? Is that what this is for?" So consequently, I used it as a journaling tool. I started journaling with them and then of course, I became a reader so I started reading. We're not going to really talk about that because I actually avoided it for the first two years. I didn't want anything to do with doing it. And then I was able to see a more therapeutic perception of what the cards were telling me, or more psychological thing as opposed to event driven. This is going to happen or that happen. It was more like, oh, this quality-

Connie:

Insight. Yeah.

Colette:

... is what's-

Connie:

Yeah.

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Colette:
Exactly.

Connie:
Wow.

Colette:
Is what I'm seeing here, and this is the psychology behind it. It doesn't make sense to you. They're like, "Oh yeah. It's totally how I think and how I've been thinking. This is what's been, yeah. Oh, that describes my husband." It became very deep and very wide, but it became a spiritual tool.

So that is why, I think really, it's because I used divination in recovery to track myself because I also didn't trust myself. I trusted God. I didn't trust me at all because I also, right away, didn't... I was clean and sober off drugs and alcohol, but then I picked up food again, you know what I mean? I was still active in an addiction, which was food, but it was better than the other things. So then that took a while and then I gave up cigarettes. So it was layers. So of course, I still always felt that sense of I'm not 100 percent sure I can trust myself, so this will help me. And it did. And I was like, ooh. Not only can I trust spirit, but I can. I have tools. I have a, oh, oh right, this thing today. I have to watch out for this thing today.

And was gung-ho. I went to five meetings a week. I was very active. I started a program with two other guys early on, many years ago, and I was one of the founders of the program. I'm not going to bother talking about it, but I was really committed to everything. And it was a life-changing moment where the woowoo, that I laugh... And that's why we call this INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE. It's a joyful name for this. That's why, for the mystical qualities. There's joy in it, but that was integrated into my recovery right from the get-go.

Connie:
Wow. That's so incredible. And to think of you at that time and how you've evolved your relationship with cards, with then going into Oracle dice. And it's such a rich, now even... Well, I always thought your cards were so rich, but now, even such a deeper, more meaningful point of birth for you and Oracle decks and cards.

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Colette:

It's because of my recovery, yeah. And I use recovery language also because yeah. You said something about are we always in recovery earlier, and again, I've been going around the circles to answering your questions, yeah. I believe that we're not broken, that we're never broken. It's that we perceive ourselves as broken. That all the pieces are there and they can always evolve. So I don't believe we're broken, but I believe that we emerge out of a state of being into the next state of being. And so things have to fall away. One of my favorite, favorite spiritual teachers is Dr. Bayo Akomolafe, who is a Nigerian teacher and healer and philosopher and amazing person. He always say never not broken, but it is the western viewpoint of what is broken, therefore, it's unusable. You throw it away. That kind of brokenness, which is what I identified with before I got clean and sober, that I was a throwaway. That is a different version. So this is you are always emerging, so you're never the same. I think that's what that means. Never not broken is like you are never going to be the same person. You are always going to evolve and move. And if you are conscious and aware of that, then you can celebrate that and not be afraid of the shadow and not be afraid of what has occurred and the deep trauma that you have as an individual, which I had individually, which was by the way, exactly what happened to my mother at the same age, which was also very interesting, which I didn't know about until after, and I was in the hospital and then my mother told me that it happened to her with Russian soldiers when she was 19.

Connie:

Wow.

Colette:

And then she goes, "Don't tell anybody," after that. So meanwhile, I'm sure now she's in spirit, she doesn't mind, but oh yeah. It was like, oh yeah, never talk about the family and never tell anybody that you were ever vulnerable or violated. Ever. Ever. So that was the other thing. I wasn't allowed to talk about it.

But anyhow, but the idea is this, that we are not broken as in throwaway beings. We may be wounded, we may come to recognize that in order to become the person we want to become, we need to change, which means we had to face things that we're afraid of, et cetera, et cetera. But that doesn't mean that the broken quality means we're throwaway. Broken in what I believe

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what he says, and really hit me, was that when a tulip, for example, pushes itself out of the leaves, they break open in order for this flower to rise up. So that's what we're always in the constant evolution of breaking open and not being broken, but breaking open. There's a difference.

Connie:

Like cracking open an egg.

Colette:

Exactly.

Connie:

Cracking, cracking into the next-

Colette:

And then they crack... Exactly, and then another egg comes and it cracks open.

Connie:

Yeah. Yeah.

Colette:

And so that was the other thing that had to change for me is to... And it gave me a great sense of empathy and compassion for people, to realize that yeah, society has conditioned us that... Vishal Lakhani says the culture scape. I like that, the culture scape. That the culture scape, we get conditioned by the culture scape and to see ourselves a certain way. If you don't conform to certain behaviors and norms, et cetera, then you're broken somehow. Or if you have been abuser, or if something has happened.

No. This is part of who we are. I do not regret anything. Not one thing. When people say, "Oh, I'm so sorry that happened to you." I went, "No. Don't be sorry. Don't be sorry that happened to me." As a result of these things that happened to me, and yes, yes, I can totally claim that I was victimized. 1000%, I was victimized, but that doesn't mean that I am a victim.

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Connie:

So it's that it happened for you, for your highest good, or the highest good.

Colette:

Well, at the time, it sure didn't feel like that.

Connie:

Well, I'm just saying now that you're saying.

Colette:

Yes.

Connie:

Yeah.

Colette:

Well now, I made it into that. I made it mean something else, and that is my source of strength. Because what I made it mean when I was younger was that I was a victim, I was broken, I was dirty, I was useless, I was meant to be thrown away. As I got clean and sober and I could see myself that God didn't make junk, and that even the people that did that to me weren't junk either. They were just really... Hurt people hurt people. And how people control other people. Look at what happens in war. They use sex to control the population, against the females in the population because it degrades them, emasculates the men. It's a thing.

And so many women in my membership site, the Oracle Circle membership, we had one woman talked very openly about something and then I shared my story and then I said, "How many of you in here?" It was hundreds of people in there have had an experience like this. And 90% of the people said, "Me. Me, me, me, me, me. I have." I think it's really important for us to heal and change our behaviors so that we do as little harm as we possibly can, continue to become awake to what we do and what we say and what we are not knowing... I know personally, I'm going to be working on myself until I die. And not working on myself like I'm flawed, but evolving. Evolving myself and learning, and learning how to be better connected with greater respect for others. We before me, to the best of my ability and be that emissary.

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And I think each one of us has a unique path. Each one of us has a purpose built right into us. And that being clean and sober is allowing that purpose to be, basically letting me be the steward of that purpose. And I always say, on my prayers, "Use me. Use me for your highest good." And sometimes, I have to see things and experience things that are painful in order for me to change them. It's like, oh, that pattern right there, see that thing you've been doing for years? You see what that does? That's no good. And how are you going to change that? And again, I don't do anything by myself. I do it with God. I do it with honesty to the best of my ability. I do it with a therapist. And I'll go through phases where I don't do therapy, and other times I do. I still use what I learned in the programs that I have attended in the past, and I know where I can get help when I need it. I have enough humility to know that I can't do it alone. That is something I know I'm not... Because be left to my own devices, I'm behind enemy lines. You know what I'm saying?

Connie:
Yeah.

Colette:
I'm totally behind enemy lines in there. I will convince myself, no, no, I don't need to do that. But then I'll be like, Nope. Bring it to someone you trust. Talk it out, work it out. And say, "Okay, what do I need to do, if anything, to clear this and to step into a life I'm proud of?" And I can say I am. I really can say that today.

Connie:
What's your deepest hope from this series that our listeners walk away with?

Colette:
Well, the reason we did it was because when you and I talked, everybody's always asked me, "Tell your story and how did you know come from this?" And we wanted to use this series as a way to acknowledge how much pain there is for so many people and that there is hope. This is about hope. My hope is that people find hope. That's my biggest hope. My intention to do this is to show people they're not alone, that trauma addiction comes in all shapes and sizes. And we do think that we're the only ones that feel that shame, that feel that isolation, that feel that sense of uselessness and rage and repression and all that stuff. We think it's only us, but it's not. And

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there is help. There is absolutely help. Mental health is something where there is help to be had. You just have to want it. You have to just reach out. There's that one section, that one step towards the gods and they'll take 10 steps towards you. And nobody has to suffer alone. Nobody.

Connie:

Let's pull a card together to see if there's anything else the Wooniverse wants us to talk about. This has been really such a beautiful, inspiring, and raw and vulnerable conversation. So thank you so much.

Colette:

Yeah. And what's funny? You know me. I'm pretty effusive, et cetera, and I did feel pretty humbled by the conversation today because it's like, yeah, I revisit. I never want to forget where I came from. Ever. People see me today, oh look at successful Colette. She has all these things. She teaches all over the world. She does all these things. All of those things are true. I am that person, but I grew out of this. I had a lot of manure in my garden.

Connie:

On your little acorn to grow into a sycamore tree.

Colette:

My acorn.

Connie:

Yes.

Colette:

Right? Exactly, and yeah. There was a lot that went into that. I paid a high price to sit in this chair.

Connie:

Well, we're grateful for you sharing.

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Colette:

And I'm always aware of it. Always aware of it too. So no question, I know where I came from. Okay, here we go.

Connie:

You're a role model. Just want to say that.

Colette:

Well, thank you.

Connie:

You're welcome.

Colette:

Let's see what spirit has in store for us to chat.

Connie:

Okay. What does spirit say?

Colette:

Let's see. What else? What else? Did we miss anything? Oh, covenant. Sacred contract.

Connie:

Oh, that's a beautiful one.

Colette:

So I'm going to look up the deck here. Commitment for the greater good. It's important that you understand what you're signing up for. Be sure to read the fine print so as not to commit to something you'll soon regret. So get ready. Don't hesitate to put all your own cards on the table so that your motives and desires are transparent and nothing is left in darkness. When shadow elements remain hidden, the covenant breaks down and becomes a contract with an unspoken dark side that is inevitably fulfilled.

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The bottom line is is that it says you've been invited now by the universe to enter into a sacred contract. So the sacred contract in recovery is I am willing to go to any lengths, any lengths, no shortcuts. If there are shortcuts, the shadow will take over. That's the contract. That's the covenant. That it's got to be clean. That my conscious contact to a higher power and my primary relationship is with spirit and everything comes second. If I let the ego run, that's what's going to happen. So that's what I'm signing up for, is the consciousness of that, and you can't be in denial. It ruins it for yourself if you decide to make a commitment to change. Uh-oh. You better be willing to see what can happen.

Connie:

And also it's like if you're listening to this right now and you are looking for a sign about moving forward and transforming yourself and going into any you know, you need to go into the shadow to take a look to see what is there for you to be able to fulfill that sacred contract. The highest purpose you can contribute to this whole world, your life, your sacred contracts that you sign up for before you even got here.

Colette:

Yep.

Connie:

This is it. This is your sign. There's a lot of tools that you shared, and-

Colette:

But it takes courage.

Connie:

It takes courage, yeah.

Colette:

But I think, here's the other thing about the sacred contract card, which isn't in the card, but I always think of the sacred contract as that we all have a sacred contract when we come onto this planet. We are here as emissaries of the divine. The divine lives inside us. It's not outside separate to us, and I think that's been a problem with many organized religions. I'm not against

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organized religion at all. I actually wanted to be an interfaith minister. I think there's beauty in all of them, but there's this idea of spirit is outside of us and somehow, we're human beings pleading for something out of us, but it lives in us. And that contract is that if we deny that divinity within us and only listen to our ego selves, we are going to have consequences that are going to be painful.

And it goes both ways too. People can project and it's not... They can project onto you too, and we see a lot of that now, especially with polarization that are going on in the world. So our contract is to be the best us, not the best meaning who's best is that? But it's more about-

Connie:
Doing your best.

Colette:
Well, doing your best, but also fulfillment. It's fulfilling the experience of being fully human, bringing your humanities table and bringing love. We have a capacity to really help and heal one another through that one thing. The acts of compassion, love, and also self-care, self-preservation in a way too. Not to try to do other people's work for them. You can't rob people of their bottom either. People have to come to that to themselves. I will never tell anybody you need to be in recovery. When we use those terms in recovery, it means addiction recovery or whatever. That has to be somebody else's choice.

But I can share my journey because I didn't want to go for a year. "No, I'm not going there. No way." That was the last house on the road for me was when I had to surrender because nothing else worked, and it finally did. And that's the gift.

So our contract, if you're not an addict, if you're not an alcoholic, if you don't identify with addiction at all, but you are suffering in some way right now because you're not radically accepting the world as it is around you, you can't really make any changes because you're not seeing with clarity. So it's realizing that we have to be in this together. So just one small act of kindness can change somebody's life and let them feel that they're not alone and you don't even know when you're impacting somebody. You don't know.

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Connie:

Thank you so much, Colette. This was incredible.

Colette:

I am extremely grateful and humbled to be here. Thank you.

Connie:

To find a transcript of this episode, quotes and links to what we've been speaking about here today, head on over to our show notes page at itwpodcast.com or click the link in this episode's description. Thank you for this real and raw conversation and for sharing your story, perspective and insight, Colette. You know we all love you.

And to everyone listening, please remember if anything we've discussed here today is leaving you feeling triggered or you're feeling like something came up for you, we encourage you to take a minute to look up our resources page, which you can find in the show notes. And we're also advocates of deep breathing, self-care and self-compassion. Thank you for listening and joining us here within Spirit and Recovery on INSIDE THE WOONIVERSE. Until next time, be well.

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