

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.*

EP55:

EMDR, Emotional Freedom & Recovery

With Dr. Tammy Valicenti

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.

Hey there. 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 welcome to another episode of our limited edition series called Spirit and Recovery. Now joining us today is a most extraordinary human being, Tammy Valicenti. Tammy is a psychotherapist who specializes in trauma recovery and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy, which is a mouthful. And otherwise, that's known as EMDR. Now Tammy has over 25 years of experience in working with clients to achieve relief from trauma, anxiety, and panic, and is the founder of Transformation Solution, a system that utilizes a synthesis of EMDR, internal family systems, and other evidence based therapies to achieve radical, life changing results in a short period of time.

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And I'm going to tell you something right now, I'm going to out myself because I have personally worked with Tammy on stuff that was stuck for 40 years. And I can attest to the fact that some huge changes happened in a very short period of time, as well as subtle, and they're continuing to, so I am a huge believer in Tammy and what she does because I've had personal experience, and she's a very interesting guest to have. So Tammy, welcome.

Tammy:

So excited to be here, Colette.

Colette:

Very excited that you're here. And we're in a very different dynamic this time, you sitting in that chair, me here, and we're not doing therapy.

Tammy:

It's great. It's great.

Colette:

It's awesome. So I want to know a little bit about you, what your childhood was like. And when did you actually become interested in healing, being a healer? And then of course, because you developed the system that is quite extraordinary, so I really want to know your origin story about this.

Tammy:

Excellent. For me, wanting to do this work wasn't something that started in my head. I kind of knew it. It's not a job or a career, it was a calling. And that started, I don't know, grade school, maybe middle school. I wanted to be a child psychologist. I didn't have a concept really of what that was. I didn't know any. I didn't know what that meant, but I just knew it had to be done.

Colette:

And then how did that play out?

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Tammy:

So the road was a little bumpy at first, but I went to U of Massachusetts undergraduate, studied psychology, then went to Columbia graduate school. I actually avoided addiction and recovery.

Colette:

Interesting.

Tammy:

Right. Well, I have a history in my family, so I come to trauma and addiction honestly, but I didn't know that's where I was headed in my adult life, so I kind of avoided that. But my first love really was trauma. I started working at an organization in New York City that specialized in working with women and children who were dealing with domestic violence and specific population, people with disabilities and domestic violence.

Colette:

Wow.

Tammy:

And then I was running a rape trauma program on Long Island in New York, and realized I can't do this work without understanding addictions, so I did a lot of that work too. But like I said, I come by it really honestly. My family history is, my dad was alcoholic. He was also a survivor of really significant trauma in his childhood, and then as a teen was fighting in Vietnam, so I'm a secondary survivor of trauma and adult child of an alcoholic.

Colette:

Yes, okay. So let's dial down a little bit more, drill down on the idea of the word trauma because it's become quite a buzzword. I've also come to all of this honestly. I had trauma, what I know to be true, et cetera, that still impacted me in my 60s, that happened to be when I was 19. So I would really love us if we could to chat about: What is trauma? What does it really mean? How would we describe it? And how does it impact us when we don't have the tools or the capacity to deal with it? Because we do have collective trauma and then individual trauma. Let's talk about that since we're all talking about it these days.

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Tammy:

Right. Hot topic, hot topic. I mean, one of the ways that I define trauma is very broad based. I think we are all survivors of some sort of, in quotes, trauma. Trauma being anything that overwhelms our ability to cope.

Colette:

Overwhelms our ability to cope, so if something overwhelms our ability to cope, it could be trauma from an event. It could be trauma from an action. Can we make it a little bit more accessible?

Tammy:

Sure.

Colette:

It would be negative, obviously.

Tammy:

Obviously. Right?

Colette:

Something bad happened.

Tammy:

Something bad happened and we can't cope. So it could be something really significant that we all think about as trauma, a plane crash, or childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, those sorts of things. But then we can get really down to the nitty-gritty and wonder, huh, when I was in second grade ... This didn't really happen. But if I was in second grade, and a boy came up, shoved me, called me names, is that trauma? I'm not sure. It really depends on the person's individual experience. But if in that moment, I felt a lot of shame and I pushed that down, and there was a part of me that was frozen in that time, yeah, that was traumatic for me. And I kind of build my psyche around that now.

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Colette:

It's funny because I always thought trauma just meant blunt force. You know what I mean? That some actually happened to you physically, or the idea that you had an event, in my case, there was a lot of violence in my 20s. But I came to recognize that overwhelming inability to cope, actually I can think of an instance when my geography teacher, Miss Prestwitch, reminded me that we weren't really Canadian because my parents were immigrants. My parents had really heavy accents. My dad was Serbian and my mom was German, and although she was Polish, a German national.

Anyway, so they had really, really super heavy accents. Yeah, and she was like, "You're not really Canadian." And I remember leaving then and shoving two big donuts in my face, and then vomiting, and that was the beginning of my bulimia. So I really think that comment that was on her case just benign, she was trying to basically school me in what it means to be really Canadian, because they had been there since, I don't know, since first settlers came, which they forgot to mention that the First Nations people were here first. But it was this whole ... It felt traumatic, but I didn't see it as trauma, but it absolutely changed a lot of how I saw myself and how a sense of shame and unworthiness became part of the fabric of my psyche.

Tammy:

Right. That's a perfect example because trauma typically happens when we're not connected. There's a sense of other-ing, or being alone. 9/11 happens, and you'd expect more people to be traumatized. That wasn't the case. We all went through it together. You see droves of people walking across the bridges together. There's touch. There's a shared mutual experience. In your experience in that classroom, she othered you. Right?

Colette:

Yeah. I really did that alone. Yeah. Interesting. And when I started working with you, well, I mean, I started diving into the idea of trauma because when you work with people as I do, you have to really acknowledge their stories. You can really genuinely work with people or try to help them discover their authentic path or help them transform unless you really understand the nature of their experience, so understanding what someone has gone through has to be part of the dynamic you're talking because there's no such thing as one size fits all. You have to take those things into account, which I think is why this movement has become so popularized right

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now, the idea of trauma informed therapy, trauma informed coaching, trauma informed, you know what I'm saying, so that it's a big thing.

And when I reached out to you, it was because I had realized that I had actually not dealt with an incident that had happened, amongst many, as you know, I won't go into the detail here. But that it was still impacting my reactions and my expectations. As an adult woman, as I was seeing the very same dynamic play out in different ways with other people and thought, "Wow, it's time. It's time that I go deal with this." And so can we talk about how trauma exists in the body, how the story sits somewhere in the body? Because that's what I learned working with you.

Tammy:

Right. I think there's a lot of different ways to talk about that. We can talk about a biological level. We can talk about that on a spiritual level. Maybe let's combine that.

Colette:

Let's talk about all of it.

Tammy:

Yay.

Colette:

Let's go through the list.

Tammy:

All right. So on a biological level, really what's happening is you're activating your sympathetic nervous system. Right?

Colette:

Right.

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Tammy:

So our breathing is deeper and heavier and faster. Our heart rate picks up. Blood sugars kind of go through the roof. And if that trauma isn't lasting, we come back down to parasympathetic, which is easy breathing, digestion, things are operating the way that they should. But when we're activated biologically, oftentimes if we're in an environment where we're activated and reactivated, and reactivated, that we'll just stay at that level.

Colette:

So can we talk about an example of that? So when we're in an environment where we get activated or reactivated, is that environment somehow energetically consistent with or echoing the feeling state that we had in the initial traumatizing moment? Right? This reminds me of that, therefore, I'm in a heightened sense. Or is that you get into that heightened sense of fight, flight, freeze, fawn, attach. And then the other stuff comes up too. I don't know which came first, the chicken or the egg.

Tammy:

Well, I think there's a lot of things happening. It can be that you're in an environment where you're constantly being activated, so you grew up in a home with a raging father. Right? You're walking on eggshells. You're hypervigilant. So your heart rate may be higher at all times. You may be not fully in parasympathetic all the time. Or if you're talking about a one off incident, maybe when you were younger or a teenager, and then later on in adult, I think this is maybe a little bit more what you're talking about, that you're reactivated as an adult, and you're feeling all of that over again. So even in the moment, you're like, "This isn't terrifying. I'm okay. I'm safe, but my body is freaking out. What's going on?"

Colette:

Right. Or you don't even recognize the difference between the two because your feelings tell you that you have to seek out the potential threat. And even though intellectually you know that's it, but you don't think intellectually because that's cut off for you. Right? It's just gone. I want to just go into something I think is really interesting that I think we could talk about because I want to come back to that. But I came across this book, *Shattered Assumptions* by Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. And in it, she shares the three fundamental assumptions that people generally hold. And I want to talk about how trauma can shatter one or more of these beliefs. So we

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typically hold that the world is benevolent. The world is meaningful. And the self is worthy. I found that fascinating because these are the three things that can be very elusive too.

But we're born with these ideas, so let's talk about how trauma can shatter that and define it really, because I think so many people will identify with the conversation that I really want to get it to ... You know what I'm saying? So that people can identify with what we're talking about.

Tammy:

Absolutely. And I think the book sounds brilliant, and the concept's amazing. Right, we're born into this world feeling worthy and feeling safe, and that the world is like you said, a benevolent place. It's the experiences in childhood, the experiences in adulthood that layer on top of that, that make it difficult for us to find that true capital S self, or that aligned with, I don't know, call it what you want, source, God, divine place. But we're all born so pure in that place, but again, all of those experiences provide layers on top. Sometimes we have a hard time finding that. So we may walk around, the world is an unsafe place, people are out to get me. It might not be a conscious thought, but our nervous system is wired that way because of experiences that we were born into. Right? We weren't born that way for sure, though.

Colette:

Right, because there's a default setting that is good, that is healed, that is open, that is safe. And I think we've been, all of us been exposed to sustained uncertainty for so long, with the pandemic and then with the war in Europe, and then all the climate ... You name it, we can just tick off all the list. So I want to kind of talk about how the individual experience of somebody, say for example, who knows that they've experienced trauma haven't really dealt with it. And then after a long period of sustained uncertainty, what that does, and how we can recover from that.

Tammy:

Right. So I'm sure you could guess, and a lot of listeners know already what that does is activates us, triggers us. So where does that bring us? Maybe we have less tolerance for whatever in the world, so we're anxious, we have increased impulse control. We're using alcohol and drugs more. We're eating more. Did I mention sleep?

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Colette:

No. We should be talking about sleep.

Tammy:

We should be talking about sleep, so having difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, not getting enough sleep, shows up as depression. Right? I think we're just more susceptible to all of those things. And if anyone has a significant history of trauma, living in the world right now feels really uncomfortable.

Colette:

And unsafe, right? It just feels ... And you can't put your finger on why. There's just this sense of, I don't know. You know I love the science behind everything, so let's talk about EMDR therapy because I'd love to talk about options for help. And I know for me, this was so extraordinary. I mean, your transformation solution is a number of different modalities, but I did find the EMDR fascinating, so let's talk about the science behind it because there is help. We don't have to all of us wander around as a collective, looking for potential threats everywhere we go. We really can heal. If we can identify this, there's ways in which we can get help, so let's talk about that.

Tammy:

Right, absolutely. So EMDR, like you said, stands for eye movement, desensitization, reprocessing. It was a technique invented 35 or developed 35 years ago by Dr. Francine Shapiro. And she noticed that when she moved her eyes back and forth and thought about something disturbing, that it became less disturbing, and she got really curious about that. And out of that, she developed EMDR. So it was 30 years ago, 35 years ago, it was just a technique.

Now it's a full blow therapy used for everything, not just trauma and PTSD. But even upper limiting, I can tell you story upon story of working with folks who because of their history and negative beliefs about themselves, not necessarily any significant trauma, but just a part that was kind of ostracized and put aside because of something that happened when they were younger, again not necessarily a trauma, but that upper limiting of, I'm not good enough to do X, Y, and Z, and really holding one's self. EMDR's really effective with things like that. I don't know if you want to get into what the science is behind that, or what a session would look like.

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Colette:

Both.

Tammy:

Great. All right.

Colette:

This is about you and it.

Tammy:

Fantastic.

Colette:

Let's do it.

Tammy:

As you already know, EMDR, what's great about it is it's not just a cognitive therapy. It works with the whole body, and it's a holistic system based therapy. So in session, we're talking about an experience and we're remembering it with maybe a visual memory, but most important, and that's almost an aside, most important is: What are the sensations in your body, Colette? And what are the emotions that go with it? So we pair all of those things together, and for good measure, we'll throw in a negative belief about yourself. And then we pair that with some eye movements back and forth, or taps back and forth, sounds in your ears back and forth. And then through that, the transformation and the processing, reprocessing happens. We can really take the memory that's still super activated in the present, you know when you can bring it up and heart races, or you feel embarrassed, or your face flushes.

We can really take that memory and at the end of the processing or reprocessing, it will not activate you anymore. You can think, "All right. That was a really, really shitty experience, and I remember how awful that felt, even when I talked about it, but I don't feel it anymore."

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Colette:

Yeah, and I can attest to that. But what I also found that spiritually, here's what happened with me. So that all happened, that was true. We did that. We tapped on my leg, et cetera, and we brought those things forward. And then what I started noticing that the outer world, and I wonder if it is because of how the reticular activating system of the brain takes our eyeballs and looks for evidence in the outer world that what our new feeling state is, is actually true. So without going into too much detail, but I'll bring up what happened with this particular person that was involved in a violent experience that had brought me a lot of shame in my early 20s. Out of the blue, this man sends me a Facebook request to be my friend, right in the middle of our therapy. Remember that?

Tammy:

I do. I do.

Colette:

I was like, "Oh, my God." And then I realized I didn't care anymore. That was the most incredible ... What would possess this person to send me a friend request on Facebook? It was incredible. Rapist is asking you to come and be friends. I'm like, "Oh, my God." But it was like I didn't feel a thing, and I actually went and looked at his page and his brother's page. And I was like, "These are just old men now that I could care less about." And I can tell you, prior to that, now I can talk about it because I think it's worth talking about because I kept that inside. I never even told anybody about that. I could tell anybody about these other things that happened to me because I wrote about them in my books, so this is common knowledge. And it was related to my alcoholism and drug addiction at the time, my early 20s.

But I never talked about this one incident because it has brought me so much shame. And the fact that I literally ... And it still did two years ago. And the pandemic brought it to me and said, "You know what, Colette, it's time for you to clean house, really clean house." And then I came to you quivering, "I have this one thing that happened that I haven't told anybody."

Tammy:

So courageous, so courageous.

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Colette:

And then all of a sudden, this happens. It was like the universe went, "Okay, let's see how far you've come." And I'm like, "What the heck?" So this stuff really works. And for me, it was the last house on the road. Right? It's that kind of thing that, okay, I've tried everything, talk therapy, I've done all these other things. But sometimes a trauma, especially if it's shame based because we are talking about the spirit and recovery, this limited series is also about recovery from addiction. And I definitely believe that specifically for women, and I can't speak for men, because I just know myself as a woman, or anybody who identifies as a woman, there are certain things that I can tell you by having been in a women's treatment center that we had all been sexually abused.

All of us had experiences that brought trauma around the loss of boundaries, just a tremendous amount of things that no matter where we came from, because we were there from all walks of life, we had the identical story. And I found that more and more in 12 step rooms when I got clean and sober. And I've been sober now 37 years. So this is a thing that's in common, it goes hand in hand with addiction, so and the shame. And it never left me. It never left me.

Tammy:

No.

Colette:

And I didn't want to tell anybody, so it was just really interesting. And now I'm just so a fan of this because we didn't talk it through. I didn't need to tell the story again. I needed to do something that could take it out of my body. And I didn't know that's what I needed. I just know my mutual friends that we all share you in common, you work with a lot of us. And it really changed my life. So I want to talk about the spiritual aspect of it, and then I'd love to hear your take on that because I had a spiritual awakening during the session. And what had happened was, it was very similar to an out of body experience where I could see, I was in this big, giant house, and this little child version of me, or this little part of me was there. And I could actually see it, and it was a mystical experience while we were doing that.

And I felt that at a spiritual level, it was bringing me back to the core of innocence, the core of the connection to spirit because what happens when we continue to hold trauma in our bodies,

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we don't 100% connect with spirit. There's still this little disconnection because we think, "Well, this part of me can't ... Well, that's just always going to be a scar or a wound." And yet, when I released it, I had more greater access to spirit, greater access to source, greater access to my creativity. It was incredible, so I want to hear your take on that, and the spiritual aspects of trauma that's unhealed, and then what it's healed.

Tammy:

Well, that was a beautiful summation of your experience, and that's exactly what happens as you heal those parts, and really pull fear out of the system. You're able to more fully be connected to spirit, to self, to divine. I think a big part of that is, and I think you kind of hit the nail on the head, a big part of that work is, and that's where the IFS piece or the parts piece comes in. Yes, deactivating your nervous system helps, and getting rid of that fear does help in that connection. But the other piece is getting in connection with the part of you that's been exiled off that was too shameful to talk about it. Right?

So we bring her out of hiding. You connect with her. You have the compassion, the love, and the understanding, and you're able to give her everything she needs, and then bring her to where she needs to be, whether it be in the present with you, having this interview with me, or to that beautiful, mystical, magical house that she lives in. Right?

Colette:

Yeah. It's trippy. It was really amazing. Yeah. And so the internal family system's at peace because I do want people to hear that too, that it's not just I'm going to shift it out of my nervous system and get rid of it because there's a story attached to it. We have to take a little break now. More with Tammy when we return. We'll be right back.

Oh, thanks for joining us today. And welcome back. With us today is Tammy Valicenti, a psychotherapist who specializes in trauma recovery. If we could segue into this other conversation that's also become quite popular, which is working with ancestors. This was something that my mother went through too.

Tammy:

Of course.

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Colette:

Which I had found out, and she had told me never to tell anybody. She's crossed over now, but there was a lot of secrets growing up, and my mom had been through the war, World War II, as had my father, and a lot went down. Plus, we didn't even know we were Jews. My mother's father was killed in a concentration camp in Dachau, so there was a lot of family history that was trauma based. I didn't know, but I had it in my body when I was ... I had it, I grew up with it.

Tammy:

Yeah, it's in your DNA. Right?

Colette:

So in a weird way, having done this, I feel like I set my mom free. It just feels so different.

Tammy:

Absolutely, you have. Absolutely 100%. Her story is a little different because you were able to shift your DNA as well.

Colette:

Right.

Tammy:

But the remarkable thing about this is that it's not just deactivating, where you're kind of touching the issue a little bit. You get to retell the story, so that's the remarkable thing about the EMDR and the combining it with the IFS piece, is that we get to retell it. So it's not just that, in your instance, that this awful thing happened to you, and you had no control over it, and you were a victim of it. No. Through the reprocessing with EMDR and then getting you out of that, you retell the story. So now you're, I don't remember the exact details, but now I'm powerful, now I have agency. Right?

Colette:

Yeah. Now I have agency. And I no longer am afraid of the part of me that didn't, nor am I consistently looking for similar experiences today, although they wouldn't be exactly like that,

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they're much more implied. I don't need to keep doing it over and over again, trying to find healing. It is healed, so I'm not even vaguely attracted to that energy anymore, which also is confusing. Why are these kind of people coming into my life challenging me? It feels just like that. And then I realized, well, maybe, oh, that's interesting. I think also, having like you said, going there and telling the new story, I think what we have to all be very careful of, and this is just my opinion because I went through this myself and I see it in clients, I see it also just in the rooms I'm in, and the Facebook groups that we run, the story of being victimized versus victimhood.

So we experience, many of us have experienced a situation where we have been victimized, either by a one-off event, by society itself, by family, by experiences that become a story that we tell. So the difference of telling the story about victimhood, which is where I am identified as a victim, is very, very different than saying, "Yeah, I was victimized here. And this is what I did to change that, and I am not that person." That's really important to remember not to be attached to the victimhood, because I am noticing since trauma has become quite a popularized topic, that people are loosely using the term to say, "Oh, that's my trauma," or, "That's my trigger. Oh, my God, you triggered me. Oh, my God." Do you know what I mean? Instead of like, "Okay, let's be responsible for this."

Tammy:

I think you're right. I think a lot of people will say, "PTSD, I can't do that." I think you're really diminishing it, for sure.

Colette:

Right?

Tammy:

Right. Let's have a little deference for people that really have PTSD or have experienced some things like that.

Colette:

Yeah. And also to note that there is real genuine help to be had. And that new story is available. That's the thing, it empowers you, and as a result of doing this psychological work, you

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automatically have greater access to spirit. You just do. Your intuition becomes ... It turns on, your creativity, your capacity to trust. I always thought that I was trusting. I had a tremendous amount of faith. I do this work, the spiritual work, blah, blah. But that was one thing I just figured, well, that's just always going to be there. That's just there.

Tammy:

No, no. Not the case.

Colette:

No. And then I thought during the pandemic, "Well, why don't I change this too? Why don't I go deal with this, this thing that sits in my throat that makes me want to vomit when I think about it?"

Tammy:

Right.

Colette:

Right? I think I'm going to go do this now.

Tammy:

Yeah. And it also doesn't have to be a thing that someone remembers. There have been many times I've worked with folks, I've got this feeling like I'm not sure. Okay, where's the feeling? You said, "It's a vomit in my throat." All right, well, go with that feeling in your body, and then the emotions that go with that. Let's tap that through and see what comes up and where that goes. And also, what you're talking about, Colette, it's really about connection. It's in those moments we were disconnected, in the classroom, when you were traumatized by this man, we were disconnected from ourselves and from others. And this sacred place that we create, you and I have done, allows you to connect more to yourself and to spirit and divine.

Colette:

So okay, circling back on the point I mentioned earlier about the three assumptions we have about life and how trauma shatters our belief in them. How do you know when the EMDR has done its job and healed the trauma? Is it now about being able to hold those three beliefs or

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assumptions again? And could that feel like a miracle unto itself? And do you have any stories? Because I know we can't name names, but I'd love to hear some of the stories because I just shared mine because it really was astounding, astounding. I could even fantasize, bring up those people in my head, and now I'm just like, "Who cares?" That's impossible, just impossible.

Tammy:

Oh, I'm so grateful every day I get to do this. You have no idea.

Colette:

Totally, it's impossible that those things could've ... I mean, my whole life, that's been hiding in the back of my head.

Tammy:

I know. Did you find yourself looking for it? Where did that go?

Colette:

Well, yeah.

Tammy:

Yeah. People do that. Yeah.

Colette:

Yes. You know what it did though, too? It made me feel more grounded in the weirdest way that had nothing to do with that, nothing to do with the exact thing, but I feel much more rooted. I would say I'm more rooted in my being. Nobody can pull me up by the roots anymore.

Tammy:

No. You have more connection to the core of you.

Colette:

I only started noticing it when I started painting. Well, I mean, I didn't start painting, but it showed up in my art, which I found fascinating because I'm like, "Wow, I feel like a different person."

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Tammy:
It's so great.

Colette:
Wait a second. How is this possible? So let's go there. How does that work? And then let's talk about some stories that you know that you're able to share.

Tammy:
I guess what you're asking is, "How does someone know when they're done with their work, with their EMDR work?" And I think it really depends on person to person. A lot of people come in with specific things, and this is going to a little bit of a story of someone I worked with, but someone came in. I've got tinnitus, and says, "I've done some research, and EMDR can help." I'm like, "Really? Sure."

Colette:
Really?

Tammy:
So I actually did some research, and I think he was right.

Colette:
Did it work for tinnitus? No kidding. Mark has tinnitus. We'll send him to you. Okay, all right. Did it work? I want to hear.

Tammy:
Three sessions, there's relief, sleeping through the night.

Colette:
No.

Tammy:
Yes. yes.

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Colette:

No.

Tammy:

Yes. Yes.

Colette:

Oh, my gosh. Okay.

Tammy:

The panic related to it is gone. The tinnitus is still there a little bit, but it recedes to the background.

Colette:

Wow. Okay, this is meant to be, this conversation. Okay.

Tammy:

So does that person feel like they're living in a benevolent world, that they're feeling safer? I'm not sure if all of those ... What was the third thing you mentioned?

Colette:

The self is worthy.

Tammy:

Worthy.

Colette:

The world is meaningful. The world is benevolent.

Tammy:

Yes. So I don't think necessarily in that quick sessions, three session treatment, all of that happened. I think maybe that person came to me with all of that in place mostly, and it was just this kind of one specific thing.

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Colette:

And what about somebody else, for example?

Tammy:

Someone comes to me, I want to stay in self when I go back and see my family of origin, when I'm around my sister.

Colette:

That's a big one.

Tammy:

Right?

Colette:

Yes. Let's talk about that. How did that work?

Tammy:

Good question.

Colette:

Yeah, like Thanksgiving, Christmas, all kinds of different family occurrences. What happens when one has an entire panic attack when you go in the house? I used to eat an entire thing of chocolate chip cookies at my mother's house because I couldn't be there without shoving food in my face, and this is back when I had an eating disorder. But I just couldn't go, I just had to eat my way through the whole time.

Tammy:

Right, right, right. And a lot of times, it's really hard to stay in self. We regress back to that petulant, angry child, or whatever you were at that time. So how does that go? That definitely goes to: What was it like to live in that house growing up? What were the interactions with your sibling and with your parent? And maybe no big T traumas as we define them, per se, but there was a diminishment of self. That person maybe wasn't seen and heard. So we work on that with

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EMDR and the IFSE piece as well. And lo and behold, that person's setting clearer boundaries, can sit at the dinner table without regressing. Can they spend a whole week in a vacation home with their family without losing it? Probably not. But who'd want to do that anyway?

Colette:

Right, exactly. I mean, yeah, I get that. I really get that. Has anybody ever talked to you besides me about my spiritual awakening, which was just so shocking? Has anybody talked to you about how working with you or working with your technique, the Transformation Solution, has impacted their spirituality specifically?

Tammy:

I know that happens almost on a daily basis. I'm thinking about something specific. In fact, even yesterday, my first two sessions, it was all just spiritual. It was conversations and processing around connection to self. And where is that for me? And that's where I feel, speaking for the client, that's where I feel most myself and okay. And how do I find that? And how do I stay in that? I keep getting pulled out by all of these forces.

Colette:

Right, right. Yeah, by all these forces that are external to us, and I think that's key that whenever we're disconnected from spirit, which I think is the greatest wound that all humanity has right now is our disconnection from spirit in all things. But yeah, we get pulled away from the self with a capital S, and coming, bringing them back. Go ahead.

Tammy:

I can think of one instance, a woman came to me, wasn't sure if this was sexual abuse in her history. And again, we don't have to know. It's just the sensation in your body and the emotions that go with it. Lo and behold, some visions, some memories come up. Though, that's not typical. With EMDR, even if you have a sense, it's very rare that it will uncover some memory. But it did, and that was processed in I think three, four sessions. And then after that, she comes back, she's like, "I just had this experience. I had sex and I was present, and I enjoyed it, and I was grounded." Again, three, four short sessions. And if that's not a spiritual experience, I don't know what is.

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Colette:

Yeah, because when we come to our selves, it is much more is available to us. That's interesting too because when people have that history, it's really easy to disconnect in the act because you can't put two and two together. You can't put love with sex together. It becomes this kind of strange bridge that you have to eventually build. Question. Can the strides be made within the realm of healing trauma with EMDR ever be reversed? Or is it permanent?

Tammy:

Great question. It is absolutely 100% permanent, so the results you see, people ask that all the time. And there's fear around it. Right?

Colette:

Yeah.

Tammy:

Am I going to lose this feeling? Is this going to go away? No. The answer's no.

Colette:

I thought that. I completely thought that. And I sent looking. I actually, remember I said that person sends me a Facebook friend thing. I'm like, "What? No." But it was so interesting because I actually made myself dive in and look at the pictures. And I couldn't make it come.

And then I actually brought myself to the memory of the event, and I couldn't make the shame come. It just wasn't there. It was like, "Wow, I'm just looking at this dispassionately, disconnected completely." I get what happened. I totally saw what happened. I feel more compassion for me at the time, and being the victim of something like that is ... I didn't identify with it. I was just like, "Wow, that was a shitty thing that happened that actually made me who I am now." And I couldn't force it.

Tammy:

Right, go with it.

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Colette:

Because I didn't, I was like, "Is this real? Is this really going to go away now?" Is this?

Tammy:

Yeah.

Colette:

I will tell you honestly, it feels permanent. It does.

Tammy:

It is. It is. You reprocessed and deactivated that memory, but also, you freed that part of yourself that was exiled off. And she is now a part of you, like you said, that experience was part of me, but it is not me. Right?

Colette:

Right.

Tammy:

And it's not activated. So yes, you reintegrated that part that was cordoned off, that was jailed by that experience.

Colette:

And I like that you used the word exile because I think that many of us exile that part of ourselves. It's a way to stay safe. I can't connect to that. But it doesn't work because then you keep repeating and keep being attracted to what you would never intellectually be attracted to these things. But I think it's the eyeballs. We keep noticing the evidence in the outer world that we're not safe, or that somehow some event could create shame in us, or it's a very interesting thing, very, very interesting. I find it fascinating.

Tammy:

Yeah. I mean, even though you've exiled or cordoned her off, because of that, she has so much power. It's when you bring her closer and integrate her with you that she has less power over you.

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Colette:

So let's talk about the inherent gifts of that self that was traumatized. What are the gifts that reside in trauma and in the healing of trauma? Because I know that it did feel like there was a part of me that was stuck, frozen in amber, that I couldn't forgive, that I was ashamed of, that I took on that was my fault, which is very typical too for women who have addiction issues, who find themselves in patterns of sexual violence and things like that, which happened to me, and I can say to me now because it's like, "Well, I participated in that, but I'm no longer ... " I realize that I have no shame here, no shame. This is what happened. This is who I became. And this is what I can offer now.

Tammy:

So the gifts, beginning with you've unblended from that part, and you're not weighted down by the shame of it. Specifically, just on a PTSD level, folks are then able to sleep better, all of those things. But I think the bigger, greater gifts are certainly you're less symptomatic, but the bigger greatest gifts is that you walk around whole, and there's a freedom in that. Right?

Colette:

And more compassionate. Right? I think people develop that you can have more compassion because you all of a sudden, that one part of you that you've disowned is now something you can care about.

Tammy:

Right. It started with compassion for self in that part, that maybe you would've hated, or shamed, or raged at, or disliked. But as you got to know her, you could have a lot of love and compassion for her and bring her close, and just give her all the love and things that she needed that she didn't have. And so the other gift is that we're able to be more connected, more connected to each other, more connected to source, connected to family, to friends, connected to self.

Colette:

I think we can't really genuinely have all the connections to friends and families ... Well, that's not true. I think we can be connected, but the connection to self with a capital S, that higher self,

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is that you get connected to the blueprint of why you're here, your real contributions, your authentic desires, as opposed to the things you think you should have. You're not looking for clues in the outer world to tell you if you're okay or not, or to tell you what you should be doing. You just inherently know, and that's why I think this relationship between spirit and recovery, and recovery from trauma can actually bring you even deeper to your spirituality, deeper to the core of why you're here. And also, I think that healing of fear, I think the pandemic and then the war brought a lot of fear back to people. I'm glad it happened to me because that's why I went and got help from you. I better deal with this thing that's come up.

Tammy:

I am too. I am too.

Colette:

Wait a second. This happened 40 years ago. Why am I thinking about it every day now? That's not normal.

Tammy:

Well, at that moment, that was your highest spiritual teacher. Right?

Colette:

Totally. Oh, my God. But that's the thing, so let's talk about that, how trauma can be your best spiritual teacher.

Tammy:

Sure.

Colette:

How it calls you, I mean, it brought me to my knees and called me to the table and say, "Okay."

Tammy:

If we listen, if we don't run from it, if we don't hide from it, exactly, our highest, greatest spiritual teacher. Follow the calling.

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Colette:

Follow the calling. So what do you love most about the work you do?

Tammy:

I've gotten into podcasts lately. These are really fun, but I have to tell you-

Colette:

I know you were on Gabby's. You were on Gabby's.

Tammy:

I was, I was.

Colette:

We share you.

Tammy:

And I did Aviva Romm's. I don't think that's been aired.

Colette:

So cool.

Tammy:

I've got another one coming up I think tomorrow. I love doing this work. It's super fun. Most importantly, I want the word to get out to folks who are suffering or carrying the weight of things like this, and you just don't have to.

Colette:

No.

Tammy:

It's just not necessary.

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Colette:

And it's not that complicated. That's the other thing.

Tammy:

I was going to say it's an easy fix.

Colette:

It is, which is shocking to me because I love to complicate things. I love complexity. I love things that take forever. I love all these ... And then when I got here, it was like, "Well, that was easy. What the heck is ... Why have I waited so long?" And is it true that it was ... Wait a minute now. There's got to be something wrong with this.

Tammy:

There's a catch. There's a catch.

Colette:

I mean, literally there's a catch. I was looking for the catch.

Tammy:

No catch, no catch.

Colette:

How come this happened like this? Oh, yeah. I was like, "I'm obsessed now." And it's so funny because afterwards, I realized I'd really done this part. And then I'm like, "What else could I do? What else could I work with next?" I'm going to come back to you now. I've got a whole new list of things.

Tammy:

I can't wait.

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Colette:

That are not necessarily trauma based, but perhaps a ceiling that I'd like to move beyond. But it is so true that there are tools, and that's why I wanted you on this series because I want people to know that there are tools, and they are not hard. And they're not hard to find.

Tammy:

No.

Colette:

And they work.

Tammy:

They do.

Colette:

They work.

Tammy:

They do.

Colette:

And I am living proof that they work, so thank you for being here. Let's pull a card together to see if there's anything else. The Wooniverse wants to talk about it.

Tammy:

So excited for that.

Colette:

I chose the oracle of seven energies because it operates off of the seven spiritual components of a person's life experience. It's also the seven psychological concepts that we work through, and basically seven categories that life is made of, so we'll pick a topic and see-

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Tammy:
So excited.

Colette:
If we can riff on one more thing.

Tammy:
Great, great.

Colette:
That came out, so let's take that. Okay, well, this is too easy. It's called into me, I see.

Tammy:
Are we surprised?

Colette:
Come on. Are we surprised?

Tammy:
Not at all, not at all. Into me, I see.

Colette:
Yes. Okay. I'm going to just read you a little bit of an excerpt from the guidebook, and that's this.

Tammy:
Before you read that, can I just ... Because it just touches on something you asked me before, which is: What do you love about your work? I mean, it's the podcast, yes, it's really fun, but it's the moments, and you've experienced this with me. It's the sacred space between the two of us that we create, and those moments of ah-ha, or holy shit, something shifted.

Colette:
The holy shit piece, yes.

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Tammy:

There's nothing, there's nothing on this planet or any other planet I'd rather be doing. I'm jazzed by it every freaking day.

Colette:

Yeah. And it is amazing, it is absolutely amazing. So here's what it says. At certain precious moments, you're called into a deep and meaningful connection with the world or another person. I'm going to cry now. A magical affinity arises with the kind of intimacy that in turn encourages a greater understanding of yourself. The relationship acts as a mirror, helping you see your own patterns. What it reflects about you can further your own personal evolution. Intimate relationships hold up a mirror of truth and reveal more treasures than you might ever expect. If you can look into it, take a risk, and see everything is beautiful. Even in its imperfections, imagine how deep you could go. That's what I wrote for this card.

Tammy:

That's the card?

Colette:

That's the card.

Tammy:

That's the actual ... That's amazing...

Colette:

Crying.

Tammy:

That is so beautiful and so perfect, so perfect. This is sacred work we do.

Colette:

Yeah. And we need each other. It's the sacred work you and I get to do, but also, this is what everybody needs. We need more intimacy. We have become so divided and so much division everywhere, and we need to come together, whatever it takes for us to do. And if anybody

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listening here that has had any kind of trauma, any kind of past experience that we know there is help, we know that it can be done. And what you get at the end of it is the capacity for connection in a way that you've never had before because I know it's true for me.

Tammy:
Absolutely true. Yes, absolutely true. Bravo.

Colette:
To learn more about Tammy and all her other offerings, you can visit her at transformation-solution.com, transformation-solution.com. And 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. Tammy, what a great conversation. Thank you.

Tammy:
I'm so grateful for you.

Colette:
Oh, ditto. Thank you so much for joining.

Tammy:
So fun.

Colette:
And I hope, I really hope the listeners heard this today, and it works, it really, really works. Don't wait 40 years like I did.

Tammy:
No, not another minute.

Colette:
To deal with something.

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Tammy:
Don't wait another minute.

Colette:
Go do it.

Tammy:
Yes.

Colette:
Yeah. It works, it works. What a great conversation. What did we learn today, all of us? Well, oh, my gosh, well, we learned so much. And of course, I am a huge, huge supporter of this kind of work because it actually works because I know it works. But the spiritual piece here, when we pulled the card, into me, I see, which is exactly what this is about. We become so disconnected from ourselves if we don't deal with our genuine trauma that we've experienced, whether it be PTSD, whether it be a number of things that she called it little T, or the big T, or just the things that prevent us from being fully, wholly connected to one another and to, of course, spirit. But this does open up our connection to the universe, where everything does become possible. I just loved talking with Tammy Valicenti today. So until next time, I'm Colette Baron-Reid. Be well.

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