

compassionate activism

Sandra: Hello, everybody! Today is the seventh session of the online seminar for Compassionate Activism and so we are more than halfway through. We are on our fourth of five practices. Let me share the screen so you can see it.

So the fourth practice is about Compassionate Truth-Telling and Consciousness-Raising Inquiry. And actually, in the last session we had started to cover this. What we had discovered, as I was explaining, is this is actually a summary of the first three.

The first three practices are:

The practice of Humility and Curiosity. This is what opens us up to wanting to learn. To being curious. Wanting to understand what is going on. First and foremost with ourselves. And then also, if you desire, with somebody else.

The second practice was around Distinguishing the Three Different Realities and Acknowledging External Reality. Distinguishing –

Oh, here. Let me go back to stop share. Sorry.

The second practice of Distinguishing Realities is looking at how we have three different realities happening. The first one is my own internal reality, which is the one that we have access to. The second reality is the other person, who we don't have access to, their internal reality. Only when we engage in conversation and ask them and invite them to share, then do we start to understand how they perceive things. Then there's the third reality, which is external reality. External reality is essentially the words, the actions and the energies being exchanged between you and the other person.

We had talked about how the major issue that comes into play is we start thinking that our internal reality is all three realities. So what you perceive to be happening – your internal reality, your experience of it, your feelings around them, meanings you're attaching to it – you think that's true for the other person or it should be true

for the other person. Even though they're giving all these indications that it's not – as well as that it's also what's happening externally.

Like there's the inherent meaning in the event that's happening. What we had talked about was: All it is is some words, some actions, and some energies. Of which we have some very faulty memories of. Of which it's hard for us to receive fully because we're actually dealing, we're filtering our understanding of what's happening through our past. Oftentimes our pain, our fears, our traumas as well as how we perceive ourselves – who we are, our personalities.

We can sometimes perceive external realities with greater accuracy and sometimes it's just a lot of filters getting in the way. It's actually focusing, being able to distinguish: There's actually three different realities at play. They all coexist at the same time and they're all different. They could be wildly different, actually.

And there's nothing right or wrong about that. It's just what's happening. The problem comes into play when you start confusing our reality for everybody else's just because it's really powerful for us, really true for us.

That led us to the third practice. The third practice is the Practice of Gentle Mindfulness and Compassionate Self-Accountability.

That was taking a breath. “Ok.” Maybe there's more happening than we realize initially. First practice. Then second practice, “Let me pause for a second and look at my own internal reality and see what's going on there.” Which is the second practice.

With this third practice it's like, “Ok now, what is going on? What is real for me?” and we let go of what we've been calling the toxic swirl of make-believe. The toxic swirl of make-believe is when we're resisting reality. We're thinking, “That should be different. It has to be different,” just because we really want it to be different.

Or we start blaming ourselves and judging ourselves. This is all to distract ourselves from what's going on, which is just the pain. I've been doing coaching and some visualizations with everybody to help them get access. Help them get rid of that toxic swirl so they can just in their own internal experience and get in touch with what is really underneath it. Unpacking those layers of feelings to get to that need that they haven't been addressing.

By addressing that need, by identifying their need they are then able to address it. As people have been sharing through the coaching, it shifts from a place of being really emotionally charged and stuck into a place of feeling at peace. At peace and feeling empowered and feeling creative about how they want to approach the situation.

All of a sudden it's not that they're powerless and voiceless. It's like, "No. Now there are lots of options." That's because we're dealing with reality as opposed to the make-believe world, the toxic swirl of make-believe. If you put all your time and energy into the make-believe world, you can't impact reality because you're not even dealing with reality.

This is what mindfulness brings; it helps you get back in touch with the present moment and we are bringing mindfulness to ourselves.

This fourth practice is really: How do we take what we've done with ourselves and bring it to the situation and the other person. How do we bring that to the other person – the same practices that we brought to ourselves?

I want to stop for a second there. I want to give a quick overview so that people can see how all the four practices flowed into each other and how really it's the same thing. Just broken down into different parts so that you could see exactly how to do it. But now we're just applying it from ourselves and learning to now apply it to somebody else.

I just want to check in with folks and see –

One) Have they done this in the past couple weeks? And if so, if somebody'd like to share their experiences, that'd be great.

Two) If somebody tried and really struggled, that's also a great opportunity.

Three) If somebody really felt them make that shift as well on their own and wanted to share that, that would be great as well.

You can also type in the group chat if you had tried it out and how it went.

Josette: If you're on the phone, unmute is *6.

Student 1: I feel like I spaced out for a moment about what exactly you asked us to share. Sorry!

Sandra: Yes. I was just asking if folks had tried out the practices over the last couple of weeks and how it'd gone for them, if they had any questions, if they got stuck somewhere, if they wanted to ask some questions. Or if it really worked for them, if they wanted to share that and celebrate that, that'd be great.

Student 1: Cool. Ok. Thank you.

Sandra: Looks like someone wants to share?

Noelle: Yeah. Hi. My name's Noelle and I guess my experiences...

Going back through the practices – can you hear me alright?

Sandra: Yeah, I can hear you.

Noelle: I teach at-risk youth at an elementary level and so bringing in this dynamic of teacher and student, I feel like that always make it really complex for me. Because I always want to be level-headed in dealing with kids and I don't always know their background.

I don't really know what's going on at home. Because that's their reality. They're little so they really don't understand that.

For me, I want to thank you because a lot of the practices that you've been talking about have helped me kind of take a step back. And one of the things – you said it on one of the sessions earlier on – that rather than react simply to the situation, to stop yourself and get curious.

“Ok. What's happening right now? Why are they choosing to respond that way?” And just that, not reacting to the situation but getting curious about it has helped me. I guess I just wanted to share that, the simple matter about getting curious about the situation.

Sandra: Yeah. What does that make possible? What makes it all different for you?

Noelle: I guess having a deeper understanding of why they're responding to something the way they are. Let me think of a situation.

One of my fifth grade boys, we've been doing – I'm an art teacher so we've been doing self-portraits. They've been using a lot of expressive color and one of the boys asked me – this is an African American male – he asked me, "They're drawing brown; is that racist?"

The room kind of went hush because this child likes to bring up racist issues frequently – which is interesting for a fifth grade classroom – and rather than responding with aggression, I stopped and went, "Why do you think that's racist? Why would it be racist for them to do that and express themselves that way?"

He took a step back because I don't think a lot of teachers question him on why he chooses to respond in certain ways. "I guess it wouldn't be racist in certain ways."

I think it was good for my classroom community, too, to have that option as well. I wanted to thank you for that tool.

Sandra: Wow. That's really powerful. Like you said, he probably hasn't had many teachers be curious about why he thinks the way that he does and didn't just override it, dismiss it, assuming he's wrong.

Noelle: Yeah.

Sandra: He took a second to think about it and was like, "Oh, wait. Maybe that's alright, actually."

Noelle: Yeah. I think he was really surprised by it because a lot of the time he acts out for different reasons but I feel like the kids get a lot of the, "No, we shouldn't be doing this." A lot more commanding instead of coming from a place of questioning. I think that's a little bit more refreshing. Him being able to express himself in that sense, someplace obviously.

Thank you.

Sandra: Powerful. That's very powerful. Thank you so much for sharing that. Awesome.

Josette: We have a question from Aurora. Aurora, do you want to speak it or I can also read it.

Aurora: Sorry. I had to figure out where the on button was.

Josette: No worries.

Aurora: I haven't engaged directly with the practices yet. I'm not sure if I'm ready or – I'm not sure if you're familiar with the spoon theory – but I don't know if I have the spoons, or the energy, to really get into it right now. But I live in Massachusetts and in some areas of the country they're passing anti-trans bathroom bills and –

Sandra: You're frozen for a second. That rarely happens... Oh, you're back.

Aurora: I'm back? Ok.

There's been a lot of dialogue about it on Facebook and I haven't been engaging directly. But I have been trying to engage in dialogue about it on my own feed. One of the things I wanted to know was, like with the principle of curiosity, when you're trying to explore why the other person thinks the way they do: How do you engage with their reality while still respecting the reality of a trans person?

On the one hand it's helpful to frame it as, "Well, this is how it affects cisgender people." That makes it more valid for a cisgender person. But on the other hand the trans person is like, "Wait a minute. This whole thing is for my safety. Why are you focusing on how it benefits cisgender people and not a trans person?"

How do you differentiate between their reality and the reality of a marginalized person?

Sandra: It's not that...

Well, one) Social media is a very difficult place. A very difficult place to have a very difficult conversation. Understanding the limitations of that is possible. Also, you can set the tone of it by asking for people: depending on how it's going that's how they moderate. Oftentimes on our own Facebook page. It's surprising how effective that can be at times. Other times it's not. But that's why we ban.

To answer directly your question: Oftentimes people feel that when you validate one group's experiences you end up invalidating the other group. Because they don't see each other as both being possible or both existing at the same time because that's what we get taught. There's only one dominant narrative and they have the truth.

As social activists I do believe folks with more marginalized perspectives and experiences, it's important to raise that perspective, their truth, up with greater frequency in order to try to balance out the sheer domination of the privileged narrative.

At the same time we also need to be helping. I think privileged people need to be doing the work to unpack their reality further. Because like we were saying, the surface reaction, action, or thinking is rarely the root of it. So for themselves, people with privilege, we all need to be doing that work, that unpacking.

“Why is this uncomfortable? Why do I have this reaction against it? Why do I not want that?”

I think if they can get to the core of that, then they're also more able to hold the space for other people to have more truth. Because when you're dealing with a lot of out there make-believe stuff you can't really deal with what's driving it. Because if it wasn't emotionally charged for them about the bathroom situation then why would it be such a big deal? What is it that's so upsetting about having people go to bathrooms that are appropriate for them?

In our minds, we're like, “That should be basic. People should be able to go to bathrooms comfortably safely.”

Where is it coming from for them and unpack that deeper. What is so threatening to them? Because it's not threatening to every single cis person out there. A lot of cis folks are like, “Yeah, that makes sense.” But then for some folks it's not. What is underneath that for them. That's not to say that I'm encouraging you to do that through Facebook.

Aurora: Yeah. Luckily – and I say luckily because it's a very charged issue – it hasn't come up in the peer mentoring group that I work with. But trans issues in general have come up in the past in this group, before I started these exercises. It is something I'm working on implementing in person.

Like you said, online is very difficult. Most of this stuff has been happening in the online sphere; I haven't had a lot of direct interaction. Definitely it's very difficult and when you're dealing with trolls and people being a lot bolder than they would be in person.

Sandra: And they are. It's really interesting to see, even on our own Facebook page. When somebody is attacking one of our articles, for example, and then the author comes on and starts responding. All of a sudden everybody starts treating one another with a lot more civility. They still disagree but all of a sudden the tone shifts because now they're dealing with a human being.

I find that that kind of anonymity online for folks allows people to act in ways they wouldn't in person. This is why I think focusing on your own sphere of influence, folks around you, is really where it's most powerful.

We all have limited time. We all have limited time. You only have so many spoons. I think being selective is important. There are people whose work will be more like Everyday Feminism where our work is obviously to take that on online. I'm not going to be in your life and do it in your sphere, in your circle.

I think it's important to be selective and see where you can have the most sway or have the most influence in those conversations. If you want, if something starts online with somebody you know more you can always take it offline. I've had that, too, where it wasn't public. It was pretty charged and I took it to a private Facebook message and we were able to be much more vulnerable and getting to place of agreeing to disagree. Even if we were on the same page.

Just throwing that out there.

Now we'll just talk a little bit about what we have been covering. I want us, as always, to be thinking about a situation. We're actually going to be delving a lot into this situation. Remember it is a specific situation which had a beginning and an end. I'm not talking about the whole pattern; I'm talking about just one time with somebody, that was somewhat emotionally charged for you but not extremely.

We only have two hours together, an hour and a half for meeting, actually. We're going to go for a little bit easier of a win. With practice, this will become easier and you can take on more emotionally charged situations. But for now let's talk about something that's a level three or four.

Just to reiterate, this toxic swirling of make-believe world versus what happens when we become mindful of our internal reality. This distinction, the ability to shift

from the toxic swirl of make-believe to being present and in touch with your internal reality is one of the most powerful things that you can do.

To give you an example of my recent life, I run Everyday Feminism, which, at times, can be a very stressful thing. I also am committed to living a life that feels very full and spacious, and having lots of peace in my life. Sometimes it can feel like they're at odds with each other. Recently, I found myself worked up, really stressed out, and I was like, "Aahh!"

I was stressed about work because I wanted to do work in a way that wasn't stressful. But it was me trying to change the fact that I was feeling stressed in that current moment. I wasn't connected. I wasn't connected to the fact that I was feeling stress as much as much as I was putting my time and energy into how I didn't want to feel stress at work.

I was like, "I really don't want to. How do I change it? How do I not feel stress? Maybe I should take more walking. Maybe I should do meditations. Maybe I should do this. Maybe I should do that. I don't want to do a long push."

I was like, "This is what I used to do and I don't want to do this. I want to stop doing this. I don't want to slide back." There was all this resistance to what was happening. I just stopped at some point and was like, "I give up. It's just going to be stressful. It's stressful. Ok. It's stressful. What do I want to do?"

I decided to do a long night push, decided to cancel my Wednesday appointments and with that I felt like I could breathe again. Then I was able to focus on what was in front of me as opposed to focusing on all the stress I didn't want to have but was having.

Because I was able to focus on what was in front of me, I didn't need to do a long-night push and I'm seeing those people whose appointments I cancelled.

This is a small but very, very common experience, I assume, in the vast majority of people who are listening to this video. Because we all work at work we find very stressful and how much of the stress in that situation wasn't so much the stress itself but my resistance to that stress and really trying to get rid of it and change it.

I wasn't necessarily judging myself for it but was kind of like, "Oh no. I don't want to go there again. I've been there before and I don't want to do that." It was just a

lot of fear, I think. And once I was like, “It’s stressful. It is what it is.” I acknowledged it. I accepted it. I was able to make some choices.

Because I made those choices, I was able to be free of my stress; I took care of it. At the end of the day I actually managed to do one of the things I was trying to avoid in the first place, which originally gave me the stress. It’s this interesting logic that we resist, persist, and when we just accept that that’s what’s going on, we’re able to move into action and it’s released.

This is critical. This is really, really critical both for how we treat ourselves and, as we’ve been talking about, how to relate to the other person. Because, as this nice little slide shows, how we relate to the other person is through the toxic swirl of make-believe.

They’ve done something that upsets us. How do we often respond to that? We make them wrong as a person. We judge them, shame them, police them, punish them, dismiss them. It’s not just that they said something that we find upsetting; we want to write them off entirely sometimes. We’re not at all curious about what happened there.

We just don’t want to deal with them. We just want to make them stop. We want to make them go away. We want to punish them, make them feel the pain that we feel. That’s really coming from our own pain. That’s because our pain is so present and it’s driving us. Because we haven’t got in touch with it to heal it. It’s just pushing that out and really making them wrong as a person.

We also –

Josette: By the way, we can’t really see the bottom part of that.

Sandra: Thank you. Now my video is also... Oops!

Let me move these videos over to the side. There we go.

The other thing that we do is that we really resist their internal reality. As we’ve been saying as we talk about the second practice of distinguishing realities: We have our reality on this side and we have their reality on this side. We think that our reality’s so real for us we just really want them to get it.

Well, their reality's so real for them, they just want us to get it. So what we get is this action happening, where we're butting heads with the other person and they're butting heads with us. If we focus on what we're doing, yeah, we do resist their experience of a situation. What feelings they do have we minimize. We focus on what they should be feeling.

We think that their reality should be different than what it is, which, as I said, is make-believe. It's not that; it is what it is. We have preferences, of course, that we would like for it to be different. But that doesn't mean that it is different. It's still not; it's just a preference that we have.

What we do because we have this preference we treat as the truth and as a must – which is a really coercive expectation, a coercive demand upon them – then we're trying to force them to agree with us. We think it's just trying to get them to see our side but really what we're doing is pushing our reality onto them – not even acknowledging they have their own experiences.

The natural thing that they do is they push back. That's actually a healthy thing in my opinion. When somebody tries to override your reality without checking in to see what's going on with you, that's not very respectful.

Now, we don't have to agree with it. We don't have to believe that ourselves.

But just as we deserve to have our own internal reality be respected, they do, too. They're another human being just like we are. What type of respect and basic courtesy we want to receive from others and have been practicing giving to ourselves in this course, this is also about giving it to them.

That's really really really hard to do when our pain is so strong. If it's something small, like, "Oh, I want to learn how to make these crafts." It'd be easy. It'd be really easy to go to somebody and ask that question, be curious, and not engage in making them wrong as a person or resisting their experiences or anything. It'd just be a normal conversation, not emotionally charged.

But the minute it's like, "Oh, I want to learn how to make my work more intersectional, all of a sudden it becomes very emotionally charged and we have those fears. Sometimes it's not even about the other person being wrong, it's about us being wrong. How do we treat ourselves always in this conversation?"

I really want folks to get clear that where we're at now in practice number four is stopping the toxic swirl so that we can open up to what the other person's saying. The way that we do that is by first identifying the toxic swirl, as we have been doing in the past.

I'm going to stop here for a second, take any quick questions before we start doing any reflections in the breakout rooms.

Josette: We had a comment from Sheila that I thought was really interesting. I don't know if she wanted to expand on it really quickly. But the comment was, "Damn, my mind is fighting that!" on the part where you were talking about allowing their reality to exist. So, I don't know, Sheila, do you want to speak to that quickly?

Sheila: Yeah, because I was thinking about a situation – because she asked us to think about a situation – so when she said that we were making coercive demands, being not respectful, I so want to keep that person in her place! I'm like, "Oh, god, I'm doing that! Do I really have to?"

But I have to. I know I need to do that for my own sanity. But yeah, just as you were saying that, I was like, "Ok, yeah. That is disrespectful," and yeah, trying to me control the situation. So that's very real for me.

Sandra: Right. I think that what you just said is very insightful. You're trying to control the situation. You're trying to control the other person is what's going on. What's really fascinating – I'm not picking on you personally but I'm going to –

Sheila: No, it's ok. That's ok.

Sandra: This is really what everyone's been asking for since session number one is, "How do I make them stop? How do I make them think and act differently?"

I keep saying:

One) You have to go through the practices.

And then

Two) It's an invitation that we can do.

Then people always say, “What exactly can I say? Give me a formula. Tell me the exact words.” It’s as if :

One) There’s some sort of magical wand – or really a magical whip – that we could lash out at people with to make them do what we want them to do. And that’s how we treat ourselves so of course which is why it’s automatic for how we want to treat other people. It’s how we’ve been treated as well. That’s where we learned it from.

We weren’t born this way. We learned it. As Noelle was talking about in class and school, that young boy probably most of the time gets told what he has to do, what he has to think. And maybe one of the few moments in school where he was treated like an actual human being, where his reality was respected.

It’s powerful when we start to think of what could be different. So I have a question for you: If you were able to look at this other person, and knowing that people act out – out of ignorance, out of fear, out of pain; and that’s usually what’s trying, right? People who are happy, secure in themselves, feel good, know their worth, know they have inherent self-worth.

They don’t walk around hurting people, say, “I didn’t mean to” and get really angry and defensive when they find out they’ve done something wrong or hurtful. They don’t do it. They say, “Oh, that’s happened. I’m sorry. Can I do something to help? Can I do something to make up for it?” That’s what people who are secure in themselves do.

People who lash out; there’s a reason why that’s happening. If you were able to tap into them and be like, “Oh, I wonder what’s going on?” and get curious about it, acknowledge that they have their own experiences and be respectful of that – not that you agree with it, just that it’s there – what do you think could be different, for you?

Not for them. But for you, what could be different?

Sheila? Oh, you’re on mute.

Sheila: Yeah. Just a second. I’m thinking. What could be different for me if I become curious about their experience?

Sandra: Mm hm.

Sheila: I think that – because I’ve been trying to practice this on a regular basis – what I find is that immediately I feel the differences go down a little bit. Because it forces me to – instead of turning away and against; trying to shut her out, really try to ignore her. At least that’s what happens.

It kind of forces me to think about having a relationship with her and having a dialogue. It brings me back to that reality again. When I try to think about, “Why is she sort of responding, thinking, feeling this way?” it forces me to get back to reality as well.

Because the other is really about trying to dissociate and ignore her and turn against her, not want to speak to her; that kind of thing.

Sandra: And that curiosity. What is that curiosity in service of? If you choose to do it. And you don’t have to; it’s just an option. But you can. And if you choose to be curious about her reality and what’s behind her reaction, what are you doing it in service of?

Sheila: Maybe clarify that question. In service of?

Sandra: Well, why?

Sheila: Why would I be curious?

Sandra: Why are you choosing to be curious? You don’t have to choose to be curious. So what are you hoping for?

Sheila: Part of it may be trying to control it again. I’ll try to stay away from that!

Sandra: Be real. It is what it is. There’s no wrong answer.

Sheila: I think the big thing – because that’s what I discovered when I heard about this – was about the potential of being heard and understood, in some sense. Because I think that’s the pain that I’m feeling. The hurt that I’m feeling is that this person’s not willing to see our reality. Not willing to listen, not willing to hear in any way, shape, or form so as a result –

I've had a lot of experiences like that so there are layers of hurt attached to that. Nothing hurt. There would be a hope there that we can actually see each other and hear each other. I think that would be my expectation – I shouldn't even use the word expectation – but that I would be curious. To try to understand her obviously her perspective, even though I can understand pieces of it, to be more accepting.

But yeah...

Sandra: Yeah. And I want to point out something. Everything you said was in service of you and your well-being and taking care of your own pain. That you wanted to share your truth. You wanted to better understand for yourself the why behind her truth.

That's really critical. That is extremely critical.

Because the shift that I want folks to make – and this is that point that I keep making – is that it's not about the other person. It's really not. Everyone came in – and still comes in – wanting to make it entirely about the other person. I keep shifting it back, “No. It's about you.”

Because you're the most important person to yourself. You're the only one that can take care of yourself and truly give yourself the acknowledgement, the acceptance, the care that you have a right to.

We can invite other people to do that as well. Anything other than invitation usually ends up being coercion, a coercive demand. This is why I keep shifting people from focusing on trying to make the other person be different because that's us trying to be controlling of them. We don't have power over the other person.

Even if we did – we don't have power over the other person – put all our time and energy into making the other person have to be different in order for us to have a sense of peace, security, care for ourselves. If we make them responsible for our well-being, we've given up all our power. That's why so many people come to these conversations feeling so helpless and powerless and voiceless.

By focusing on the toxic swirl of make-believe, you've given up your power. That makes sense. It's by shifting to the focus being on you and taking care of your pain, what you need, that's when you get your power back.

What would be possible for you if that was just a standard way of how you responded in the world to those types of situations?

Sheila: Is that a question or –

Sandra: Yeah, it's a question for you, Sheila.

Sheila: Can you repeat that? Can you repeat the question?

Sandra: The question was: If this way of responding, of relating to the other person – coming from a place of taking care of your pain and needs first and from there being curious about what's going on with them – as a way of taking care of yourself. If that was just your standard default reaction, what would be different for you? What would be possible for you that isn't now?

Sheila: I think it puts me in a position where I probably have more – what's the word? Power? Or I feel less powerless because I'm focusing on my need. I think it presents options for me. I think the other one really just shuts everything down and almost causes me to ignore my own feelings if I go the other way.

It allows me to focus on my needs. It gives me options. Because it means, "Ok, what do I need to do in order to feel some sense of peace and security and still feel like I have a voice?" What else can I do in that situation?

I think it's less stressful, that's for sure! No doubt about that. Less anger. Because then I'm just giving my energy to the other person and that's not helpful. What's funny is because I work with men who are being abused and they come in wanting to fix the boyfriend. I mean, we're constantly expressing this to them!

But when it comes to us applying to ourselves it's much more challenging. I've been really trying to do some of this this week because I see this. It's our director on a regular basis.

I'm desperately, I was trying to get in touch with it, "What is the hurt?" I think part of it was that feeling of insecurity about the future and the jobs and all that kind of stuff. As well as understanding, "Oh, yeah, it's hitting that core issue again: that I feel like I don't have a voice or I'm not being heard or people aren't listening to me."

I've had multiple situations like that so that one's very strong for me: People making decision without me or whatever that looks like. Definitely, that's helpful.

Sandra: As you get stronger in practicing it yourself – and modeling for the other people in your program who are being abused – you're that much stronger in your ability to help them see that, "Actually, there's a different way. And look, it's actually far more effective."

Sheila: That's right. You can teach it but it's a little different when you're trying to apply it. It allows me to breathe because when I'm in the other mode, I'm not breathing at all. I'm not breathing at all. I can feel it's very shallow and I'm not breathing.

It not only affects my relationship with that person but it affects my performance at work. It affects all of my relationships with all the people around me because they can sense it. I think the other struggle is that everybody's on their bandwagon right now so it's very easy to jump on with that. Sometimes that's a real struggle in the workplace because some people like to jump on that bandwagon a lot.

Sometimes it's really hard to distance myself from that.

Sandra: If you walked into a conversation, you were part of a conversation that was happening, and you got in touch with yourself, what would be your need in that situation?

Sheila: If they were jumping on that bandwagon?

Sandra: Mm hm.

Sheila: I think when I'm in that situation what I feel the most is that it has a big impact me physically and emotionally. It feels very heavy. All I can hear is the negativity. Sometimes there are personal attacks going on, people attacking people's character. There have been times when I've addressed it. Sometimes they don't want to go there.

What I end up having to do is a lot of self-care. Again, I try to avoid it to some degree because it has a big impact on me physically. And I think because my job is listening, it makes it even harder. Because then I have to walk away from that and go into a session with a client. It's a real challenge.

Sandra: What's your deeper underlying need?

Sheila: In that situation? When we're in that toxic swirl, so to speak?

Sandra: Mm hm. If you want me to do a guided process like I normally often do I can do that as well. But if you want to skip, if you don't want to we can do that.

Sheila: That's fine. That's fine. I think there's some anxiety attached to it. I think I'm not very comfortable with conflict either. I'm trying to think of what my need is.

Sandra: Where do you feel that in your body?

Sheila: The anxiety?

Sandra: Mm hm.

Sheila: In my gut, for sure.

Sandra: In your gut?

Sheila: Yeah.

Sandra: Can you describe it a little bit to me?

Sheila: It feels... It's pretty dark. It's like a potato, like, it's really big. It feels like something swirling. That's what it feels like. Something's working away.

Sandra: On a scale of one to ten, how strongly do you feel it?

Sheila: I would say it's probably at a four or five. It's not really severe but it's very present.

Sandra: Tell me more about it. The potato-sized swirling thing, does it have a color?

Sheila: It's dark. I think it's black. Little mixture of a few other colors but it's dark.

Sandra: Is it heavy? Light? Dense? Gassy?

Sheila: I think it's dense, like a potato. It's pretty...yeah.

Sandra: How are you relating to this feeling, to this sensation?

Sheila: I really try to – because I’ve been dealing with anxiety most of my life. I try to befriend it as opposed to... Or almost coexist with it instead of turning against it. I’m trying to think of what a feeling is.

Sandra: When it comes up, do you feel like, “Oh, you’re here!” or like, “Oh, you’re here,” or like, “You again.”

Sheila: Exactly. It’s more like that. “There it is again.” It’s more like that and “There it is. What do I need to do?” I used to run away from it. I used to fear it but I don’t fear it anymore. Sometimes there’s frustration attached as well. “Oh, it’s here again. Will it ever actually go away?” that kind of thing.

Definitely, yeah.

Sandra: Ok. Do you feel that frustration right now? It’s ok if you do or don’t.

Sheila: Yeah, I would say I do a little bit. Yeah.

Sandra: Where is that? Where do you feel that?

Sheila: The frustration. I think it’s more systemic. Not systemic but I think it’s a little higher up, almost in my ribcage, my spine, my gut area.

Sandra: What does it look like?

Sheila: The frustration. I’m seeing the color red but I think it’s got more movement there. Maybe it’s moving up and down. It’s not like a solid. Yeah, it’s not solid. I think it’s red and there’s some movement, almost like steam. Yeah.

Sandra: Like steam. Red steam.

Sheila: Kind of like flow. Like foggy kind of going on.

Sandra: From a scale of one to ten how strong is it?

Sheila: I think it’s stronger than the anxiety. Probably a six. I feel... I’m sensing there’s some hurt or pain underneath the frustration.

Sandra: Where are you feeling that?

Sheila: I think that’s more in my chest. It’s deeper. Not in my heart but maybe in my heart, yeah. Probably that general area but it’s deeper.

Sandra: Tell me more. What does it look like?

Sheila: The hurt. What does it look like? It feels denser. It's weird because I feel like there's an experience that's wanting to show itself. It's not coming to mind but I feel like there's something like a memory or experience that's attached to that and it's not coming up.

Sandra: That's ok. That's ok. That physical sensation, is there a movement or a size to it?

Sheila: There's no movement there. It's more solid. I think it's a little bit smaller but it's pretty dense.

Sandra: And from a scale of one to ten?

Sheila: The hurt?

Sandra: Mm hm. The hurt.

Sheila: It's funny because my mind was telling me it was probably a high number but my body is almost like I don't want to go there. That's what my body's telling me. That's what I'm sensing. That it's just below the surface and it's not wanting to go there.

Sandra: So it is probably high.

Sheila: I think so. There's a point where I felt tears coming out. But it went away. That tells me there's definitely something underlying there.

Sandra: Do you want to explore it further?

Sheila: Yeah, I'm comfortable with that.

Sandra: You can always, to everything, there's always the invitation that you do to yourself. You invite yourself to explore something. You can always say "Yes, no, counteroffer". You can always pull back and regroup through some breathing.

Sheila: Yeah, if my body starts telling me stop, I'll let you know, for sure.

Sandra: I think that's really important, though. Honor it.

Can you move? Close your eyes and visualize yourself looking at the hurt in your chest? Tell me what you see in front of you.

Sheila: It looks like it's dark. It's black. It's almost like, this is kind of odd that it's coming out but it's burnt somehow. Like there's charcoal there. There's a part that feels like it's been burned.

Sandra: The image that comes into mind for me is a burnt-out building almost. Is that –

Sheila: I'm not seeing a building but it's almost, like I'm picturing myself as a person and there's a hole there and it's burnt out.

Sandra: Can you get closer to it? As you get closer, walk around it. What does it look like?

Sheila: There's a thought that just came to mind. That's weird but I remember my mother when she had cancer. She went through severe chemotherapy and an image of her comes up. But when I walk around it it's pretty solid, looks like. It's pretty big. There are holes.

It looks like it's been burned and it's not the shape that it was before. There are pieces of it that are burnt out. I can see right inside it because I think at one point it had a round shape. There are big pieces that are gone now. It's like I'm walking into a building even though it's a person. There are big elements that are gone now.

Sandra: Do you want to go walk inside of it?

Sheila: Yeah, no, that's ok.

Sandra: Just kind of look around, turn around; see what it looks like. What are you noticing?

Sheila: I'm hearing, as I'm walking around – I'm walking on debris so I'm hearing a lot of things – crunching under my feet.

Sandra: What's coming up for you? What are you noticing as you're walking around?

Sheila: It's interesting that I feel I'm still able to look past it and – because it's almost like a building within a building – so the outer core is still very much healthy and together. I'm able to almost look out the windows and see light even though I'm in this burnt building.

Now I'm noticing, I can tell. I'm starting to feel. I feel like there's a second floor underneath, like a staircase.

Sandra: Do you want to go up them?

Sheila: It's in the basement. It's going down.

Sandra: You want to go down them? What are you noticing down there?

Sheila: It's really dark.

Sandra: What else?

Sheila: There's a part of me that's wondering, "Is there anybody down here?"

Sandra: You can ask. You may or may not get a response.

Sheila: For some reason – and I think there's an association there because when I was young we went through a house fire – what I'm thinking, and it was in the basement, about my sister. She passed away but her bedroom was downstairs.

Sandra: You want to ask if she's there? She may or may not be.

Sheila: Yeah. I sense that she's there.

Sandra: Do you want to ask her to come out and talk to you?

Sheila: Sure, yeah. She's willing.

Sandra: What do you notice coming up for you as she's coming up to you to talk to you?

Sheila: I feel tears coming.

Sandra: What else?

Sheila: That I wish we could've had more time together. And the time we did have together that we were able to be closer. More in contact.

Sandra: Can you take her hand?

Sheila: Take her hand?

I'm sensing that she's hugging me right now.

Sandra: Can you tell her what you just told me? Can you ask her if she has something she wants to tell you?

Sheila: I'm sensing that she's kind of feeling the same way.

Sandra: What do you want to do now?

Sheila: We're both kind of laughing so it's almost like we're just enjoying that time we have right now together.

Sandra: That sounds good. You can tell her you'd like more of these.

Sheila: My mom keeps coming up, too.

Sandra: Bring her into the party.

Sheila: There's a part of me that's not ready for that. Very hesitant. I lost her when I was four so it's... I want her there but I'm afraid of it at the same time. I think she's kind of waiting in the background going, "You know, whenever you're ready." She's French and very – I don't know the word for it – very outspoken so she's like...

Sandra: She's like, "Hello, there!"

Sheila: I don't know if she's making a demand but not, you know? Like, "I'm at the [unintelligible]." She's speaking to me in French.

Sandra: That's always your choice, if you want that. You can want to and not choose to because you don't feel ready yet.

Sheila: But I think I've come as close as I've ever gotten to doing that because I'm at least able to wave at her. Less anxiety and pain there. I'm not sad or completely freaking out.

Sandra: Is there anything you want to say to her through, if she's on the other side of the room?

Sheila: I think the big thing is that I love her and that I wish she could have been part of my life.

Sandra: Can you say that to her as you send her a psychic hug, too?

Sheila: She's really emotional right now and I am picturing myself as a little girl running up to her.

Sandra: Is there something she wants to tell you?

Sheila: She's apologizing for not being there. Letting me know it's ok.

Sandra: What would you like to do now?

Sheila: Right now I think we're all holding each other. I think that, it feels like something's been... I can feel myself retreating already and feeling ok about that.

Sandra: Because you could come back at any time.

Sheila: I'm sitting on the top of the stairs now just taking in the experience. I'm seeing the light again.

Sandra: Do you want to thank them and start walking up then? And you can say that you'll be back to visit them.

Sheila: I'll be back.

I know this might seem really odd. There's a part of me that was always afraid of dying. Now can I know it was because of my mother when she was dying. I'm underlining the fact that I'll be back but I don't know if I'll be alive.

Now back the other way. I'm not ready for that yet.

Sandra: Not yet. Not yet.

As you walk up and you're out. You look great.

Sheila: I can't see.

Sandra: Yeah. What are you noticing now?

Sheila: I feel like that hole in my chest, it's almost, I don't know if it's gone completely but it's healing up. This is shifting for sure. I think it's transforming as we speak. It's filling in and the burnt area is being rejuvenated.

Sandra: That's powerful. I want you to take a couple of deep breaths. Let that feeling settle and do what it's doing. Just breathe in and out. Just enjoy it; experience it.

Sheila: There's a part of me that's saying, "Hooray! Finally went there! It's on my list."

Sandra: Healing has its own timeline.

Sheila: Oh, I know that.

Sandra: But we'd like to, of course.

Sheila: But I feel like it's... I think when we all know that it's sitting there. I did some of that grieving when – and I knew it – about ten years ago I had a client who contacted me who was HIV+. He was dying and he said, "I want you to take me through that process." I went, "Oh, boy!" and knew that I would be revisiting.

I'm looking at this gentleman. I think there were points when he was carrying me more than I was carrying him, so to speak. I really believe that experience took place for a reason. I was able to do some grieving, at that point, of my mother. But now I feel there's another piece that's been completed. Less there about that as well.

Sandra: Yeah. Because you were in there. You saw your mom and you weren't ready yet. You were there then. You were able to be with the situation. Be your full self.

Sheila: Exactly. Yeah. That's a victory. Whenever I conquer a little bit of fear.

Sandra: If you look at that situation at work from this place.

Sheila: When I think of that situation... I'm thinking there's a connection with that feeling of powerlessness. Because in the situation with my mom I was a very young child going through this experience. The other piece is that they didn't take me to the funeral so I kind of had to grieve by myself.

I didn't want to talk about it because I was afraid of upsetting the people around me. Even when I knew they were grieving, I didn't address that with them. I didn't say, "I know." Because she was in the hospital so they were able to continue saying, "She's still in the hospital. She's still in the hospital," and they didn't take me to the funeral.

As it evolved, I felt like the adults were making the decisions and that I didn't have very much say and that I was pretty powerless in that situation. And in this situation at work we're dealing with a new director; she's only been there for eight months. She has friction with authority and making many many decisions without consulting or approaching the staff.

I'm feeling that dynamic there. There's somebody in authority, won't let me have a say, making pretty drastic – there are layoffs going on. There's a lot going on. I feel there's a connection with that.

Sandra: And when you look at that situation, how do you feel towards it? Any way you feel towards it – it could be the same as before, that's perfectly alright, it can be different and that's perfectly alright, too – about your ability.

Sheila: I definitely think there's been a shift. I think there's less anxiety. I feel more in control. I feel more like I have choices.

Sandra: And what need can you take care of that can help you start having that conversation?

Sheila: I think that I'm going to have to make sure I talk to her in person and get connected.

Sandra: Mm hm. And what need is behind that action?

Sheila: I think in the beginning I was isolated so I think it's knowing that I'm not alone and there are people supporting me, they're supporting each other.

Sandra: And when you go into that conversation, how do you want to enter that conversation? What kind of energies?

Sheila: With my coworkers? It's the director.

Sandra: Coworkers for now.

Sheila: Ok. Coworkers.

Sandra: What's the intention/energy?

Sheila: Yeah, I think that – because I think it's in the spirit of us continuing to work together as we always have. At the same time, of course I know when I approach people then there's always the risk of them jumping on that other bandwagon. So I would probably have to make it clear that it would be about mutual support and focusing on the work that we're doing and working together as team.

Almost knowing that at the end of the day that the truth in that is going to move us forward. Because we work hard and at some point that's going to be sort of recognized, I guess. And that's a reality. That's not going away because of the situation. It doesn't matter who's at the helm; we can still appreciate them with everything.

Sandra: And how different is this from before this conversation.

Sheila: Oh, very different. Because I was focused on the director and just being angry and hurt and feeling disempowered. So it's very different.

Sandra: Because now you feel?

Sheila: I think there's less of a need to even... I feel more neutral when it comes to thinking about her. There's a feeling of almost hopefulness that things are going to be ok. And that I don't have to throw too much energy at the other.

Sandra: Make-believe world.

Sheila: Exactly. Or yeah, or even trying to. They're very much on the, "Let's try to convince her," kind of deal or "We need to confront her." Part of that has to do with me as well. But yeah, that's not any...

I know that conversation is what needs to happen. About getting ready for that conversation.

Sandra: Yeah, and they're all conversations. Just what kind of conversation do you want to be having?

Sheila: Exactly. It'll have to be respectful and yeah. No, that feels better. At least I know what the hurt was underneath. It's kind of interesting that it took me all the way to there.

Sandra: That's true for everybody. You've had other groups, other sessions, where it's, "This reaction is rarely what it's about."

Sheila: Exactly. Clearly there was something underneath that because it was a lot of fear attached but I'm glad I was able to get to the source and have the courage to walk in there so that's good.

Sandra: Thank you so much, Sheila, for sharing all of that.

Sheila: Thank you.

Sandra: It was very, very powerful. Check out the chat. Lots of support there.

That was another really wonderful example just being able to see that by doing the three practices, Sheila was able to be in a place where she was more peace, more voice, more power. She knew she was taking care of herself. She now has a plan of action – we don't know how it's going to turn out – and she'll roll with it.

That's really what this is about. This is why people kept asking me, "How do I? What can I say exactly to make them stop?" and I was like "It's not really about that. You have to do the three practices first and then we'll get to the fourth. The fourth practice isn't really about that, either.

It's very hard to let go of the toxic swirl of make-believe, where you're trying to coerce the other person and you're resisting their reality; you're making them wrong for their reality. As well as making yourself wrong for your own feelings and needs. You're negating them. You're ignoring them.

As Sheila was describing, when she was focusing on the person, that was actually her ignoring her own feelings and needs at that point. It was all distracting from what was actually happening, what the pain was for her.

That's what we all do constantly. Whenever we get that emotional charge we can't just be here. We're here in our past because that's the pain and fear that's flaring up for us. I remember I read somewhere – and I've said this before – unless there's imminent physical threat, fear is inappropriate.

But it wasn't back when we were kids. That's why when we unpack the different layers there's some childhood trauma. So we felt really helpless because we were children. That makes sense. Because we didn't have the support and the care to process that and heal that we carry that forward into our adulthood. And then sometimes traumatic things happen to us as adults that we have in our bodies as well.

They impact how we act in the world, how we relate to people, and what we think. I really wanted to reiterate. I know I keep saying the same thing over and over but it's because I keep getting the same questions over and over again; it's not about them. It's about you. It's about taking care of you.

I'm going to pause for a bathroom break right now and then we can take questions on that. Then we assume breakout rooms. I know we only have 30 minutes left so I'm going to ask a three-minute – it's not that long – a three minute break. So if people come back at 7:30.

Ok. We are back now and as I'm waiting for some of the other folks to come back to their seats, I just want to share some things people are writing in the chat box.

Apparently some folks have been practicing this, what they've been learning, in their lives and a couple of people had shared:

Jesse Monroe: "A really difficult family situation came up this week and I've been watching how everyone is dealing with it. It's been especially hard for me to hear my mom's viewpoint. I try to remember that I don't know what she means by what she says but I'm trying to see her reality."

Sometimes you work with where you are. Where you are is realizing that you don't know. You don't have access to her reality. You don't know what she means and you try. That's still powerful.

Somebody else, Jillian wrote: "I explained to my mom why Black Lives Matter is important and the daily trauma of nonwhite Americans is important because she doesn't understand it. I did use the steps in a conversation this week and it worked."

Yay! So I am teaching something useful here. Sheila also said that she applied some concepts of the somatic work regarding stepping into and exploring their

feeling as a space and was able to get a client to create a new space where they feel empowered.

Marina also shared that she had been asking someone about where they're coming from regarding, I assume, the trans bathroom bills. "He thought that both groups were reacting. I didn't have the energy to argue the trans side. I wasn't overreacting but this person who I knew was very concerned about the veterans and the high suicide rates."

She pointed out that how trans people are treated contributes to high suicide rates and there's a higher percentage of trans people in the military. Asked him to at least consider before he posted anything related trans issues and he agreed. It seemed to make a difference regarding his transphobic bathroom posts.

So yeah. I don't know if this was a Facebook conversation that you had with this person but eh! If it was, that'd be awesome. If not, that's great, too.

I'm hoping everybody is back by now. Yep, it looks like folks are back in their seats. I just really appreciate everybody who shared in the chat box about what they've been practicing with and how it's been turning out. And it's really, we've all been doing our best. Our best is sometimes really great. Sometimes our best is not so great. Sometimes our best is harmful.

I think the point is to notice that. Notice: What is the impact we're having in the world and on us particularly and on other people? Then do the work to build our capacity so that our best gets better. That's what you're really doing as you're taking this course is that you're getting access to some tools, some framework, some support that's helping you better your best be better than it was a few weeks ago.

It's making a difference. It's not that you need to heal everything all at once and be perfectly healed – "healed" and happy or whatever that means – every single day, every single moment for you to feel fine. No, it's just it means that we are able to be with whoever we are showing up right now. Whatever's coming up for us, taking care of that.

If you haven't had these skills, if you haven't been taught that before this can be really hard to do on your own. That's something to understand about the people in

your lives as well. You're taking the course. Most people have not taken this course.

I've coached people who have been in therapy for years, for decades and sometimes this kind of stuff is new for them, too. That happens. This is often used in therapy as well but not everybody does that.

I want to do a breakout room and let me share it. Ok. Can you copy and paste these into the thing.

There are four questions and they're related, though, obviously. Really I want people to get in touch with is: How are they showing up in these conversations? Because until we are aware that we're engaging in toxic swirl it's going to be hard for us to step out of it, to move out of it.

I want people to get in touch with:

One) How we're showing up.

and

Two) What is the impact?

I want you to think, which is easier for you? Which is: How do you think the other person is relating to you? How is the other person in the situation, in the conversation, relating to you? Are they making you wrong for your perspective? Are they judging you? Are they shaming you? Are they trying to change your mind? Denying and minimizing your experiences and feelings around this?

What is their toxic swirl about you, possibly?

This is all speculation, of course, because we're not them. But we can speculate. What is then the impact of the way you think that they might be relating to you on you and your ability to receive what they're saying? When they're treating you like this, how open are you to hearing their perspective? How curious are you? How interested are you in what they're thinking, what they're saying?

Then I want you to flip it. How are you relating to that person in that situation? What's your toxic swirl of make-believe? Then: What do you think the impact of your toxic swirl is? What is the impact of how you're relating to them on them?

How open are they to receiving what you're saying because of how you're relating to them?

This, once again, is speculation. You don't know exactly how they're receiving it and there are some guesses that you can make based on how they are responding to you.

I want you to kind of get in touch. There's no making right or wrong, judging, shaming. It just is what it is. It happened. The more we resist how we reacted in that situation the less able we are to do something about it.

I just want folks to really get present. To really get in touch with what was going on in that situation, as you remember it. Do we have any questions about the exercise?

Nope? Ok.

I'm going to give you seven minutes total. I'm going to expect y'all to monitor your own time so after about three or four minutes, switch off. We're going to come back at 7:50. At the 50 minute mark.

Alright, so I'd love if – we're going to do a white board and people can also write in the chat box – what did they learn from that discussion?

Josette: And make me a cohost again, please.

For folks who have trouble seeing the white board annotation materials, you make the screen big and where it says "you are viewing Sandra Kim's screen" there's a nice little button called "options". In there is one that says "annotate". When you click on that it should come up with a mouse and an arrow and a color and then you should be able to write on it.

Sandra: And then hearts.

The question was: What did you learn? What did you speculate in terms of how they relate to you? What is their toxic swirl and how does it impact you and your ability to receive what they're saying? And then flipping it. How are you relating to the other person? What is your toxic swirl? What is the impact of your toxic swirl on them and their ability to hear what you have to say?

Please share what you learned.

Someone wrote: “It’s important to recognize our steps in the right direction.”

If there was anything that surprised folks? Or was there something that was difficult for people as they were having their conversation?

Someone wrote: “Finding common ground can be challenging.”

“In an emotionally charged moment, it is difficult to remember not to simply react, but to take a step back, reflect, and follow the model learned in this course.”

It’s a little bit covered up.

Josette: Whoever wrote the text that’s being overlapped, you could move it away and you’ll be able to read it...by clicking and dragging it.

Sandra: Yeah. The person who wrote something about respectability politics, it’s hard to read the first sentence. If you want to type in the chat, too, that way we can see what you’re trying to say.

Somebody else wrote that it’s: “hard to accept someone else’s reality without invalidating my own.”

“My shutting down makes them seem more angry/aggressive.”

“I’m able to step back and reflect and at least acknowledge the other person’s reality in a very emotional moment.”

“Important to keep in mind when you...”

The person in red, Josette, can you read that?

Josette: “Important to keep in mind where people are at in their own healing.”

Sandra: True.

And then: “Being called out on tone via respectability politics is painful, but also that calling out can be from a place of caring because sometimes we both have similar goals of caring.”

So yeah. This is not easy. It's emotionally charged for the very reason we talked about and as we've been saying, as I've been trying to show, it's emotionally charged more because we're resisting. We're resisting the reality. We're stuck in this make-believe world. If we're in this toxic swirl of make-believe, it is really hard. It is really emotionally difficult and you don't want to do it.

Even if you want to do it, it's such a struggle. That's because we're just trying to change how we're feeling, how the other person's feeling as opposed to just acknowledging it. Being like, "Yes, that's what's going on. What's underneath that? Tell me more."

Part of the reason why I keep doing these coaching sessions – and if you notice I tend to say the same things over and over and over again in my coaching sessions – I will just be like, "Oh, where do you feel that? Oh. Tell me more. What does it look like? What does it feel like? What's coming up for you?"

I'm not trying to get anywhere different with them. I'm just trying to stay with them. The reason why it's so much easier for them to do this when they're talking with me is because I'm holding this space. I'm holding this space for them to go deeper. So they can focus and not get caught up in the toxic swirl.

When they do, I point it out. Toxic swirl – and you've seen the participants go like, "Yes. That was toxic swirl. New focus."

It is not workable. It is really not workable and not effective and takes a big emotional toll on you. Why are you trying to do it from toxic swirl?

So let's not. How do we shift away from toxic swirl?

Somehow that heart made it onto my PowerPoint.

Can you see everything, Josette.

Josette: Yes. We're still in whiteboard mode, though.

Sandra: Oh, ok.

Alright, can you see the PowerPoint now?

Josette: Yes. I think we're still in white board mode, though. I see the...

Sandra: Oh, really?

Josette: Yeah. There we go. Going to lose my heart.

Sandra: Are we on video now?

Josette: We're in video, yeah.

Sandra: Ok.

Let's go to PowerPoint. What about now?

Josette: It's still – I think you have to hit exit on the white board.

Oh, you know what? I'm sorry. I think it's just, maybe it allows you to edit and annotate it all the time. So I'm still seeing the annotation but I just edited it out and it looks normal so never mind. I think. Going back to the screen.

Yeah. That works.

Sandra: Can you write in the chat box if you're seeing the PowerPoint?

Josette: PowerPoint.

Sandra: Or the slideshow? PowerPoint or the white board.

Ok. People got PowerPoint. Thank you. Love the feedback.

What is this conversation really about? How do you shift? How do you shift from having this be toxic swirl to having it be more about you? Couple of things. You'll see these are the same things I've been saying over and over again and it showed up in the conversation with Sheila. It's not really about making them wrong. It's just about sharing your truth.

You're doing it for yourself. I asked her what is she sharing in service of. In service of taking care of her own pain, taking care of herself. It's not about trying to change their minds because that would be resisting their internal reality at this time and moment.

This is before you even got to understand what's going on with them. So you don't even fully understand what's going on with them. They themselves may not have,

probably, unpacked it. You're already resisting when you don't even know. You're not being curious. You're not being humble.

Instead you could want to be curious and want to understand their truth. You don't have to. But this may be something that you want to do. And in order to get access to their internal reality, what that means is you seek to understand, not to change.

Almost all the questions I've been getting is "How do I get them to stop? To stop doing that, to stop hurting us?" is really what they've been asking. That's totally understandable. But, as I've been saying, if we keep the focus on them, in trying to force them to change, then that's more resistance. More of us trying to be controlling. That's not a very productive place to be in.

It's not a very respectful place to be in. It's not actually about getting them to stop. What I'm trying to teach you is that it's actually about taking care of yourself. Treating yourself like you matter. Like your feelings and your needs matter. Focusing on that.

If we can shift away from making them wrong, trying to change them, trying to get them to stop, we shift it away from them and we refocus the attention on us and what's going on with us. What's going on underneath that reaction? What pain is there? What need is there? What can I do to take care of it?

You get propelled into action. You get called to do stuff. You saw how people, in all the different coaching that I do in these sessions, start out really emotionally charged and stuck. Once they get in touch with that pain that's underlying the initial reaction, what they need to do next, what they want to do next comes up. They know.

Before they felt helpless, powerless, voiceless and once they get in touch they're like, "Oh yes. Here's something I can do." They have a need that they can take care of. Really it's about refocusing. Refocusing on yourself.

It's 8:00 so I'm going to skip the next. Skip the reflection questions. I'm going to share this PowerPoint. I want folks to use the next ten minutes to take questions on them. I'm not going to read it out loud because I covered this in the last session.

But I'm bringing it up again because you have to really get the importance of letting go of the toxic swirl in order to let go of it. Because I can show this to you a bazillion times but until you want to, you're motivated to, you're not going to do it.

I'm not asking you to believe me wholeheartedly. I'm asking you just to try it out and do it the way I've designed it to be done. For instance, somebody wrote in the chat box that trying to acknowledge and accept that other people have their own reality, that is really hard. That can be hard for folks.

Sit with what is hard for you. Keep the focus on you and not on them. There's a reason why the practice number two says acknowledge external reality, not the other person's internal reality. I don't say that. I don't say that in practice number two.

Because it's important for you to sit with yourself and acknowledge your own internal reality before you can do anything with anybody else.

I'm going to take questions for the next several minutes and then wrap up by 8:15. We're a little bit later.

People have questions?

No? It makes perfect sense to everybody? Then we can wrap up earlier, then.

Just know that this is in the PowerPoint. It'll be shared later so you don't have to write everything down.

Josette: There was a question from last session that I think is good for this moment. This one was: "How does one be accountable for their actions when they're afraid of the consequences?"

And to connect it to what we were just talking about: How do we interact with someone else with these practices when you're afraid of the consequences? There may be power dynamics; your boss could fire you or whatever. Your mom's scary or something.

Sandra: Right.

The first thing is if we are afraid, is sit with that. Usually when that fear comes up we get so focused on the toxic swirl of the make-believe, that is distracting you

from getting in touch with that fear and that underlying pain. Usually any kind of conversation coming out of the toxic swirl is not going to be terribly productive.

You probably have a history of having tried to do that and it didn't work out very well. This is why I say sit with it. Sit with your fear. Sit with the pain underneath it. It'll make a shift in your body.

As Sheila was demonstrating, these were deep things that happened to her. Her mother passed away when she was four and then how the adults in her life handled that in not really the most helpful ways. And then her sister also passing away.

These are serious, real things. By just visualizing it and acting out what she wished she could have done, it was almost as if she had been able to do it in real life. That led to healing. She was literally feeling that burnt out house building, getting rejuvenated. That hole in her body getting filled and healed, being transformed as we were talking.

This is stuff that happened a long time ago. It was very traumatic to lose her mother. You have to understand, your body does not know the difference between external reality and your internal reality. If I ask you right now, "Think of the most delicious food you've ever had. Think about eating that. Savoring it. Rolling it around in your mouth," is your mouth salivating? Are you getting hungry for it?

Probably yeah.

Is this food in your mouth? No, it is not in your mouth. It is not real! Yet your body is reacting as if it's really there. It doesn't know the difference. This is why everything I've been teaching you, not everything, but a lot of things I've been teaching you, is about changing our language. Changing the way we say things to ourselves and that has an impact on how our body feels, how our experience is of that thing.

Our mind actually creates it. Everyone's all into food right now. People can't focus. And yet there's no food in your mouth. But y'all are acting like it, right? Our minds are powerful. The way they impact our bodies. We can feel that fear and then we visualize sitting with it and then talking with it.

As Sheila showed, she was not ready. She had some fear about talking to her mother. Her mother stayed at the edges of her room, saying hi from over there.

Then I asked her to give a psychic hug. Not visualizing a visual hug, but visualizing a psychic hug to give to her mother.

She did that and that ended up shifting for her to being a little four-year old girl running up to her mother. And then they were all together. These are all things that she had been initially afraid to do. Now she was able to do her body and her mind and that shifted.

Now when that feeling comes up it's going to feel a little less intense. It's not going to be probably a six; it's going to be probably a four. Each time she does this work it's going to drop. As she's able to respond to that situation from a place of honoring her feelings and taking care of her needs and taking care of her pain, her faith, her belief, her trust in her ability to respond to those situations will go up.

They will go up.

That emotional charge that makes you get stuck will go down.

It's through our actions that we build the trust. This is what Compassionate Self-Accountability is. It's when we take care of our own needs. That doesn't look like necessarily going from terrified to talk to your boss – who's really awful and hates you; no, no – to going and having the first conversation with them off the bat. It may not look like that.

It may look like practicing in smaller ways with your friends, with your family members, having more informal conversations, building with your boss. Build the relationship up to the point where you could have that conversation about whatever is truly problematic. I don't know.

But you have options now. That's why there's so much that you can do just by yourself to build up that new muscle of honoring your experiences, taking care of your pain. And then bringing that forth into the world. Like I said, you don't need to do the biggest, hardest thing. I ask you to take on a situation that's only a three, four.

You can do the same, too. Bring in the situations that are one and two, two and three. Maybe you go a whole month and only do one and two and that's it. That's one more month of doing this practice that you've never had. Work up. Work up.

The – are we still showing the PowerPoint? Good – Now it's final takeaway and I would love for folks to share in the chat box things they want to make sure that they remember after the session. I've talked a lot. We had a lot of amazing coaching. Wonderful people sharing so much.

If there's one thing that you want to make sure you don't forget, what would it be?

Someone wrote: "Healing has its own timeline."

Very, very sure. Very, very true. The only way out is through and you can't rush that. You can try but it won't work.

"Being patient with yourself."

"That it's not about changing others."

"Building the muscle of honoring yourself."

All really wonderful.

"I need to prioritize self-care, including not taking the toxic swirl of someone else personally."

That's really powerful. It's truly powerful to understand that people are caught up in their own toxic swirls when they're acting out like that. That doesn't excuse them. We all have to take responsibility for our own toxic swirl. Just like you take responsibility for your own behavior, they have to take responsibility for their own behavior.

It's also true that they're caught up in their toxic swirl. If that moves you to feel compassionate toward them so that you can get curious about what's going on with them, what is the pain that is driving that, you can choose to do that, too. You can now know that. You can now see that in them.

"Taking myself even more seriously and stepping back to reflect."

"It's not about getting them to stop. It's about you taking care of yourself and treating yourself like you matter."

Right.

“Don’t make it about them. If you do you give away all your power. It’s about taking care of yourself. You’re the one that needs you the most.”

Then you’ll see that everything kind of flows out from there. Take care of that pain. You’d be very surprised. But don’t take my word for it; just do it. You’ll see what happens.

Alright. Well, thank you so much. Next session, we are still going to be focusing on this. This has many layers to it so I’m glad they’re repeating it. Now that I think we’re in a better emotional place around this we’re going to get a little more process-oriented.

It started out with the process in the beginning just so you got the whole idea of it. We shifted more into the emotional way, the emotional approach of this and then we’re going to go back to the process so that you combine the process with the way you’re being, with the way you’re relating to it.

So I’ll see you all next Tuesday.