

Daughterhood the Podcast

Episode #38: Trauma-Informed Care with Andi Fetzner

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• 57:14

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

trauma, person, notice, caregiver, disconnection, feel, stress, happening, toxic stress, people, understand, experience, big, moment, caregiving, brain, conversation, today, podcast, helpful

SPEAKERS

Andi Fetzner, Rosanne, Disclaimer

Disclaimer 00:02

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Rosanne 00:42

Hello, and welcome to Daughterhood the Podcast. I am your host Rosanne Corcoran Daughterhood circle leader and primary caregiver. Daughterhood is the creation of Anne Tumlinson who has worked on the front lines in the healthcare field for many years and has seen the multitude of challenges caregivers face. Our mission is to support and build confidence in women who are managing their parents care. Daughterhood is what happens when we put our lives on hold to take care of our parents. We recognize this care is too much for one person to handle alone. We want to help you see your efforts are not only good enough, they are actually heroic. Our podcast goal is to bring you some insight into navigating the healthcare system, provide resources for you as a caregiver, as well as for you as a person and help you know that you don't have to endure this on your own. Join me in Daughterhood. Andi Fetzner. Psy D is a co-founder of Origins Training and Consulting. Her training mantra is you don't

have to be a therapist to be therapeutic. Her decades of experience professionally. And her personal caregiving story give her the unique perspective of living both sides. Andi and I discussed the challenges of dealing not only with your care partners past trauma, but also our own. She shares techniques we can use to improve our interactions and care for ourselves throughout our caregiving journey. I hope you enjoy our conversation.

Rosanne 02:03

So caregiving on a good day is hard. It's a challenge. And then you throw in, wow, does my person have trauma? Do I have trauma? Have we ever acknowledged that trauma? And what is trauma that can contribute? Because some people wouldn't think a minor trauma event. Somebody might be like, Well, what was the big deal? Yeah, but yet it's still with them. So how do we as caregivers go into caring? Being aware of trauma and trauma informed care?

Andi Fetzner 02:34

That's a great question. I think definitions are helpful for sure. And what I'd like to do is introduce a different frame. That's the foundation of what a trauma informed approach is, please so that we can talk about operationalizing it the whole idea of a trauma informed approach. It's the worst thing by the way. It's the worst name, it sounds so fancy, it's the worst name. Nobody wants me to come into their space and be like I'm talking about trauma informed care. They're like, trauma, but trauma, as we understand it. And as the the most recent research understands, that is the emotional, psychological, and physiological residue that's left over from heightened levels of toxic stress that accompanies experiences of danger, violence, significant loss, life threatening events, anything we perceive as disrupting connections, anything that we might talk about as life experiences that overwhelm our body, our mind our spiritual capacity to understand what's going on. And what happens is that that part of us gets stuck. And that part of us, there's parts of us, we're not just like, I'm not just Andy, I'm lots of Andy's, that part of end gets stuck. And I can go back to that moment could because that moment gets stuck in kind of a loop, right? And so, however I respond and survive in that moment, becomes how I survive in similar moments in the future. And that's where the trauma trigger, column activators, because that we try to use non violent language whenever possible, that stress activators can bring us back to those moments, and then put us in that loop of adapting.

Rosanne 04:22

Okay.

Andi Fetzner 04:22

There's no exhaustive list of like, this is what a traumatic event is. And like you said, something that's traumatic for somebody can be non traumatic for somebody else. I worked in Community Behavioral Health for a long time. And I did EMDR, which is eye movement desensitization and reprocessing. You identify an experience, you reprocess that experience and it helps you get out of that loop basically, that you might be stuck in from childhood generally, and the experiences that people would bring up and I worked with kids and families who had experiences of intergenerational poverty, violence, food insecurity, the department of child welfare involvement and the experiences that people would bring up, were always fascinating to me, because they weren't the moments that are written in the file as the trauma.

Rosanne 05:17

Right.

Andi Fetzner 05:18

It was, you know, well, what else? What else remind you like, what else? Where else is that linked up in that loop? One specific one that jumps out to me is, well, I remember when my dad went to work for the first time, it was a positive experience, we would say, Yeah, but that kiddo looking out the window. His dad had never gone to work before. And he was five. And he didn't know what was happening. He didn't know if he would ever come back. And so even though dad came back, he didn't understand what was happening, he got stuck. Now, that's not to say that that was, you know, the event. But that kind of set the tone that I don't understand what's happening physiologically, and, and we'll talk a minute about how we adapt and how stress, toxic stress and trauma impacts us. But that's, that's what I'm talking we're talking about. When we talk about trauma. It's the stuckness,

Rosanne 06:09

Right. And it doesn't have to be this big. It doesn't have to be an explosion. It doesn't have to be a fire.

Andi Fetzner 06:15

Um Hmm.

Rosanne 06:15

It can be something. And I don't want to say that small because I don't want to minimize that it was that was a big event for him. But it could be something as simple as the Father going to work.

Andi Fetzner 06:28

Right. And the key is not understanding. It's the disconnection that causes the trauma. It's the disconnecting of the understanding the disconnection sometimes from ourself. So sexual abuse is a big event that people experience trauma, right? And there's a disconnection from the self that occurs in that moment. There's a distrust, oftentimes, sexual abuse generally happens between people who know one another more often than strangers, something we don't talk about.

Rosanne 06:59

Yeah.

Andi Fetzner 06:59

And that's where the trauma lies in that disconnection of trust, disconnection of this is, this is how life goes. And then it doesn't anymore.

Rosanne 07:11

Wow. Okay. So it lies in that separate in that disconnect?

Andi Fetzner 07:16

In that disconnection? Yeah. And that causes pain. Right? And that, and that emotional pain shows up in the same space of the brain, as physical pain. Research has shown that. And then what do we do when we are injured? We do whatever it takes to make that pain, less to make that pain not exist to respond to that pain, like, Hey, this is telling me something, I need to do something. Right. And so we adapt. We adapt to that. And that's where, what's the impact of stress or what's the impact of trauma. And we're not talking about just stress, right, like stress, we need it to live, need it to get on calls, and be prepared. Right, we needed to finish finish our deadlines and whatnot. And not all big events, big scary things can cause a, you know, a trauma, as we call it, think about when people pass away, right? When somebody dies, it's not always a trauma, a traumatic event. But what's present in those who do not identify that event as traumatic versus what is not present in those who do. Oftentimes, we call them protective factors, right? Like things that are kind of like a shield, if you imagine like a shield to kind of buffer that that stress coming on and becoming toxic. We think about some spiritual understanding of what happens to that person, or that pet for the right when it when when that thing is there, and then it's not anymore, or a divorce. They're not there anymore. It's not like it was before. And the protective pieces, the understanding the connection that's maintained, and then the ability to understand and it doesn't mean there's a right way to understand. So that's the important thing to know about, about stress is that it's not always there's that there's a way to protect it from becoming toxic, and that it's helpful, and it matters how we talk about stress. Yeah, there's a lot of research around that matters, how we think about and talk about stress, and that we talk about it is important.

Rosanne 09:26

Absolutely. Yeah, well,

Andi Fetzner 09:29

Especially post COVID. That's one gift from COVID.

Rosanne 09:31

True. The difference between stress and toxic stress, of course, you know, it's it's in the name, but it's isn't our reaction to that?

Andi Fetzner 09:39

It's whether or not there are protective factors in place,

Rosanne 09:43

Okay.

Andi Fetzner 09:44

To buffer the stress to metabolize physiologically the stress hormones, and typically it's a protective relationship in adolescence. There's research that shows that having an identity I would say for me personally, one of the The things that helped me sustain through the many experiences that I had an adolescence was my identity as an athlete. And I always had that as like my thing that I could go to, but I'm an athlete, so at least I've got that I didn't necessarily have a consistent, you know, the whole time and consistent parent or adult as we'd like to say, but having the identity the, if you like to be an artist, if you identify as a musician, if you identify as like I am a person who holds this true to my identity

relationships are also part of that protective piece. And we talked, we talked about the in between that you're identifying is tolerable stress, it does have a name, the Center on the Developing Child from Harvard is who came up with that framework. And so we referenced that you can check on our website as well at origins.training.org, that kind of gives a more pictured graphic because I'm a visual person, I'm like, How can we make this a picture because I need a picture. And so you can kind of see how, how that unfolds? Because what we're trying to do is create because inevitably stress is going to happen.

Rosanne 11:08

Absolutely.

Andi Fetzner 11:09

How can we create environments, relationships, walk through our days, so that the stress doesn't build up, become apt or get us knocked into that toxic cycle and and further make us sick? Essentially, because that's what toxic stress does is it makes us sick, little doses of stress hormones are super helpful, big doses. It's like poison.

Rosanne 11:34

Well, and you know, I know that you have the ACE survey the Adverse Childhood Experiences, and there is there is research about those types of events or experiences and how it affects our well being through our lifetime.

Andi Fetzner 11:48

Absolutely right. The ACE study that Adverse Childhood Experiences Study that only looked at 10 risk factors, traumas associate with abuse, neglect, household dysfunctions, and then it looked at health outcomes, right. So things like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, autoimmune disorders, things that run in my family, especially rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, substance abuse, those smoking very common and intergenerationally. We see these outcomes, right, we say it's like, is it hereditary? Is it not hereditary is it exacerbated by the exposure to toxic stress hormones, toxic levels of stress hormones, and so understanding that it's those those aces, but also there are community traumas like that violence, um, if somebody's involved in the child welfare system, and they can, that's an increased risk of not having basic needs met, those can all contribute to those high levels of toxic stress hormones and similar outcomes were found there. So it's, is it nature? Is it nurture? Right? It's really both of them. And I'll give you a big word, epigenetics. It's a big word that explains nature and nurture working together. Okay. I like to say it's the messages from our ancestors are and so it's my grandmother, what my grandmother ate impacts me today. Because it there's a marker of that on my genetic makeup, and then whether or not that note is activated, is dependent upon the environment in which I am in currently. So you'll hear people say, Oh, it's, it's I have a predisposition. We hear that a lot. And that predisposition can get activated by an environmental exposure too often stress we say, but but it can also these toxins in the environment, or diet, nutrition. Those are the three big ones nutrition and diet, toxins in the environment, and stress are the three big things that impact epigenetic expression.

Rosanne 13:47

Wow. And we're all we're all just kind of going along.

Andi Fetzner 13:51

We're all just doing the best we can. Absolutely.

Rosanne 13:53

We're all just doing the best we can. And then we we come into caregiving, by choice or by necessity. And we may not know what type of trauma or events these even if they're our parents, or our spouses, we may not know and we could be adding to their stress. So the importance of knowing is it important to know what the trauma was? Or is it just important to try to care in a way to take care of that?

Andi Fetzner 14:29

That's a great question. I get that question a lot because what we look at when we talk about exposure to trauma is like we talked about how much has someone experienced in their life. I just like to use the universal precaution that everyone has gone through something in their life and that if they if they're noticeably agitated, it's probably not about me directly. Their core memory is probably not they're probably not that upset that I You took a step towards them, there's probably something else there. And so the way that I think understanding trauma can be helpful is just assuming that when folks are, or when we are noticeably agitated, that means we're noticing our physiological body posture, jaw clenched, fists grew up, we physically feel our heart racing and our lungs kind of getting more constrained. Or when we feel like our voice is up here, and we sound like Minnie Mouse, that might be an indicator that there's something going on. And it might be an opportunity, and it is an invitation for us to take a pause for ourselves and for those for caregiving for to pause and just sit, notice, regulate, acknowledge, hey, my body's telling me something right now, I'm noticing that my thoughts about this situation, maybe this is not an external processing conversation, depending on the audience, and noticing and my thoughts. How am I thinking about myself? Am I Is there a mean little Jiminy Cricket on my shoulder telling me what a piece of crap I am? And how will never amount to anything? And how I need to find my prince charming if I'm ever going to be successful in life, or? And how am I thinking about other people? Am I thinking they're out to get me they're always trying to make my days worse, you know, they never think about anybody about themselves. And that kind of narrative that we went, our stress system is activated when we're in that responsive mode. And then how we think about the world at large. Oh, I'm feeling hopeless. I'm feeling helpless. I'm feeling powerless. Everything feels 50 pounds heavier, right, than it reasonably in our thinking brain should noticing our emotions, right and noticing which emotions we're comfortable with and uncomfortable with. I love the movie Inside Out. If you've seen inside out, I have, it's so great. It's the characters that you think are going to be the heroes, you know, we're gonna all be happy in the end. And in the end, we know that it's not the characters that we think I'm not gonna spoil it spoiler alert.

Rosanne 17:11

Gosh, no. Spoiler alert. Yes.

Andi Fetzner 17:14

Spoiler Alert. Sadness is a brilliant, a helpful, important one to sit next to sadness and sitting with that big emotion. Even though oftentimes, we were told when we were little, I'll just pull up those I'm from Western Pennsylvania. Okay, pull up those bootstraps trudge through the mud uphill both ways.

Rosanne 17:32

Yup, absolutely.

Andi Fetzner 17:33

And so noticing those emotions, so I'm talking about notice our body, notice our thoughts, notice our emotions, and then notice our actions, our behaviors, if we've not noticed it until behaviors than the words have already come out of our mouth. Our brain has already said the thing we're already feeling big emotions were probably a little bit further than we might like. So that's why I say them in that order. Of what to notice, notice if you can notice it early. But that doesn't mean that all bets are off. Okay? It doesn't mean that like, oh, no, I blew it. I'm not going to be able to be a good caregiver today. I should just throw today out the window. What a beautiful opportunity to heal and to say, Did you see what a mess I just loves? Right? Because when I say that to you, Rosanne, what does that give you the opportunity to do?

Rosanne 18:22

Well, it gives you that that chance to be like, Oh, it's almost a permission, like, okay, all right. Let me let me regroup here. I'm not off the wall. I can get this back. And it does. It gives you a moment, and it gives you a chance to just be like it's okay. I'm okay. Let me let me try to go forward. And what was that? What was that that just popped into my head? Why did I feel like that?

Andi Fetzner 18:47

And it's okay, if I'm not okay.

Rosanne 18:49

Exactly.

Andi Fetzner 18:49

Even say look, did you say, hey, you know, Hey, bro. Brother. Did you see how messy I just was? Did you see how my face changed? And I'll tell you what, if a person has experienced trauma, they will notice the first three things and they'll know because their capacity to anticipate danger is active all the time.

Rosanne 19:13

All the time all the time.

Andi Fetzner 19:14

All the time. They are ready. They're the first thing they think when you walk in the door. They're they're posed and ready for you to attack. Yeah, so it's a bit disarming. When we show our cards and we say, hmm, I just kind of fell over myself a little bit. And we we are offered that we open the space up. It's so hard, especially being a caregiver because we're supposed to have all the answers and that and I'll tell you from my personal experience in caregiving, that person knows the thing to say that is going to send me rocket ship quickly into Oh, see you never helped me. Uh huh. Yep, I understand that you might feel that way right now. And as you're saying that I can notice that my heart is going really fast. And I just

want you to know that I love you. And I'll tell you what I want to say in that moment is not that I love you, but I do love you. So but I have to build that muscle, right, and that self awareness before I could sit here and just tell you, Oh, this is what you need to do. And this is how you need to behave with other people. But until that introspection happens until we do the work with ourselves, we can note in our brains, and I want to share another little fun sure fun thing that I like to do so ever with kids, I've worked with families, I've worked with professionals, I've worked with frontline staff and all people find, you know, we have to name things. So I'm going to invite you and listeners to put your hand up as if you're giving someone a high five, okay, and from your elbow to your wrist, I'm going to ask you to just kind of think about that, that is your like spinal cord and your nervous system, we're doing a brain hand model and the your brain and your body are connected, I'm going to invite you to put your thumb in the middle of your palm there. And this bottom palm a part of your palm. That is your survival brain. That's what's in charge. When when that button is pushed, the the rockets Guide To The Moon kind of button is pushed. And one danger is perceived your thumb that you just put in the middle there that is your perception center. It's searching all the time for danger. But more than that, I'm going to tell you, it's searching for familiarity and unfamiliarity. So it says wait a minute, she get pistachio ice cream. She knows I like chocolate ice cream, bing, bing, bing, I'm gonna just lose it. survival brain onboard, put your four fingers over your thumb there. This is one this is your thinking cap. Okay, so your thinking cap right now your whole brain, okay, your thinking cap is on. You can make conscious choices. You can make decisions you can think through like, how's this going to play out? You can say, Oh, I'm in this moment, right? Not now, not that moment from 10 years ago, or 30 years ago, if we're honest. And what happens I said when when we experienced these like threats, these dangers, whether or not we think they're whether or not they actually are we flip our lid, so put your hand up again, what becomes disconnected. Right now we're operating from our survival brain, our lid is flipped. We've heard that phrase before. And so we like to use that language of when our lid has slipped, because then you can say, Oh, I'm noticing my, my lid has slipped right now. I can't even think I can't find the words. I'm Italian. We come from a lot of words and our family.

Rosanne 22:48

You and me both

Andi Fetzner 22:49

We don't always, we don't always understand the words. They're loud

Rosanne 22:53

Right And they're rapidfire.

Andi Fetzner 22:55

Exactly. And when one of us is speechless, who somebody's in trouble.

Rosanne 23:00

Totally.

Andi Fetzner 23:01

That that means somebody's let it slip to the point that they can't even access the language, because language lives in that prefrontal cortex, the executive functioning. And so I just introduced that because again, if we don't talk about it, then we can't do anything about it, we can't really do anything about it. But just having those little pieces of language can be really helpful to share in conversation with those who were supporting. And it gives us language to say, Ah, this is what we're happening. I'm not crazy, because I'm just human. This is a human thing. That's a human experience. This isn't to those people thing. This isn't all of us thing.

Rosanne 23:40

Right. So is trauma informed care, then approaching everyone as if they had some sort of trauma. And it's almost like compassion care. In my in my head, that's what pops into my head is compassionate, because you need to have this compassion.

Andi Fetzner 23:58

It's understanding that our life experiences traumatic or not really, yeah, impact how we show up every day, and that other people are having an experience that probably has not nothing to do with us. And when we can recognize that it's way easier to show compassion because we don't feel threatened. Right? When I'm getting yelled at not because the person is angry with me, but because the person is feeling frustrated even because they even though they can't say I feel frustrated, it might come out as expletive, expletive you you you when we can pause and notice ah, this is that this is what that is. This is theirs. This is mine. I can be compassionate and hold the space. But I have to be compassionate with myself first and understand what in me can relate and or where I'm at in the space right now. Sometimes it's I'm not going to answer the phone right now because I know You do show myself some compassion. The tough thing about that. And this is something I've been thinking a lot about, because I come from, like many of us a punitive environment where, well, you did this. So you have to live with the consequences. Yeah, or a boundary feels punitive. Yeah, totally. I work. I've worked with kids with fosse in the foster system. But I'll go just from my personal experience of disconnection from my caregivers early, having someone walk away from me and say, Hey, I need a minute, I don't hear them say, hey, I need a minute, all I see is then walking away from me, my stomach goes to my throat, my hair stands up in the back of my neck, I have a full fledged flipped moment, the difference between a trauma informed approach there is I love you, you are so important to me. And I'm noticing that my body is telling me that stuff's going on. Would it be alright? If I took about five minutes, and I sat over there? Or maybe if I went outside, which would work better? And that's I'm giving options that work for me. Okay, I'm just giving options. Because when we give options, what does it allow for choice control, right? And if you can allow someone to feel in control that helps them keep the whole brain going. And I need to I need to take a minute, I love you. You're amazing. I can still take my time. But how I'm doing the taking time? Is trauma informed. Does that make sense?

Rosanne 26:27

Makes perfect sense.

Andi Fetzner 26:28

So it's connection. First, I love you. And I'm having an experience that may or may not have to do with you. But you don't need to know that it's none of your business. It's my business. Exactly. Which is a

hard thing, even though we can write in our journals later and talk to our therapists come to our caregiver circles and vent because that's okay to Okay. I'm not saying we could say Kumbaya and pass the talking stick. Sometimes we have those conversations too. And that's absolutely part of being human is is coming together and community and sharing experiences of perfect and imperfect and everything in between moments.

Rosanne 27:04

Right. No, I love that. Because it's true. And it's an instead of escalating it further, instead of being in that place where you're, you're triggered. And at that point, it's just not it's it's not going to end well. It's just it's a collision waiting to happen.

Andi Fetzner 27:25

I'm not my best self. When my lead is flipped that person that part of me that scared little end does not handle fear, well, does not handle conflict, well, I'm going to handle it well. Just doesn't end up well for my relationships. I'm a fighter. You know, the ways we adapt, we fight we flight we freeze. And recently they've added fun, which we never really like talked about, but that people pleasing that we do the I like to think about it like through the perspective of what we do with a bear. If we encounter a bear. It's like we do with the fun. It's like we feed the bear like fish constantly. But think about how much energy it takes Right? to constantly be giving and giving. And we're doing that from a place of fear. We're not doing that from a place of caregiving. We're not doing it from a place of self love. We're not doing it from a place of genuine, this is my calling, right? Like that spiritual experience that caregiving is right, the beautiful like gift that we have to be present with someone in their journey during some of their most vulnerable scary times. I mean, that's really what it's a spiritual experience to be able to caregiver. And if I'm going to show up, I want to show up in a way that allows me to attune safely with them. And with myself.

Rosanne 28:51

That's beautiful. Yes. And it's you're right it is it's it's another level. And sometimes it's just all of this crap gets in the way.

Andi Fetzner 29:02

Yes. Yeah. I loved I love that metaphor for sure. It's all the crap. Yep. And I encourage that conversation. I want to connect with you right now. I'm feeling like there's some stuff between us. What do you notice? I'm noticing some stuff, you know, the power of, of just talking about it when it was not safe. We didn't talk about that growing up, right.

Rosanne 29:27

You're Italian.

Andi Fetzner 29:28

I mean, yeah, we talked about stuff but it was never about that stuff

Rosanne 29:32

We eat

Andi Fetzner 29:34

Talked about was for dinner

Rosanne 29:36

Exactly.

Andi Fetzner 29:37

Talked about what we're supposed to be doing. But the feelings we moded that was never a problem. But the the other thing oh, I want to bring this up celebration. Yeah. I want to celebrate with you right now. But I feel like there's some stuff in the way that might be getting in the way of that like celebration and connection. Yes. And celebration is Such a healing technique and tool and just letting go or just giving it up, whatever that means to a person really can can really facilitate and burn through sort of this stuff. Like, let's burn it metaphorically or physically, like, Let's go have a barbecue in the back and throw in a bunch of papers and just throw the stuff away, because it's really getting in the way of us having a good time. Yeah. And that's a level of vulnerability. And cognizance that isn't always possible. I mean, the the family member who I work with closely as to traumatic brain injury, it's like working with somebody with dementia, right? And there's good days and bad days and grief. It's a constant grief process of man, yesterday was such a good day. And today, isn't it's not so much. And that's okay. I can be sad a little, I can be a little bummed about that. And I can hold it, I can hold it all. And it doesn't have to be good or bad or right or wrong. It's all part of this beautiful picture.

Rosanne 31:08

Yes. And because that's what it is. And that's what caregiving is. Yeah, there's so much of it. It has, there's so many different faces of it, and degrees of it. And it's almost like being able to be vulnerable and being able to talk about these things that well, we don't talk about this. Well, that's great. But now, it might be a good idea. Like, it's going to be helpful, more than, you know, turn it around from being a hindrance into something that's helpful. And something that can that can bridge that gap.

Andi Fetzner 31:43

Right? Yeah. It's, if if we don't talk about it, why don't we talk about it? Who said, Who said we can't? Right? And then go down that road? You know, have the conversation. I think we we often move so quickly through conversations about like, what's the next thing? How can we fix right? Especially as as caregivers and helpers, like, we want to fix the situation? Oh, man, I'm doing a dance right now. When you want to fix it, I love to fix it, give me a fix it button, I want to fix it. And I want to get that like dopamine head of like, hey, things are good again, right? And that's really dangerous to our long term relationships, sometimes with folks who maybe don't feel broken, or like, there's an implication that there's a brokenness that needs fixed. I think one of the things that I'm, you know, it's, it's in theory, I can understand this all day, but I want to share from my practice, too, of like trying to navigate this journey. Sometimes I have to say, Okay, what is your problem right now? What is the thing that's that we could make better together? What projects can we work on together? That that you see at and like, sometimes that's like, I'm confused about the where to put the cans in the pantry? Because like, spatial stuff is hard. And so I'm like, okay, and then once that's resolved, it can it opens up the door for so many other things. But when I'm over here, trying to like, let's work on transportation, and let's work on

this done. And then it's, it's a barrier. And we're having two different conversations. And there's a disconnection there. And we go back to old habits have conversations of when we were five and six years old, because that's what's safe and comfortable.

Rosanne 33:29

Right. You know how that feels.

Andi Fetzner 33:31

We know how to do that. We know how to do this. Yeah. So we go back to that. And I find that happening so much more often than I'd like to admit. And I'm a participant. Yeah, it's so easy to get pulled into that conversation. Right? Right. Oh, quick, so quick and so easy. I mean, we know each other's buttons. Yeah. Yeah. So the best thing we can do, I think, is hold space. And that's a hard thing to do when we're so used to feeling like we're supposed to be fixing it. Feeling like we're supposed to be doing something. Just sitting with someone watching the Hallmark Channel. Right, exactly. It's it's seeing it's it that's where the compassion comes in seeing the world through someone else's eyes and experiencing that joy, letting go of like, I don't need to fix anything because it's nothing's broken. I'm, I'm here watching a Hallmark Channel. It's this is this is it? The it isn't fixing the it is this, this is the relationship this is the that stress is contagious, right. So if I get all like the hibbity Bibbity like we need to do something, then the other person is gonna get hibbity Bibity and they don't necessarily have the mental capacity to like, follow me. So they go into the pattern and then it becomes the dance and then it's just a mess.

Rosanne 34:41

It's a hamster wheel. And I think it's living in that uncomfortableness because there's it's there's just times it's uncomfortable. You can't fix everything. And you just have to kind of go with it and that makes you feel like why don't want to sit here like that because it you you feel that mmmmmmm You know?

Andi Fetzner 35:00

Yeah.

Rosanne 35:01

And that's when you have to think of why it's, why am I feeling like this?

Andi Fetzner 35:06

Right.

Rosanne 35:06

And because it's, there's a lot of that there's enough of that to go around. And I think stepping into that uncomfortable area is where you can then get to the freedom of being like, this is okay, I can do this.

Andi Fetzner 35:22

The only way. That's the only way is through it. Yeah, I worked within health care clinics off the specifically one group I'm thinking of we did a survey on why, what's the barrier to taking 10 to 15 minutes to yourself every day? Yeah, one of the prompts was, I feel like I need to be doing something

all the time. And I, we did, I did like a little bit of a focus group around that. And it was a feeling of self worth. I'm only good if I'm productive. This conversation is happening in those in the world in the universe, right? Yeah. But I'm only good enough if I'm producing if I'm having outcomes, if I'm making money, or making some sort of project happen. And that is the product of kind of that programming. Yes. And so when we can deprogram that it's okay to just sit and just be, and it's okay to not be okay. It's okay to cry. If something's happy or sad, or whatever it is. It's all part of this. It's all part of the picture. It's, I always say to people who are like, especially like 20 Somethings. You know, everything's such a big deal when you're in your 20s. And, you know, they they're like, Oh, well, you know, how's this going to work out? Like, is it going to be okay? I'm like, if it's not okay, it's going to be a great story. Nobody read a book. Nobody reads books about people who were like, yep. And then I did my college. And then I got my first job. And then I, you know, everything worked out exactly. ABCD. Nobody wants to read that book. No, I'm not reading that book. Nobody's writing. You know, I'm not reading the memoir. I want to hear about the adventure and the resilient, right. And then I we can explore how did you get to where you are today? What have you already been through? That was hard. You're so scared, you can't get through something. But look at what you've already come through. There isn't a caregiver out there who hasn't been through something that has inspired them to want to be the person that they didn't have when they were younger, to be that be that person who was there for them when they needed them? That's, that's the paying it forward? Or the healing that can happen in those relationships, those caregiving relationships. And, you know, that's the magic.

Rosanne 37:39

I totally agree. And it's, it's a chance it's an opportunity to pull all of that together. And you, you know, I think, once you're a caregiver, you can do anything. Absolutely anything. It's like, Is that all you have? That's it? Okay, no big deal.

Andi Fetzner 37:56

I love that. I'm a pro, I can make phone calls, I can send emails, I can hold a group session, I'm a facilitator, I can be a liaison between agencies. I can Oh, 100%. Yeah,

Rosanne 38:12

I can do medical things. I mean, the list, the list is, is endless. And it's an opportunity to, to also tap into yourself through all of this. Because you grow as, as a person through this whole process. It might be hard and uncomfortable, but it can transform. And that's, that's part of this. And if you have someone say you're caring for someone that has an awful trauma of physical trauma that had happened to them, and you're trying to care for them, and they're viewing it from that lens, how do you make that safe for them? For both of you,

Andi Fetzner 38:52

That is a really hard situation to navigate. And I know that there's some amazing work in the geriatric community around this specific thing, because what happens when people get older, is they go back to their childhood, and they go back to those experiences, and that is their reality. I have a dear friend who is a physician's assistant, and she works with this population. And we were hiking last weekend, and she was telling I said, Tell me about the people who you work with who's long hike, we've talked about a lot of things. She said, You know, I really love working with the population because sometimes some

days I'm in the 1920s and I'm going down to the malt shop and I'm having a malt with Sal and Tommy and Other days I'm someone's daughter or other days, I'm hearing this the pain of someone and having to really be challenged myself and having to make sure the physical space is safe because this person is like on the floor, right? That all that to be said of someone else's reality is their reality. And so trying to say Your reality is not real, can be really challenging. I mentioned the preventative things of understanding how we adapt, and acknowledging the things that can flip our lead. Sometimes they're unpredictable. Sometimes it's because it's Tuesday at one o'clock, and then it's Friday at 9am. And there's no way to tell when we are attuned to each other, we can recognize some some physiological things, we can notice some thoughts. When we model that self awareness, it gives other people the language and the framework to then mimic us. It's like the yawning thing of mirror neurons. We learn through seeing representation matters in many different ways. Plug that a little bit. And so when we are able to do it ourselves and be the thing, then it gives people the space to open and communicate, right. So if I say, You know what I want to talk, I want to share a little bit about my morning and something that happened to me, is that okay, so I'm talking to the person, I'm caregiving? Yes, of course, they want to listen, we'll say it's a good day. So we model that, that walking through, I noticed my heart was going really fast. Do you ever notice that that happens? That happens, let's talk about it. If you start to notice, you know, oh, what's more, your stomach? That happens? Okay, cool. That's good to know. It's really amazing that you're self aware like that, because sometimes I don't notice it. Right? What thoughts do you start to have began going through that, it's, I always say to you not to be a therapist to be therapeutic. I love that. And so you can walk through this conversation and help folks gain language and gain a framework, trauma, such a heavy word, what we're talking about here is someone having a normal response to an abnormal experience. And then that becoming activated because it's stored in our brains, because we got to stay safe. She must feel really scared in that moment, I felt scared to probably not the same as you. But let's talk about that. preventatively so that later on, we can have a conversation about it or not, or at least go back around and do a recap, there may or may not be memory there, too. I mean, I want to acknowledge the fact that if we're caregiving someone has the person has issues that might just there may not be learning happening. And that's okay, too. That's something that we have to know and, and to use a word that I love. And it's so simple, but so not easy. Except, yeah, so easy to say out loud. But it's so not, it's so like, not easy to practice. It's simple to say out loud, it's not easy to practice. And so just again, being present with people in their journey and not saying it worked, or it didn't work, it's not about the outcome. It's about the journey. Gosh, gosh, if we think about it through that lens, then we can't fail. We can't do it wrong. Because what we're doing is we're just moving. Oh, I burnt the toast, okay, let's make more toast or do we want something else? Right? Or, or we can we can pontificate over the toast. And we can spend our time doing that, what do we want to do? And if we do want to complain about the toes, that's fine, let's do it. But let's do it. Because we want to do it right and not do it. Because we feel like we're supposed to right. And the thing about trauma that I'll just kind of come back on is that it is not a conscious choice to go into those moments. And to go into that cycle, even to get out of it as a conscious off to get to get out of that loop requires an interruption. Now we can be that interruption, but that doesn't mean we can be that interruption, we might not be able to be that interruption we possibly could be. But we don't know if it's gonna be us or the dog or the mailman mail person? We don't know, right? And so let's focus on what's working and not working right. And just maintaining a level of curiosity and a sense of presence, as we're navigating through this moment by moment, day to day, hour by hour, and offering compassion for all parties involved, including the dog and the mail carrier, if possible.

Rosanne 44:04

If possible. Yes. Well, what and when, when those moments are happening, when those triggered moments. What is it? Is it a duck and cover? Or is it a I'm gonna stand here with you? Like, which? Which way is it?

Andi Fetzner 44:21

It's okay. It's a decision. That's that's an in the moment decision. But hopefully, it's something that could have been prepared for that we can have conversations about, it's a connectedness, wow, it seems like you're in the trenches right now. I'm gonna go stand over there, because I want to make sure everybody's safe, okay? And it's about safety. It's not about you're in trouble and you shouldn't be doing what you're doing. If we're scared. We're going to be giving directives. If we're compassionate and understanding we're going to be with the person in the trenches. Literally. If somebody's being violent, then it's not you're in trouble because you're violent. Wow. It seems like you're scared and unsafe right now. I need to make sure I'm safe too. So I just want you to know I'm here and I love Have you and I'm gonna have to do what needs to happen to keep us both safe because that's important for us, that us and we language can be really helpful. Maintaining connection, remember, traumas disconnection. So if we want to not re traumatize staying connected is the key. Okay? That is so healing. Yeah, just that action, because that person was disconnected. And that's why they're going into that person. We, we as humans, right. In that moment, we are disconnected. And that is why we move into our old habit.

Rosanne 45:31

So the the connection to reestablish that connection is, is where the magic lies.

Andi Fetzner 45:36

Absolutely. And talking about safety, let's I'm, I want to make sure you're safe. And I'm safe. And we're in this together, not I need to protect myself from you. But rather, we need to all be safe. And sometimes me being safe and you being safe means that we might be in different rooms. And that's okay. It doesn't mean that I love you any last year, not bad or I'm not bad. It's just you know, it used to be like that. It's not like that anymore. We have a new way of operating. So you're okay, we're okay.

Rosanne 46:03

Right.

Andi Fetzner 46:03

Um, sometimes it's talking to a five year old. And, and I'm saying that to ourselves, talking to that five year old self of this person doesn't have to be in trouble. I don't have to be in trouble. It just is what it is right now. Okay, I can accept this moment for what it is. The pet, the punishment is only going to further perpetuate the exacerbation of the fear response. And the lid flipping the goal is of trauma informed approaches is to get the whole brain. That's the whole point. How can we get the lid on? How can we operate from a whole brain? If the action the thing we're saying thinking, feeling or doing is threatening or scary? The lids gonna flip?

Rosanne 46:48

Okay, so it has to be more of a we're in this together.

Andi Fetzner 46:52

Right? I've had people in my life who were not safe, but I've had to say I love you. And I want what's best for you. And for our safety, for your safety, my safety, you know, we were not able to connect, like we used to be able to, that doesn't mean that if as you navigate through life, you know, I don't think you're a bad and I'm good. It's just we're in different paths as a human. You know, I see you, I hear you. And it doesn't, and I don't have to say, but you need to be doing this, that and the other. That's the hard part. Right. Right. If they is there any questions you have for me? I'm open to asking, answering any questions you have right? Connection. Okay. It's so hard. It's so non egoic. It's so counterintuitive. It's like standing there naked. Yeah, is what I'm proposing. And I'm sure some of you all are like rolling your eyes like this lady. I'm not saying I even do it all the time. And when I don't, I try to come back around and do some healing around it. And I like to ramble off in my journal into my support systems and then have to come back around. And if I want a certain outcome, I have to do things that I've never done, right? Because what caused the trauma is not going to cause the healing. I can't keep doing the same thing. Can't keep playing the same game. If I want a different outcome.

Rosanne 48:13

I love that. What caused the trauma isn't going to cause the healing so then what what would you suggest, okay, if this is happening, I would do this, this, this and this.

Andi Fetzner 48:25

Give me a scenario.

Rosanne 48:26

Um, caregiver comes in and she's been running errands and you know, cleaning up dog vomit and, and went to the grocery store and came home and the father says you're never here. You never do anything for me. Just like you know, you've never done anything for me.

Andi Fetzner 48:42

Can relate? Okay, this is a good one. Before I even walk in the door, why am I here? What is the point of this? Okay, I'm here because I'm choosing to be here, here because I love this person. I'm here. Because I do want to be what I didn't have when I was younger. And what do I notice in myself? I'll go through the check in. What am I thinking feeling? What's my body telling me? Get my body ready to do the next action? When I feel centered enough to enter the room? I will not until okay, if I enter the room in chaos. What can I expect to happen?

Rosanne 49:21

Chaos? flipping your lid?

Andi Fetzner 49:23

Absolutely. Because that's the thing that this person who I'm cared for, is ready to respond to because they are in such a vulnerable place that if there is a threat, they need to be hyper aware and ready to respond. I come in ready. Hey, what's going on today? If I get if I get you're never here. Gosh, that must

be hard to feel so alone. Gosh, yeah. Like Well, I'm here now. What do you want to do? Gotcha. Somebody's still mad. Gosh, it sounds like we're having some big feelings today. I've had days like that too. Let's you know, roll with it if it gets more violent if it continues to escalate Got, it seems like we're having some some tough times today. Maybe I'll change the environment. I'm gonna go for a walk. Do you want to come with me? No, ask a few times.

Rosanne 50:09

Don't go. Okay. See ya.

Andi Fetzner 50:10

Okay, bye. Couple times. Are you sure? Well, maybe we take the dog for a walk dogs, pets are always very nice little third party things. Make sure this person is fed basic needs are met. Do you need any food, water? Basic Needs kind of stuff, just like we check in with ourselves. Where are you fed? All of that. And then choices are always helpful. Here's three options. This also works with kids. Do you want peas, carrots? Or? Yep, green beans are some choices, you're gonna get a vegetable, which one do you want, I'm really looking forward to ice cream later setting up something in the future. So that there's some predictability. I'm a huge person of predictability and a huge person for flexibility. I used to be really bad at flexibility. Because I made up a lot of stories around. If things didn't go ABCD, then this means this. Okay? So knowing what stories I'm making about and where my own anxieties like, oh gosh, if I don't, if I don't do it, the thing if I don't turn on the radio station that they like, they're gonna yell at me. So I'm already bringing that energy, calming that energy before. And noticing the stories I'm telling myself and the fear state that I might be getting in can be really helpful. Yeah, that's great. You just thought of this, too. I'm really thinking that modeling is important. So you know what, I'm noticing my stomach is really bugging me today. You know, and I think that it's just because I had so much going on. I'm gonna just is it okay, if I share with you what I just came from? When I do a lot of stuff like that. Sometimes I noticed that myself, do you ever notice anything like that your stomach, your chest? Again, creating some of that narrative, we say shared language, creating a shared language around understanding stress, just having it become part of the regular conversation. What do you do? We love to become experts, all of us, right? So if you can ask somebody advice, like oftentimes the people who are being helped want to help. They were helpers once or they felt like they were in charge one. So flipping that script can be really helpful. You know, I'm really struggling with this. Can I ask her your support and advice then shifts the energy in the room. So that's another fun one. That's great. We're all just model. Like, even right now. Like, I can notice all my notes. I noticed my shoulders or to my ears, I feel like a turtle. Is that okay? If I take 30 seconds, and just take some breaths, and I want to make sure I'm the best person for this interview today. Okay, if I do that, yeah, sure. Draw my shoulders, roll my back a little bit. And as I do this, while I Take three breaths, if I do this, I'm noticing there's more tension on my stomach than I anticipated or noticed. I heard three is starting to slow down. Probably gonna do two more breaths, not too soon. Your jaw starting to relax. Even as I settle in, I can notice the smells in the environment that I didn't notice before. Last breath, I'm gonna say it out. Thank you so much for giving me that I'm in and now my whole brain again. I can I can interact with you in a much better way. So let's move forward. Oh, that's great. And what do you notice about yourself right now after me, me doing that?

Rosanne 53:28

I was I was much more relaxed.

Andi Fetzner 53:31

And I didn't have to direct you to do it.

Rosanne 53:33

Not all right. It is contagious. No, I love that.

Andi Fetzner 53:36

It's such a hard journey and and it's just shifting the culture a little bit shifting the narrative a little bit. We know this in our hearts anecdotally. Yeah. It's just hard to be vulnerable. It's hard, especially when you're caring for a family member who shoulda Coulda, Woulda, right. And we have some of our own stuff around it. And that's okay, too.

Rosanne 53:55

Yeah, well, and it's, it's hard to tap into that, when you're sad. When you're grieving, your relationships, your life, everything, that person how that person is changing. It's hard to tap into that because everything kind of gets stuffed down anyway, while you're doing all of this. And it's like, I don't have time for this. I don't have time for this. But it's important to make that time to make that connection with the person that you're caring for. Because it's it's a win win for both of you.

Andi Fetzner 54:27

The day is gonna pass anyways, yeah. Okay, like the hours gonna go by. So in the next hour, I can walk from here to my kitchen, unconsciously, or I can walk from here to my kitchen and notice my feet. And notice my breath. As I do that. And if I do that, I'm metabolizing more stress hormones I'm going to interact with, you know, this, the person I'm caring for, I can pass that 30 minutes in a connected way. Or I can pass it in disconnected scared, wait, it's a lot less energy to do it in a not scared way. You're we ended up a lot less tired. We ended up a lot more fulfilled. It's just challenging to the initial shift out of that loop is what the challenges, right? It's like lifting weights, right?

Rosanne 55:19

Yep. No, you're absolutely right. And it's like you said, we're used to these feelings when you try something different, like, oh, I don't like the way that feels. Does it make it bad? It's just different. And you have to, you have to get over there. Any last thoughts for caregivers that are caring for people that have experienced trauma or have bad experiences or or anything or just caregivers in general,

Andi Fetzner 55:44

You're doing the best you can. They're doing the best they can, that might look different next week, might have looked different last week. All of that is okay. And it's okay to not be okay. It's just a journey. All of it is just a journey. Make it one worth reading.

Rosanne 56:01

A big thank you to Andi Fetzner. To learn more about Andy her work and her training opportunities, check out originstraining.org. I hope you enjoyed our podcast today, head over to Daughterhood.org

and click on the podcast section for Show Notes including the full transcript and links to any resources and information from today's episode. You can find and review us on Apple podcasts or anywhere you listen to your podcasts. We are also on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at Daughterhood the Podcast and on my blog. HeyRoe.com Feel free to leave me a message and let me know what issues you may be facing and we'd like to hear more about or even if you just want to say hi, I'd love to hear from you. Also a very special thank you to Susan Rowe for our theme music, the instrumental version of her beautiful song Mamas Eyes from her album Lessons In Love. I hope you found what you were looking for today, information, inspiration or even just a little company. This is Rosanne Corcoran. I hope you'll join me next time in Daughterhood.