

## Interview with Joyce Smith, MA, MFT

**Joyce:** Let's see. So, a little bit about EMDR and TRM. Basically, I'm dealing with my own PTSD issues. I spent literally decades with therapists talking about things, and it just didn't go away. It got to a certain point, and it just wouldn't leave. And through some of my training professionally, I was introduced to these techniques and discovered that, through EMDR and through the somatic-based therapies, they address things physiologically in a way that talk therapy just doesn't get to. And things that I had been activated for literally decades, well, the activation went away. So, that is why I wholeheartedly believe in it, and also I see remarkable changes in my clients as well, too.

**Doug:** Wow. That says a lot right there. I guess the proof's in the pudding. Well, I know there's a whole different, wide range of therapies, so I imagine what works for one doesn't work for everybody.

**Joyce:** That is true. That is true. Generally, these types of therapies work for situations where people have something that they just can't let go of; that they're still activated regardless of what they've done, what they've tried, and they still keep getting triggered. These types of therapies help your brain to understand it better so that you can kind of put the pieces back together and leave it in the past. It also helps you relieve certain impulses that are still stuck inside your body, that are being activated, but we don't even realize that's what it is. So, it just addresses it differently. And you're absolutely right, there is not "one size fits all" in terms of therapy.

**Doug:** Right. Well, very good. You kind of mentioned a word there that I think is kind of a good segue into one thing that we wanted to discuss. Earlier in the week, I had asked members of the Higher Healing Group and our website to throw out some questions for you and kind of find out what it is that they're struggling with. And as you and I discussed earlier in the day today, it seemed like a lot of those had to do with triggers as a result of the affair.

**Joyce:** Yeah.

**Doug:** Can we just talk about those a little bit and, first of all, define - I think everyone knows what a trigger is, I would think - but maybe how that relates to

PTSD and then maybe some methods how some people can get past some of these triggers and the way they affect them.

**Joyce:** Okay. Well, there's so much more to triggers than most people are aware. When we've experienced something that is traumatizing - and the basic definition of trauma is either too much too fast, or too little for too long. But particularly in instances where it's too much too fast [and] all of a sudden you just can't believe what it is you've just seen or heard, or what is happening, your survival mechanism - and all this happens unconsciously, without you thinking about it - it determines that it wants to make sure you're not going to be exposed to this danger ever again.

So, it takes that event and splits it up into a gazillion, little sub-particles; that every last, little bit of anything that relates to that incident - be it a color, be it a shape, be it a sound that was in the air, or word you were looking at - it could be thousands of different things. And because, in the moment, it's overwhelming, your brain cannot consolidate all those into one, cohesive memory. So, it gets filed away incorrectly into lots of little, different file cabinets; but they're all interconnected by the word "danger," which relates to that particular event.

Subsequently, when the traumatic event occurred, and it happened to be something blue you were looking at, if you happened to see a shade of blue, your nervous system is going to say, "[Gasps] I'm back in the trauma. It's happening right now," because your nervous system and your emotions do not have a sense of time. You're still stuck in that moment, and that's why it's so easy to access those feelings and for your nervous system to get activated. Mentally, rationally, we're able to put things on a timeline. We're able to say, "Yes this is in the past. It's not happening here and now"; but your nervous system, unfortunately, doesn't follow that same set of rules.

So, if there's anything that remotely relates it to that traumatizing event, the second we pick it up - and it happens faster than we can even think about it - our survival mechanism supersedes our cognition, and before you know it, were activated, and you start shaking or sweating. Or, your heart starts pounding harder and all those types of things, which are basically preparing you for the fight-or-flight mechanism; or, in some cases the freeze mechanism, which is when you perceive you can't get away and you can't fight your way out of it.

Consequently, with triggers, unfortunately, with as complicated as it is with just one of them, if we've had other traumas in our life, each one of those traumas has its own subsets of your hundreds of different types of triggers. And if any one of those triggers is the same as the trigger in a different trauma that occurred, your entire neural network lights up for both of those - or, three them, or four of them, or however many there are - and your nervous system goes on hyper alert for everything. So, when we think we're reacting to, for example, finding out that there's been infidelity, we might actually be relating to other things that have to do with betrayal, such as some kind of sexual abuse, or physical abuse, or a car accident, or - you know, et cetera, et cetera, that we're not even aware is feeding into our reactions.

**Doug:** Hmm. So, it can bring up all kinds of past pain - not just the one that is triggered? Is that [crosstalk]?

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. In particular, the people that take longer to let go of this stuff and have stronger reactions - it's usually because there's other things that are fueling it as well.

**Linda:** That probably haven't been addressed?

**Joyce:** Yes, that have not been addressed. Or, what I've also seen happen is, if somebody who has addressed a lot of what has happened in the past - but remember I said there're, like, hundreds of little triggers. Well, they might not have gotten to every, single one of those. And then when you have something as earth-shaking as finding out about infidelity, suddenly those little, teeny, tiny triggers that were something become bigger than life. And so they just jump to the foreground, but they don't necessarily realize, again, that it's old stuff.

So, yeah. And you can work on it, and this is a great way you can work on what hasn't been completed before - sort of a bizarre blessing in disguise, so to speak.

**Doug:** So, is this why, in traditional therapies, they get so much into people's past and their childhood and all that sort of thing?

**Joyce:** Um, yeah, there's a piece of that that does that as well to come to a different understanding. The problem with traditional therapies is when they're talking about it, they're not getting into the physiology of it. And if we could heal things just by talking about it, we would have been healed a long time ago. Right? So, [crosstalk] trigger, the talking obviously isn't the key to make this thing work.

**Linda:** I also believe the awareness of what is actually happening. I think a lot of our listeners are - were almost set free when they starting reading your articles: "Oh, my gosh. That's how I feel! That's why I'm sweaty and I'm shaky. And I'm not crazy!" And I think for the cheater to truly understand these triggers don't come up because we're trying to punish the other person. It's just something that happens that we really have a difficult time controlling.

**Joyce:** Absolutely.

**Linda:** And I think, if the cheater was aware of what was actually going through our bodies and brains and so forth, maybe they would be able to be a little bit more sympathetic to when we're going crazy [chuckles].

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely, because it's not because we're crazy. It's because our inner biology is taking over. And, yeah. Sure, it helps to see that there is a real reason, there's a physiological reason why we are responding the way we are, or reacting. And for somebody else to understand that it's physiological - like the cheater, as opposed to saying, "Oh, come on. Get over it. We're done. Let's move on" -

**Linda:** Right.

**Joyce:** - well, yeah, except your nervous system isn't done. Your nervous system is back to when the betrayal happened, and every time there's a new piece of information that gets revealed, it's like starting over at square one again.

**Linda:** Right. And so then the physical symptoms of the sweating, the shaking, the dry mouth - those are all a result.

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely.

**Linda:** And I've always wondered why I would always start shaking. And I still shake, and it's all due to that - to the physiological impacts.

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely. And shaking is actually a good thing, because it's releasing some of the energy that's been stuck in your body all this time.

**Linda:** Okay.

**Joyce:** Yeah. It is a good thing, and if you can just sort of embrace it. Sometimes you'll find there are times when you feel the shaking will start to come and, if you want to, you can consciously stop it. But if you allow it just to happen, then it becomes a relief to get some of that stuff out of your body.

**Doug:** Okay. Anything else on triggers, Linda?

**Linda:** Um, gosh you can go forever on triggers.

**Doug:** Well, let me look here real quick at some of the questions that some of the readers have. It looks like a couple of them - for instance here, "How do you stop the thoughts as they escalate out of control over something you know isn't happening?" I don't know if that's considered a trigger, necessarily, but I guess it could be.

**Joyce:** Yeah. Well, sure. Something has triggered those thoughts.

**Doug:** Right.

**Joyce:** And, yes, you logically know it's not happening; but that's when we get into the physiological part that ties into the emotional part that is still stuck where something happened before. So, when you start to feel yourself getting activated - and that's really the first step to beginning to take control over this, is notice where you're sensing it in your body. This is where some of the somatic stuff comes into play - "somatic" meaning body sensation. And if you notice - is your jaw clenching? Are your teeth clenched? Is your body shaking? Do you feel tightness in your legs? Where are you feeling it? And if you can begin to get in touch with that, bit by bit, you will recognize it sooner. And as soon as you do that, then if you do some of the grounding exercises - because grounding is very

much about bringing your cognition back on board and bringing your brain back in the room, because what you're responding to is either something that happened before, or something you're afraid is going to happen in the future - not what's occurring in the moment while you're right there. So, what you want to do is get in touch with what is happening in that moment. You know, real good places to start with is if you're sitting down, or even standing up - wherever you are - notice your points of contact from your body to the chair to the floor. With your arm, notice how it's been supported and held. Notice the texture of what's holding you, or [what] you're standing on. Notice the temperature. Notice the sounds in the room. It's a lot of mindfulness, which is very big.

**Doug:** Practicing mindfulness - right?

**Joyce:** Right. Mindfulness is another name for something that's been around for thousands of years. It's kind of the catch word of the current day. But the bottom line [is] what you're doing is coming back in the room.

Another thing you can do would be to engage your cognition, because remember what I said before is your nervous system hijacks your cognition. So, after it's been hijacked and you start to get activated - that's where you say, "Okay, let me bring my cognition back on board. Let's rein this thing in. What's going on right now? Let me look around the room. I'm going to find five green things right now." And then you look around the room, and you spot those things. It's a distraction technique to get your brain away from thinking about the intrusive thoughts. It's also getting in touch [with] what's happening here and now and getting your cognition back on board, which then will begin to supersede what's happening in your neurobiology.

**Doug:** So, in essence, both techniques that you just mentioned are basically just controlling your thoughts and getting away from past events and bringing them to present?

**Joyce:** Yeah, basically. Controlling your thoughts and also getting in touch with your body sensations, too, because your body sensations are what get triggered and also are what can bring you back.

**Doug:** Now, normally, when you're conducting this type of therapy with somebody, or the exercises, does this take a lot of practice? How long does it take somebody to get somewhat proficient at this?

**Joyce:** Oh, it doesn't take that long at all, and I actually have on my website a couple of guided meditations that have bilateral music in the background. Bilateral is a basic premise of EMDR, which is where it shoots back and forth from left and right sides of your body, and it helps connect your rational with your emotional side of your brain to make sense out of it. It's a way of being able to integrate things more easily. And I have one guided meditation I called "Grounding, Resourcing and Peaceful Place," which has a lot of these techniques included in it. And after you've done them a few times, you can do them on your own anywhere. The bilateral music does help to bring that in as well. I have another -

The music helps you integrate the experiences, what you're thinking about. And, honestly, it doesn't have to be music. It can be any kind of bilateral movement where you can be – there's something called a butterfly hug, where you're basically hugging yourself, and you can tap back and forth, left right, left right, with your fingers on your arms. That works as well. The music is good, because you don't have to be doing anything. And when I work with my clients, sometimes we'll use music. I'll use these - they're basically vibrating polls. They hold one in each hand, and there's a vibration that shifts back and forth, left and right. Or, sometimes we'll use lights.

The EMDR eye movement part of it is because, initially, when it was first discovered, they thought you had to use your eyes to look back and forth, from left to right and follow somebody's fingers. That's a technique that's still being used, and it doesn't have to be just eye movement. So, the music takes the place of that, and when you have your eyes closed, it often helps to get into it more fully, and you can also focus more because you're not looking at the external stimuli at the same time.

**Doug:** Yeah, I started meditating - I don't know - maybe about a year ago, and I've done it sporadically over that period of time. When I first started, I always had a hard time. My brain was just going everywhere, and I found that it took a little bit

of practice to rein your brain back in where you don't have a million thoughts going through your brain at one time.

**Joyce:** Right. Well, your brain will have different thoughts that will crop up, and you just make it okay. Yeah.

And one technique I've heard of is, when your brain starts going off somewhere, you just say, "Thinking, thinking, thinking," and it brings you back in again. But, yeah, our brains are going to go off unless you're a Tibetan monk or something. We don't have that kind of practice. So, yes, your brain is going to go off, and then you bring it back in again. And, generally, when you root things in body sensation, and you come back to noticing the rhythm of your breathe, again noticing again what's happening in the moment - that helps to bring you back in again.

**Doug:** Yeah, that's what I have learned. The breath is the key. Everybody breathes, and then you kind of just - that's the one certain thing while you're sitting there, [is] that you're going to be breathing. So, you kind of center yourself on that and come back.

**Joyce:** Absolutely. And rather than saying, "Okay. Am I breathing really fast? I need to slow down my breathing," if you look at it from a different perspective, and you, say, notice the rhythm of your breath - well, when you notice the rhythm of your breath, you're going to notice that you're breathing very quickly. And just by noticing it, you're inherently going to start to slow it down.

**Doug:** Now, getting back to specifically how this relates to infidelity and stuff - I assume that you have some clients that suffer from infidelity?

**Joyce:** Um-hum, yes I have.

**Doug:** [Crosstalk] this type of therapy on them - or, "with them" I should say, and it's not voodoo.

**Joyce:** No, it's not.

[Chuckling]



**Doug:** A lot of people just have questions, like, "How long am I going to feel this way?" "Do you ever get passed the anger?" "Am I ever going to feel good enough?" - that kind of stuff. What's your experience with those types of questions, maybe as it relates to the therapy you do and maybe just in general? What's your experience with how long it takes somebody to heal?

**Joyce:** Sure. Well, everybody has their own individual process and, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of it has to do with how much prior trauma you have had that is also feeding into this. Another piece of it is how empathetic your partner is. I've had several clients that have discovered that, when they get activated by something, if they're able to have a conversation with their partner in a way that is not accusatory, not blaming, just, "This is how I'm feeling when this happens," and the other person can acknowledge that, what can start off as being really difficult, by the end of it, they end up feeling closer; and they've got through it and gotten a better understanding of the other person's perspective. So, as far as how long it can take, the general thing that's out there says it's roughly two to four years. It can be sooner. It can be longer. A lot of it has to do with how stuck you are and how often you keep repeating the same tapes. And for some people, they can feel very comfortable to hold on to the negativity, because it's something they can control. It's something that they can hold onto, and it feels normal in that moment - that it's a way of being able to draw attention to themselves: "Look at what I've suffered." "Look at what has happened." And it really takes a certain amount of trust in yourself, trust in your partner, which takes a while to build, and trust only comes with consistency and time - which is a big one.

But just to sidestep on that one for a moment, the consistency: it's so important for the offending partner to make good on things they say they're going to do, and it could be something as simple as saying, "Oh yeah, I'm going to take out the trash after dinner." Well, if you don't take the trash out after dinner, the wife says, "Aha! You lied to me again." Right?

**Doug:** Right.

**Joyce:** Well, it could be the husband. I'm sorry. The person who's been betrayed. I know. I just made that the [faux pas?] part of my article. There are plenty of men who had women who have been the ones who have betrayed them.

Let's see. Where are we?

**Linda:** [Crosstalk] what you need. Keeping [crosstalk] -

**Joyce:** Yeah. Okay, thank you. Yeah. It's so important to just follow through with what you say you're going to do, because when you've been betrayed, it feels like there's nothing you can trust. You can't trust your own opinions on things. You can't trust the reality of anything. What is real? How do I know what's right and what isn't? And the only way you begin to establish that is, bit by bit, having things that you can see happen. A little bit like when you have a baby sitter [sic - sitting] in a high chair, and they reach this point where they start dropping things on the floor. And you pick it up, and they drop it on the floor again, and they keep doing that because they want to test that and see "what's going to happen if I drop this? If I let go, is it really going to fall on the floor?" And it takes several repetitions to begin to assimilate that information.

I know it's a very different example, but in many ways it's very similar. We need the consistency. We need to see what's happening. Part of healing is at a certain point being willing to make your peace with what happened. And what happened, happened. And, basically, there's going to be one of two choices. You're either going to find a way to make your peace with it and move on with your life and do what you try and regain closeness and a new level of closeness and intimacy, or you're going to discover this wasn't the relationship that works for you, and so you part. But even then, you still have to work on your own stuff, because it's going to carry you through into your next relationship.

So, you've got to deal with all those issues of betrayal which can stem back to things like when your parents got divorced and one of them left. That feels like betrayal and being abandoned, which are very similar feelings to what it feels like when there's infidelity.

**Linda:** Doug and I were talking last week, and he wanted to write a guide for men, and I told him that cheaters do not realize all the implications and the healing that has to be done. I mean it seems so very black and white, I think, to the cheater. "Okay. I'm back, I'm transparent. I'm done. We can move on." But it's, like, all those little things. It's a daily battle. As I said, they have a hard time understanding that something as - as much as a color or a smell will cause a

trigger and that our brain is going crazy, and then eventually we have to say something, you know? And the way that the cheater responds back to us is so important. If we feel safe telling them about our trigger, and they listen and can put themselves in our shoes for a moment, then we are able to move on. But if you're hearing, "You need to get over this," "You need to get over this," or, "Here we go again," we can't move. You know, we're stuck.

**Joyce:** Yes, that's absolutely true. And one of the most important things in healing on both sides of it is to have empathy, in particular for the person who is the cheater. When they can begin to empathize with the feelings of their partner, that's a huge step towards healing together as a couple.

**Linda:** You need to build that trust.

**Joyce:** Yeah. And one of the things that tends to happen with this is when you've got one partner that is the cheater, and then they come to a point, for whatever reason - either they just can't stand it anymore [and] they say something, or the other person discovers something - in that moment, usually the person who's the cheater has this tremendous sense of guilt that they've been holding for a long time. And it's like they give you this ball of guilt to the person who has been betrayed and said that, "Oh, I feel so much better this is off my shoulders." And in that moment, the person who's been betrayed holds onto this thing and says, "Well, what am I supposed to do with this?" And there's all kinds of -

And so for the person who's the betrayer, in a certain sense, it's easier to say, "Okay, I'm done. Let's move on." And also, there's a lot of guilt and shame on their part as well, particularly when they begin to realize the depths to how much pain they've caused their partner. And some people are willing to hold that pain of their partner, and some people can't handle it, and they create distance. So, there's a lot of ways people deal with this stuff; but, yeah, I wholeheartedly agree it's a fabulous thing to have a manual of sorts for the person who is the cheater to know how to best help the person who's been betrayed, because there are so many little things.

**Linda:** Right.

**Doug:** Yeah, I think that - you know, we've had our blog - it'll be - what - three years in December, or whatever, and all the people we've talked to and who've made comments and all that sort of thing - the people whose spouses have definitely stopped their affair, the biggest problem for their spouses in healing is that the cheater basically didn't help them, and there's no empathy, like what we just discussed. They're the ones that are kind of cutting their own throats, so to speak, because they want to move on. Their spouse won't move on until they talk about it, and they don't want to talk about it, and it's this vicious circle, and it's just [crosstalk] -

**Joyce:** It is, and part of talking about it is that it's really important to have a timeline of events to understand what happened. In retrospect, the person who's been betrayed can then begin to say, "Oh. Well, I've had a feeling this was going on, or this seemed kind of weird. Now I understand now why that was happening." Well, there's a piece of that. The other piece of it is that the person who's been betrayed wasn't there to witness what was going on. So, there's this huge chunk of time that has big questions. "What was happening when I wasn't there?" And as far as getting that information from the person who's the cheater, it can be a little tricky because there's part of that person who wants to know everything, and then [it] reaches a certain point where knowing everything isn't necessarily helpful. It's more like pouring salt into a wound. And that really varies from one person to another in terms of how much information they really need to have in order to be able to understand and let things go.

**Linda:** And, unfortunately, that changes. At first, you think you want to, and then as time goes on, you realize how difficult it is knowing things, how that produces uncertainty. As I said, what you think you knew after six months then after two years, you change. It's almost like starting over at every stage.

**Joyce:** In some ways, it is. Yeah, in some ways, it absolutely is. There're certain things that didn't seem important before that suddenly seem very important now. And it's a process. It's not fun, but getting through it can produce incredible closeness and intimacy that wasn't there before, if both partners are willing to work through this together.

**Doug:** Absolutely. [I'm] looking here on the list for any other questions here. I know we talked a little bit about trust, but I wanted to get your thoughts on that. I

guess a lot of people, betrayed spouses in particular - they want to trust, or they think they do, but they can never get that trust back to the level that it once was. And there's also another set of people who don't want to take the risk, thinking that it might happen again. What do you say to somebody like that?

**Joyce:** Well, as I said before, it takes time and consistency to begin to develop that. And at a certain point, the person who's been betrayed has to take a little bit of a leap of faith to say, "Well, maybe this isn't going to happen again. Maybe they really do mean what they say." And at that point, that's when you stop and say, "Okay, what are the things that show me that this person is different? How do I know that they're not the person they were before?" Because, usually, when there's an affair going on, the person who's the cheater has withdrawn in a number of ways; and that withdrawal can take the form of, sometimes, sexually in terms of performance. It can show up in things like how one person kisses the other. There's a difference between a quick, little peck or a more intimate kiss. It can be the look in somebody's eye. And a lot of times, you can look in somebody's eyes and tell if they're telling the truth or not, or tell if there's sincerity. I've seen with couples that I've worked with when the person who's been betrayed is talking about the pain that they've gone through, and the cheater has such a look of pain in their eyes to see what they have caused. And seeing that in your partner, I think, can help have you have a sense that they understand what happened.

**Doug:** Sure.

**Joyce:** Yeah, and that can help. Let me think. Other things with trust, uh -

**Doug:** I think it all comes down to, you know, is the actions that the person is doing. I mean the words are -

**Joyce:** Yeah, actions are huge - absolutely huge. And at a certain point, it takes an amount of willingness to say, "What good is it serving me to hold on to this anymore?"

I know people who have done things like put Net Nanny on their computers so that they can stop the cheater from going to X, Y and Z. And that carries a real mix bag with it because, on one hand, it's stopping the person from physically being

able to do it. Truth be known, they can use somebody's else's computer somewhere else, if they want to. But what it also does is it keeps perpetuating the idea that there's something there to have to worry about.

And at a certain point, if you can reach the point of being able to say, "You know what? I just have to trust that they're not going to do this," and you take Net Nanny off. Then, suddenly, the person who's the cheater feels more trusted, which makes them feel that it's easier to have intimacy with you because you trust them, and things of that nature.

And, all in all, it's a process; and at a certain point, there's some vulnerability that's going to happen in order to be able to make it through. And is there a guarantee that you're not going to be hurt again? No, but as far as life goes, there are no guarantees other than being born and dying and having to pay taxes. [Chuckles] Other than that, you never know.

There's that expression that says, "It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." So, if you still keep holding on to all the pain and being afraid to trust and being afraid to open up, that's going to affect your quality of life. And is that something you want to continue to have?

You reach the point where you say, "You know, this isn't anyway to live life. I just can't do this anymore," and you['ve] got to take that blind leap of faith and start focusing on the things that show you that that person is with you, that they are connected, that they're not off somewhere else. And you know when somebody is connected with you. You have a sense of that. You can feel it. You can feel the vibration of it. And you can tell when somebody's fluffing you off, or when they're really connected.

And so it's shifting your focus a little bit like I discussed in the article, scanning the environment- how when we're hyper vigilant, when we're looking for danger, and we only take in in 4 percent of what we're seeing out there, that's all we're going to see, is danger. And if we start to shift our focus to look for positive things, suddenly we're going to discover there's a lot of positive stuff out there. And does it take a conscious effort to do that? Absolutely. And, bit by bit, it becomes a habit to start shifting your focus. Or, when you notice that you're focusing on something negative, shift your focus to something positive; because if you keep

going over the same loop over and over of the negative things that happen, you're reinforcing that neural pathway in your brain so it can get there quicker and quicker. And what you want to do is kind of short-circuit that [and] think of something else instead.

**Linda:** And there's a very poignant video which I will not talk about how you find out, because we don't want to give it away. But in the third article about "Methods to Heal and Cope" there is a very poignant video - it's only, like, a minute and 20 seconds long - that directly addresses the concept of what you're looking for is what you see.

**Doug:** Yeah, I don't even think it's that long. I think it's, like, 30 seconds.

**Linda:** The poignant part of it is 30 seconds, yes.

[Chuckling]

**Doug:** [Crosstalk] definitely an [interesting?] video because, you know, it works. I don't know if that's the right word to use; but you have to try it out, because you'd be surprised what you see, or you don't see, I guess.

**Linda:** Um-hum.

**Joyce:** It's true. Absolutely.

**Doug:** One of the other questions that comes up quite a bit, too, is the feeling of not being good enough. You know, a lot of comparing to the affair partner. You know that's done quite a bit. So, can you address maybe how someone can kind of get past that?

**Joyce:** Sure. Basically, something like this will hit upon all of your insecurities - right? And whatever your issues are, they're going to come through loud and clear. So, once again, it's a golden opportunity to begin to deal with some of those things. But, yeah, there's a natural tendency to want to compare, to say, "Well, what did this other person have that I didn't have?" And, in truth, this other person, the affair partner - in many ways, it's a fantasy of affair. It's not real life. They're not in there day to day, dealing with paying the bills, or having to fix

things around the house, or take the trash out, take care of the kids. So, it's a very unreal environment, and in the case that it's an unreal environment, it's also an unreal relationship. So, there's a lot of that that is not genuine. And that true intimacy includes everything. It's not just having all the good stuff. It's also being able to go through the stuff that's not so much fun.

So, as far as ways to feel better about yourself, there's things like doing exercise, that gets the dopamine going in your brain - which dopamine feels good, which is part of what affairs are about. They're hitting dopamine centers in your brain. It is a chemical response that happens when people have affairs. So, you can get a similar feeling when you're exercising. When you eat well makes a difference. Doing nice things for yourself, like go out and get a pedicure, if you're a woman. Or, if you're a man, and you're into that, too, that's fine. Just do something nice for yourself. Treat yourself, because part of feeling like you're not good enough gets perpetuated when you keep saying, "Well, I don't deserve this," "I don't deserve that."

Well what fed into that? Again, there may be old issues that are feeding into the concept that "I'm not good enough." that "I don't deserve to have good things happen, because bad things have happened to me before, and here's just another example of that."

So, again, you shift your focus. Work on something positive. Go and volunteer some time with an organization somewhere. You will be very appreciated, which is part of what we all want.

It's also really important for the cheater to do a lot of things to acknowledge the person has been betrayed, to notice when they done something nice for them, or comment, "Gee, you look really handsome," or, "You look very beautiful today," or, "Thank you so much for remembering me," or, "I thought about you the other day" - you know, things to let each other know that you're still on each other's mind; because part of the not feeling good enough feels like the other person didn't want to take the time to think about you. So, it's real important to know you're still being thought about. You know, they can do things like leave little notes around the house, or a note can suddenly show up in somebody's car. And it's these little things that make a huge difference in terms of the interplay.



Sometimes, people that feel that they're not good enough - they can get so stuck in that, that they realize that it takes two to make a relationship. So, sometimes, if you are willing to step out a little bit and do something nice for the other person, it makes the other person that much more willing to do something nice for you, and they kind of feed off each other. So, it's a process. It takes time.

You can make a list of all your good attributes. What are the things you do feel positive about? What are some accomplishments that you have in your life? Who are people that are important to you? What are some things that somebody has said before that made you feel good about yourself. be it a friend, a teacher, a coach, or whatever it is? Everybody has something in their life that they've done where they felt good, and it's important to begin to start putting all those in your arsenal to be able to point to those when you're feeling bad and not good enough and say, "Well, but, you know, there was that time when I did this; and, yeah, I felt pretty good about that." And, again, it's shifting that focus from the negative to the positive.

And it takes effort and real disciplined consciousness to be able to make that shift. It's a little bit like everybody says they want to lose weight. Right? Well, what is involved in losing weight? There's two basic components. There's exercise, and there's eating differently. You can think about it. Is that going to do it for you? No. You can go to the gym and still not do anything, and that's still not going to help. It's the actual effort, and the initial efforts does take more discipline, a conscious effort. And the more you begin to do these things on a regular basis, the more it starts to become second nature and gets easier. And then you feel better. It's a cycle that feeds on itself.

**Doug:** Yeah, I think that it's those people that do those things on a regular basis that end up having a better relationship after a bunch of trauma than what they had before it. Or, maybe they -

**Joyce:** Oh, absolutely. There's so much more appreciation. Everybody wants to be appreciated and acknowledged and to feel loved, and the more things you can do like that with your partner, the more that's just going to help increase your intimacy. We all want to feel accepted.

One thing that I was thinking about [?], getting back to the trigger thing again, that when the person who's been betrayed gets triggered, one of the best things that the cheater can say to them is, "What do you need from me right now?" "What can I do for you?" And it can be something - that's where you really have to think about what you need. "I need a hug." "I need you to tell me what you love about me." "I need you to tell me that you're always going to be here." "I need you just to hold me while I cry." "I need you to understand what I'm saying to you." You know, there's all kinds of different things that it could be; but it's important to communicate what those are needs for the most part, which a lot of people don't communicate those needs upfront. And that's part of what causes the distance between each other, which then causes the need to wanting to feel that somewhere, and then it sort of becomes, like, a magnet somewhere else.

**Linda:** - I think one of the biggest mistakes cheaters make during a trigger is to justify their actions rather than giving their betrayer what they need. Normally, the reason, I think, a trigger happens is because we do feel insecure about something. It could be - maybe they didn't say hello the way they usually do - really minute things; but, really, all we need is for them to come closer to us, rather than justifying our defense and moving away, or any kind of anger. And I think it just takes a long time for the betrayed to get through to the cheater: "This is what I need." You know, you need somehow to go beyond what you normally do, put away those old defenses and those old habits, and try something different and come towards us.

**Joyce:** Um-hum. If they can go back to those beginning courting days. What was it like at the very beginning when you were starting to show your love and affection for somebody, to show that they mattered, that they were special to you, that they were attractive? All those things were really important. Absolutely. You're completely, 1,000 percent right, Linda, that it can be something as simple as somebody saying hello in a different way, or maybe they don't quite make eye contact. And then, suddenly, the person who's been betrayed - their nervous system goes into hyper alert, saying, "[Gasps] He's having an affair again!" -

**Linda:** Right.

**Joyce:** - when, consciously, you know that that's not happening; but your nervous system is saying, "Oh, yeah?"

So, that's why it's real important for the cheater to say, "I can see that you're feeling activated right now. What can I do for you? What got it going?"

There's a dynamic between two people as far as being understood. When we feel that we're not being understood by the other person, we do one of two things. We either say it louder, because we think it's going to get in better. Or, we pull away, and then we get this dance going back and forth. When we say something louder, the other person will either say what they're saying louder, and then that goes back and forth. Or, the other person pulls away, so then we start chasing after them as they're running away. And the way to get around that is to try and say things in a calm way that you just can hear what the other person has to say without taking it as attacking. You can speak from your own experience about, "When this happens, I feel this way." "When I saw that you didn't make eye contact, I felt unimportant. I felt like I didn't mean anything to you" - whatever it is [so] that you can get in touch with your own personal feelings. And in conversations with other people, they will take in that information so much more when you talk from your own personal experiences and your feelings versus saying, "You didn't pay any attention to me!" It's received very differently.

**Linda:** I think for a long time, like, I would say, "I just feel this way."

"Well, that's crazy!"

And then I back down. You know what I mean?

It came to a point where you can't tell betrayed spouse that any of their feelings are crazy because, to them, they're very real.

**Joyce:** They're extremely real. And at that point, the betrayer can come in and say, "I can see you're feeling upset. What do you need?" "What would help you feel better?" and without questioning it, just accept it, because this person who's upset needs to be acknowledged that they're in pain.

**Linda:** And I think that's why a majority of these people who have these questions are stuck. I think it's just the way that the cheater is handling their triggers.

**Joyce:** That's a big piece of it - absolutely: communication between people. And also, if there's old, unresolved trauma, it absolutely feeds into this stuff. But, yes, a cheater can help this process immensely by taking full responsibility for their actions; because there's absolutely nothing the betrayed person did to cause the cheater to go out and do what they did. They did not hold a gun to their head and say, "You are going to do this, or I'm going to kill you." That didn't happen. So, the cheater has to take full recognition for their actions. It has nothing to do with the person who was betrayed.

**Doug:** Right, and that's a hard thing for a betrayed to really understand and believe - because they do really think it's about them, and it's a tough thing to get over, I think.

**Joyce:** Yeah. And something we haven't even gotten into at all is the whole idea of addiction - that people who have problems with sex addictions, love addiction - the whole Internet thing has one through the roof. It's the largest form of addiction that's happening, because it's accessible. It's affordable, although it can escalate, depending upon what you are doing. But in a lot of cases, it's free. There's a lot of anonymity that happens. There's other types of sex, love, romance addictions; and for people who are involved in that, there's actually a physical disconnect in their brain between their actions and the ramifications of it. It's filled with just as many justifications as any other addiction - as drugs and alcohol and gambling. There's always justifications that, "Oh, they just don't understand," and, "It's no big deal." And those people often in childhood grew up in highly restrictive environments, or environments where there was some type of abuse or abandonment from one of their parents. And as a child, you cannot deal with that type of betrayal from your parents. You need to feel safe, and so your brain physiologically makes a disconnect, because the idea that a parent is abusive or a parent leaves you - you can't handle it. Your brain does not equate a parent with abandoning. They're two, different things. And then that ends up carrying through in life in addiction, where the consequences of your actions are not linked up. And they can be; but, again, it's a process.

**Doug:** Yeah. Linda sees a whole lot of that at her school that she teaches at. It's kind of a lower socioeconomic school, and there's a lot of -

**Linda:** Abuse.

**Doug:** - abuse and a lot of family issues and -

**Linda:** And trauma.

**Doug:** And one of the counselors was telling Linda - what? There's actually a -

**Linda:** With the lobe in the back of your brain. I have a little girl who has experienced severe trauma, and her processing is very slow because she always has that fear - flight. She's always in a state of fear, so she can't focus and process things. So, we're working on that with her. You know, a lot of the things the counselor was telling me, it was like, "Oh, I know. I know exactly what you're talking about." And, you know, not that I said anything about my situation; but I just really could understand everything that she was telling me this little girl was going through.

**Joyce:** My guess is she lives in a household where there's an alcoholic parent, or there's some kind of ongoing thing with drugs. Basically, where there's sexual abuse. All that stuff - it's in an environment where you never know what's going to happen, when the rug's going to be pulled up from under you. And so your nervous system is stuck on high and hyper vigilance. And when that happens, your - the hippocampal switch is part of your brain that deals with assimilating information in a way that makes sense. It goes on flight, because you're stuck in survival mode.

And one other thing for her - it's the same kind of thing: grounding techniques, finding ways to be able to calm your nervous system. It's not going to change the environment she is in, unfortunately, but there are some techniques she can use in the meantime to begin to help herself calm down a bit. Yes, there's tons of this stuff, and there's multigenerational things, where it goes from one generation to another to another. Be it the physical abuse, the alcoholism - whatever it is - and so forth, and on it goes until somebody finally stands up and says, "Uh, it's time to change this."

**Doug:** All right. Well, I'm sorry to say, Joyce, we're running out time here. I think we could probably continue talking for another few hours -

**Joyce:** Yeah, probably [chuckles].

**Doug:** - [chuckles] yeah. Maybe we can pick it up here somewhere down the road in the future, but we're kind of limited as far as time goes. But we really do want to thank you.

**Joyce:** Oh, you're welcome. There's one more thing I just want to just briefly say on the bilateral meditation. I have a new one that I've added there that's on the website called "Alleviating Emotional Pain." That's an exercise which I have had tremendous success with a number of people who've been using it and [are] quite pleased with the results. And it also has the bilateral music, and it's different from the "Grounding [and] Resourcing" one.

**Doug:** How long does the meditation last?

**Joyce:** The "Grounding and Resourcing" and also the "Alleviating Emotional Plain" - both of those have about 12 minutes of a guided meditation portion, and then there's about two extra minutes of music afterwards. You'll be amazed how fast that time goes once you're in there.

**Doug:** I do 15 to 30 minutes, and it goes really quick, so that's not very long at all.

Your website, by the way, is [www.JoyceSmithMFT.com](http://www.JoyceSmithMFT.com) - that's MFT for "marriage family therapist".

**Joyce:** Um-hum. We're all set.

**Doug:** [Joysmithmft.com](http://Joysmithmft.com). And then on your site, you've got these guided meditations along with some other articles and information and resources and such. And, certainly, if anybody wants to contact Joyce, there's a place on her website, or a contact page, or form, or whatever that they can do that. Correct?

**Joyce:** Right. There's a contact form. My email address is all over there. Feel free to send an email. But, yeah, contact me through the website; and there is a lot of additional information and so forth in there.