



EPISODE 76: TRAUMA, RESOURCING & WINDOWS OF TOLERANCE WITH SHELBY LEIGH

THE MARRIAGE LIFE COACH PODCAST | SEE SHOWNOTES AT: [MAGGIEREYES.COM/PODCAST/76](https://maggiereyes.com/podcast/76)

Maggie

Hello, everyone and welcome to The Marriage Life Coach podcast. Today we're going to have such a wonderful and powerful conversation. I know you're going to find it so immensely useful. Whether you have experienced trauma or love someone who has, I know you will find something that will help you make your marriage stronger in today's conversation.

I am so excited to welcome Shelby Leigh to the podcast. She is a trained trauma specialist with 15 years of clinical practice. She has a Master's Degree in Somatic Psychotherapy, two Coaching certificates and numerous trainings in the somatic treatment of trauma.

Now, Shelby has been through her own journey with complex PTSD. And she now focuses on teaching trauma awareness to Coaches, facilitators, therapists and organizations and leaders worldwide through her programs embodied Coaching experience and creating a safer space.

She is the co-host of a fabulous podcast called Revolutionary Love and Resilience podcast. And that's a place for caregivers to connect through personal stories about what comes up when they're working with people with trauma.

Now, I have a very special and beautiful history with Shelby. She was one of my teachers in my Sex, Love, and Relationship Coaching Training with Layla Martin. And we had a live retreat together back in 2018, which seems like yesterday and five lifetimes ago at the same time.

And at our live experience, I went through a very intense emotional experience during a breathwork exercise, where I was just sobbing. I was literally on a yoga mat on the floor sobbing





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and just processing a lot of intense emotion.

And Shelby literally held my hand through that experience. With so much gentle power and compassion. I'm literally like, tearing up a little just remembering that. And she just was present with so much love for me in that moment. And for all of her students, all of her clients and all the work that she does, I am really, really delighted to bring her powerful energy to the podcast. Welcome.

Shelby Leigh

Thank you so much. I feel like it was just yesterday and lifetimes ago as well. And I have tears in my eyes remembering just such a sacred and beautiful moment, getting to share that with you. Thank you.

Maggie

Thank you, thank you. So I am a student in Shelby's Creating a Safer Space Program. And this is a program that's helping Coaches really bring trauma awareness to their work. I am loving everything that I'm learning there.

And I personally as I move into leading group programs and holding space in different ways than I have before with larger amounts of people, with different dynamics of the group, I think it's so important to think about the spaces that I create as both as a leader in the group itself, and on this podcast, and in my programs.

Like how do we create a safe space for you to listen and grow? And when it comes to marriage,





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I want everyone to think about the space that we're creating for ourselves and the people that we love in terms of partners and families. Like how do we create just safer spaces?

And one of the things, or one of the reasons I wanted to have Shelby on the show was to normalize talking about trauma, how it affects us in our daily life, how it affects us in our marriages. And until we have awareness around that it exists -- that we are walking around the world with millions of people having it and all of us having an in different ways, which we'll talk about now as we define a little bit about what trauma is.

Once we have awareness around it, then we can do something about it. If we have no awareness around it, then we can't do anything. And as all of you know, when you listen to the show, I want you to listen with intent to apply. Listen so we can do something about it.

So today we're gonna talk about what trauma actually is. We're gonna talk about a concept called resourcing. If you're familiar with somatic psychology, it's gonna be very familiar to you. But if you're not, it's a very simple, very powerful way to help yourself work through traumatic moments.

And we're going to talk about windows of tolerance and why you want to know all about them both for yourself and for the people that you love. So that's the plan. So, Shelby, how do you like to define trauma?

Shelby Leigh

I love this question because it comes out differently every time yet somehow sounds similar. So





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when I was growing up and trying to figure out why I felt so crazy all the time. Also, I would never call my clients crazy. But I certainly thought that I was.

I always was under the impression trauma meant someone had experienced a severe accident, or was in war, or had experienced abuse or sexual assault, that it was about the event.

And these days, I am so relieved to know that we talked about trauma as the response in our bodies, hearts and minds to any event that is too overwhelming to process.

Maggie

Yes.

Shelby Leigh

So it could be anything from repetitive criticism at home, neglect, inconsistent care, ruptures that happen when a little one is in the womb, it can be intergenerational. You know, our bodies carry memories from so many things. And so is how our bodies, our hearts and our minds, respond to the events that have happened to us.

Maggie

And I really love that such a simple definition is exactly what you're saying. It's anything that is almost like too intense for our body to handle in that moment. Right? It's just something we can't process.

Shelby Leigh





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Yeah... other people describe it as something that wanted to happen, but didn't get to. So for example, we might have wanted to fight but couldn't. We might have wanted to run, but couldn't. We might have wanted to do all sorts of things, but couldn't.

And so we end up storing that in our system. And so when we heal trauma, we get to allow those experiences to mobilize and feel more free in our lives.

Maggie

So, so powerful. And when we think about a stress response, like fight or flight or flee, like you just mentioned, you might want to run and you couldn't. It's like the stress response is how we're responding to this input, right?

That feels in some way overwhelming, either for our mind or for our body or for our emotions or something like that. And I think sometimes we have stress responses, but we don't know that, that's what's happening. We just have them.

Shelby Leigh

Right. It feels like stress or activity, or actually numbness for a lot of people. They've learned how to cope through not feeling very much. And that takes a lot of a really high load on our system to not be able to feel our feelings and move freely through the world and all of that.

Maggie

Yeah, and one of the things I see with partners, when a marriage relationship specifically is struggling, is sometimes we have a lot of judgment for our partner if they're doing -- let's say,





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activities that aren't healthy or aren't useful in some way.

And we tend to judge that on the surface level, like, oh, this person is drinking too much, or this person is overworking or this person is doing some thing, right? And what I always invite my clients and students to do is, but why are they doing the thing?

Is there something they're trying to process? Maybe this isn't the best way to process it, right? We can debate whether it's a good idea or a bad idea for them to do the thing.

But we want to just come to this place where it's like, wait, is this a coping mechanism? Why are they engaging in that behavior? And will that help you cultivate some compassion for them? What do you think?

Shelby Leigh

Yeah, and not only the why. I don't get so invested in the why these days. I like that if you're not a professional and just curious about your partner. But I just know, like, I don't even need to know why. But I know that people are coping. We call them defensive coping strategies because there's something they're not able to fully feel on their own.

Maggie

Yes.

Shelby Leigh

And so there's actually even more than knowing why. I want to actually celebrate that there's





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something happening that this person is doing that's trying to take care of them. Even if it's really misguided.

So if they're drinking a lot there has got to be a part of them that's trying to help them not feel, or trying to help them manage something. And how cool is that? That our systems are so sophisticated.

Maggie

Yeah. What an amazing way to look at it. I know several of my listeners are gonna be like, "I don't think it's cool, Shelby." But that's why we're here, right? We want to be able to have a conversation where we say, okay, you mean, I think it's cool. We need to process that separately.

But let's notice that this -- everyone is doing the best they can with what they have. It sounds like one of those platitudes that we hear, but it really is. Everyone is doing the best they can with what they have available to them in any given moment. And the more we return to that truth, the more connection we can create ultimately, in the long term.

Shelby Leigh

Absolutely. I just have to trust that even if people are really seeming quite out of control, that there is something happening that makes sense. And we just if we can slow down enough to appreciate it, usually we can get a little space to actually work with what's happening under the surface.

Maggie





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I love that. Get a little space to work with what's happening under the surface. That's I think what every episode of this podcast is about -- is to create that space. So that then you can work with what's happening under the surface. I think that's so beautiful.

So when we talk about trauma, we also want to talk about resilience. Because resilience is the ultimate way that in a healthy way we work through trauma by creating more resilience or our ability to first of all, have more things we can handle, right?

So some things aren't -- that were traumatic in the past may not be in another situation, when our resilience muscle is built up. And when something does happen, creating the confidence that we can bounce back from it. So tell me a little bit about how you like to define resilience and what you see as the relationship between trauma and resilience.

Shelby Leigh

Resilience is wholeness, to me. You know, when we feel able to be our whole selves, our authentic selves, we feel like we can be here, in the present moment without trying to escape or getting hijacked by the past.

We can feel our feet on the ground, and our breath and our bodies and, more importantly, connection with the people that we love and trust. And we can not only lean into others, but we can depend on others.

We feel safe to ask for what we want and what we need. And then they can also do that, with us. When we're resilient, we have this experience of just being able to kind of rest into our sense of





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safety, our sense of ourselves, and our connections.

Maggie

Yeah I love that so much. And one of the ways we build resilience, to me, is first awareness, right? What we're talking -- everything we're talking about today, I always say awareness is halfway there.

Once we know what's happening, we can then decide how we want to react to it, or how we want to respond or who we want to be in the face of it, all of those things. And one of the key ways to build resilience in your body is to resource.

And I think I pretty literally learned resourcing from you. So tell us a little bit about why -- first of all, what is resourcing? And then we'll talk about how to do it.

Shelby Leigh

Yeah, I'm also gonna just answer the second half of your other question, and then move into resourcing because I think it's important for people to know. But often what impacts our resilience, our wholeness, are the ruptures of trauma.

So if we're constantly getting criticized, or we're bullied, or we have a car accident. You know, it impacts our ability to feel safe and confident in the world, especially if those things happen again and again. And so our resilience can -- we might either start with a lot, and which means we don't actually have a lot of trauma responses, because we feel supported, we feel connected, we feel whole.





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But a lot of people don't start with a lot of resilience. And they tend to end up experiencing trauma a lot more in their lives, because they don't have that ability to bounce back or lean into support. So resilience is directly correlated to trauma or lack there of.

And one way we can, it's so cool. One way we can build resilience is through this experience of resourcing. So we can resource in our bodies, as you said. However, a lot of people who've experienced trauma, don't want to go anywhere near feeling their bodies. It can feel quite scary, because that's where the trauma happened.

And so we can also resource outside of us too. And what resource means is to be able to lean into something that feels supportive, comfortable, soothing, something that brings us into balance centeredness, present moment.

For example, in this moment, I can look around this space that I'm in here, and I look outside and I see the trees, and to me nature is something that helps me feel connected. I look across my space here and there's this magenta color, daybed that just lights me up. And I put plants all over my space.

So these are external resources that help me go, "Okay, I'm taken care of, I'm connected. There's something I can focus on. That doesn't hurt or isn't wrong." Because folks with trauma tend to look for what's wrong, because that's survival. It's like, I just want to make sure this isn't going to happen again.





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So the more we can remind ourselves, “Oh, there’s something here that’s okay. It’s soothing.” And if we can go in our bodies, we might go, “Oh, my feet on the ground. Yeah. Ah, that helps me take a big breath. The support behind my back in the chair. Yeah, that’s supportive. The rhythm of my breath. My heart beat. Warm hands.”

And you really only need to choose one and take a few breaths with it. And that creates an internal experience, even if we can’t feel it, that communicates oh, there’s a little bit more safety here. And that grows our resilience.

Maggie

I love that so much. I love that you mentioned that we can find resourcing outside of our body and inside of our body, and it doesn’t matter. Whatever feels most nourishing to us in the moment is what’s useful.

And it’s this way of noticing where we are already safe. Like where we are already, okay, in this moment, in this present moment right now. And when we’re going through a heightened experience, or there’s a moment of emotional intensity, when we can be in the moment and find like our North Star, then we can deal with the next moment.

Shelby Leigh

Mmm hmm. Also, the more we practice this when we are feeling okay, or even grace, the easier is to access it when we become overwhelmed.

Maggie





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Okay, we're gonna pause because that is amazing. And I'm going to tell you a story. So everyone, listen up. So I used to work in the cruise industry. And I use this example often with my clients, and I love sharing it on the podcast in this context.

So what Shelby just said is the more we practice this when we're feeling okay, the easier it will be to access this when we're not feeling okay. And in the cruise industry, what we used to do, if you imagine a cruise ship with 4,000 people on it, right?

We used to have, every week, safety drills on every ship. When the ships were in dock, they would do person overboard, heart attack, bomb scare, like all these things. And they would do them every week, over and over and over and over and over and over.

And the purpose of doing the safety drill, right? So resourcing is kind of like a safety drill or an emotional safety drill. So that if that situation occurred, everyone would know exactly what to do. It would be their natural response.

They would know exactly where was the emergency exit, where were the supplies, where were the things they needed, what was their role, what their what was happening. And so that when an emergency occurred, they would just go to their most natural, most practiced response, which was all the things that they practice in the safety drill.

They did this when the ship was in dock, in port. Nothing was going wrong, there was no emergency, right? So that when the emergency happens, they know exactly what to do.





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And I just love giving that example, because I think sometimes when we think about, “Really you want me to look around the room and notice the chair and feel my ankles?” And it’s like yeah, we do. And here’s why.

Shelby Leigh

Yes. I love that. An emotional safety drill. Yes. And I want to add one more resource that we don’t talk about that much, that in the world of developmental trauma (which is early trauma, trauma that happens either prenatally in the first three to five years after birth, sometimes it can come in intergenerationally)

And resourcing externally can be a little overwhelming. So that can feel like oh, gosh, that’s a lot. I’m just checking out like the dirty laundry basket and all the things that need to get done and everything that’s wrong. We go into that state of hyper vigilance.

A better resource is resourcing (if we can) with another human. So right now, I am here with you, Maggie. I see your bright eyes, I see your face smiling, you’re familiar to me. And when I really take a minute and take that in, I feel my belly soften and my seat sink in and we can be here with each other.

A lot of folks with developmental trauma didn’t get the experience that it is safe to actually lean into somebody and to let them into our own experience. When we can do that with people who we are familiar with and really trust then we can resource with people.

Maggie





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Yes, yeah. I love that. That's so beautiful and so powerful. And something that I just thought and I'd love to hear your thoughts on this is: I was recently like on the highway. Now that COVID is opening up, you know the situation is opening up and things are changing, I went out into the world.

And I was on the highway. And I had this experience. I don't know if anyone has had this experience before, but I was in a place where there were four different exits and I didn't know which one to take. And at that moment, my GPS wasn't on and I just had to take one, basically.

And I felt myself be very afraid. And what I did was, I resourced with my brain, with my thoughts. Like, I was so engaged with the driving that I wasn't able to like resource in another way. And I just thought, "I can do anything, when I'm afraid. I can be afraid, and I can do this. I can be afraid, and I can take the exit, and I can just do anything."

And I remember repeating to myself, like incessantly, "I can do anything while afraid." So that's what gave me comfort in that moment was like -- it wasn't looking at the clouds or anything like that.

Within another moment, right, in a different context, I might look up at the sky and feel very comforted, you know, by something like that. But in that moment, the only thing that I could resource with was my brain. And I was like, "I can do this afraid."

Shelby Leigh

Yeah, I'm guessing that when those thoughts came to your mind, something probably happened





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in your body and response. Is that true?

Maggie

I would suspect that I calmed down, right? Like my -- the knot in my stomach got lighter I would say.

Shelby Leigh

Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes we can go bottom up, which means working with our body first. Sometimes top down. And in those intense moments, it's like, grab all the tools you have.

Maggie

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, take whatever, take which one. Exactly. So just to offer that you can resource with a human, you can resource with yourself, you can resource with whatever is around you or the room that you're in.

You can resource with whatever you have available to you in that moment. You can go bottom up, you can go top down. The idea is anything that helps you return to the present moment and to be centered in it, you can use to resource with.

Shelby Leigh

My favorite is my dog. She is an excellent resource. And you know, just taking a moment to sit with her, look at her cute eyes, and pet her fluffy head. That will immediately bring me here in the present moment.





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Because when we're having trauma responses or stress responses, generally we're in the past reliving something that felt familiar. Or we're running to the future because it's so uncomfortable to be right here. So pets are great resources for people.

Maggie

I love that so much. And as we talk about this, I don't know why I'd never made this mental connection before but really resourcing and self soothing techniques, it's really very, very similar. Do you think that there's a significant difference? Or is it just we use different words in different moments?

Shelby Leigh

I think so. Yeah, I mean you might have to name some but yeah, what we're doing is we're moving towards self soothing, for sure. Because many folks with trauma didn't get that modeled. And then that becomes a resource.

And then also, co-regulation. I think there's a lot of emphasis on being able to self regulate, which is great. But I think it's really hard to self regulate, if we can't learn how to co-regulate, which is be able to be with our partners or our friends or community members, our pets, and be there together, soaking up that support and soothing.

Maggie

So what would you say is the simplest definition of co-regulate? If someone's never heard that term before, but they're like, on the edge of their seats -- they want to know more? What would be the simplest way you would explain that?





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Shelby Leigh

Something like resourcing together. So it means like, if I was hanging out with you, and I was getting really anxious about something, and I knew you're safe person because I know that, I could say, "Hey, Maggie, would you be up for sitting shoulder to shoulder with me? I'm noticing that panic that comes on and it's something that would feel really good is if I could just lean on you for a minute."

And that would be me taking in the supportive resourcing that someone else is offering me in that moment and being together.

Maggie

Being together in the present moment. And it's so interesting, because I've seen research around people who love each other holding hands. It turns out that holding hands has the same effect on your body as an analgesic. Like it, literally, you could take an aspirin or you could hold hands and the physiological reaction is the same.

So in this co regulating, it's like the healing of each other together by just your presence, like holding hands. You're not doing something -- you're not engaging in activity like other than holding hands. But that automatically puts your body at ease.

Shelby Leigh

Yes. And I have to imagine there are people out there listening going, "But usually it's my partner that I'm feeling activated by, so how in the world could I get that co regulation?" Do you think?





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Maggie

Yeah, totally. Yeah.

Shelby Leigh

So that's what we need a community, right?

Maggie

Yes, yeah. So sometimes, right you, you get the co-regulation from your bestie, or your cousin or your dog or from other humans and other opportunities. And sometimes, I'll tell you this, I have seen it over and over again. Sometimes you resource as best as you can, with whatever resource (all the things we just discussed.)

And then you reach out to that person, and it creates an opportunity for co-regulation. So I have the famous example I use all the time is one of my clients had for homework, to choose her husband on purpose. So in her mind, she didn't have to say it out loud. But in her mind she's like, "I choose you, I choose you."

So when he was doing something annoying, she was just, "I choose you. With all the things you do, including that thing," right? That was her homework. But it so happened that, that same week, they had a fight. And in the middle of the fight, she's like I chose you.

And it completely disarmed and defused the whole situation. He's like, "What do you mean? You choose me?" And it totally like, changed the energy. And then they came very quickly into a





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space where they could co-regulate again and be together.

So just to say is that example is it can also happen in a second. You think, “Oh, my partner and all these things.” And in a moment, that energy can switch by your own resourcing and your shifting of that energy.

Shelby Leigh

Absolutely. I love that image that just came out. Oh, wow, I need your support. You’re gonna have to help me.

Maggie

We’ll talk about that behind the scenes.

Shelby Leigh

I love the work of Stan Tatkin for couples work. And he really breaks down how to co-regulate even amidst challenges with partners. How we learn to lean in together and work through it together. It’s this idea of that togetherness, that we grow our resilience so much.

Maggie

Yes, yeah. So the way that I teach it in my phrasing is I talk about teams and alliances. And I’ll link to that in the show notes. But I talk about cultivating team all the time. And the difference is, if you think of the US and the UK, like we’re a very convenient alliance when our interests are aligned. We’re besties.





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But the moment that they're not, we're out. And marriages that are alliances don't tend to thrive, and they don't tend to really -- they have all kinds of issues, let's just put it that way. But when you're a team, it's more like the LA Lakers or your favorite, you know, sports team.

We're all working together towards the same goal and we're leaning in towards each other's strengths. And we're all helping each other get to the goal of thriving, the goal of togetherness, the goal of whatever relationship we want to create.

So cultivating team -- if we were on the same team, how would we approach this -- is something that we do just incessantly.

Shelby Leigh

Right. That, you know, that reminds me of that experience of belonging. And for so many people, the activation (some people use the word trigger) that happens is, oh, my gosh, you know, I might be out.

And so then that black and white thinking starts happening and polarizing each other. And when we are committed to moving through the challenges together, that sense of belonging stays intact. And then the resilience is still accessible, instead of that overwhelm that can come from oh, my gosh, my belonging could be compromised here.

Maggie

Yeah, it's so beautiful. So let's talk a little bit about windows of tolerance. You and Creating Safer Spaces have a whole sort of training module on this. We're gonna just talk about it in very basic,





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simple terms.

If you are a Coach, therapist, or in some helping profession, and you're listening to us, we will link to Creating Safer Spaces in our show notes. It is a program that I just cannot recommend more highly. Definitely, if you're in any kind of profession where you help other humans, this program will just help you understand the things we're talking about today at a deeper level as a practitioner, right?

Today, we're talking about how do I use it tomorrow, right? Have an emotional safety drill. That will help you for tomorrow. But in the in-depth as a practitioner, absolutely look that up. And we will definitely include that in the show notes.

I just wanted to say we're going to talk about windows of tolerance, just for everyone to sort of have an awareness if you haven't heard this term before, and if you have, we're going to get Shelby's take on it, which is always just so brilliant and so wise.

And what I have found in over the years of my work with you is that you're so thoughtful. Like, you study many, many, you know, of the eminent teachers of our time, but then you synthesize it in a way that's so filled with compassion, which I personally find so powerful. So first of all, thank you for doing that. And let's talk about windows of tolerance.

Shelby Leigh

Okay, so because we're on a podcast, I don't get to get out my whiteboard and draw you pictures. So I don't know if I've ever talked about it without that. So this is gonna be really fun.





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So when we're talking about our window of tolerance -- and first, I just want to say there are so many amazing theories around how to understand our nervous systems, and what is happening around trauma responses.

I love the polyvagal theory, that's probably the most in depth one. And I like the window of tolerance for everyone from, you know, professional care providers to somebody that just needs to know a little bit to take them a long way.

Because it's a really simple tool, Dan Siegel created it years and years ago, and some people will, you'll hear them call it zone of resilience, too. And if you can imagine -- let's see if I can do this without the whiteboard -- that you've got two parallel lines in front of you. And in the middle of those parallel lines, lives resilience.

It's where we can stay centered, we stay grounded. We're here in the present moment. We can have the social engagement experience of being able to connect with others. We can know what we want, know what we need, express it. We can trust, we can be out there in the world getting what we want. And so this is our resilience within that window.

Above that window would be what we call hyper vigilance. We become so overwhelmed, and move into fight or flight, for example. That's when we go out of that window of tolerance. And we're in a state of reactivity.





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So trauma creates reactivity. When we're in present, we respond. So above that window, we go into: what's wrong, what do I need to fix. We're in action, we're trying to move away or something like that, in order to survive.

And so when we know, "Oh, my gosh, I get so frightened. And everything gets so fast, and my heart rate goes and my breath gets quick. Oh, I'm trying to survive." There's a part of me that thinks -- or the reality is that things are really scary right now are overwhelming.

Similarly, if we move down and out of the window, that is called hypo-arousal, where we go to these places of collapse and helplessness, and freeze, where we can't be, immobile. It's just so hard to get energy.

In the hypervigilance there's a lot of tension. And the hypo-arousal it's almost like I can't even pick up my arm.

Maggie
Yeah.

Shelby Leigh

And there's the breath is so slow. In both places, it can become so overwhelming that we freeze. Like, it's just too much to manage and then we can't really do anything at all.

The coolest thing about the window of tolerance is that -- so I love it because when we experience significant overwhelming events, the window gets really small. So there's not a lot of





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space for feeling centered, or here.

And when we grow that window through resourcing, through awareness, understanding, “Oh, I’m about to go up and out. I better put my feet on the ground.” Through practicing again and again, when things feel good or okay, the window naturally widens.

Some people used to think you had to heal through digging things up at the roots and re-experiencing the trauma and doing it really intensely. But actually, when we resource and we learn to co-regulate, we are able to spend more time here inside the window, doing things that are soothing. The window naturally grows, and then we can tolerate things that used to be overwhelming.

Maggie
Yes.

Shelby Leigh
So we can also support each other to go, “Hey, what’s your window of tolerance? What’s in my window of tolerance?” Let’s do that. Let’s try that.

Maggie
Yes, I love that so much. And I have found that to be true in Coaching where we’re not so digging into all of the things. We might touch upon some things in the past to bring them to the present and decide how to move forward.





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But we're not focused really on that and that resilience muscle grows and grows and grows by your intention of living into the vision of (in our case) a thriving relationship or more peace or more harmony at home or those kinds of things.

And I love the idea that if you think about that line, there's above the line, there's the center, and there's below the line. So in center, you actually are at the center of the line. Right? And when you're above it, there's like, it seems like action that can lead to freezing, but there's like an action response. And below the line is that freezing response that is really like a non action response.

Shelby Leigh

Yeah. Immobility. It's like an animal in the wild being attacked by a bear, and they just play dead. It's like, just the whole system shuts down. Digestion stops, breathing slows, it's like, this is how I'm going to survive by just not moving.

Maggie

Yeah. And in the notes from what you taught us in class, you said, the top is you're stuck on on and the bottom is you're stuck on off. And I think that's a really great way to think about it too. In center, you're in flow. You're flowing with the ons and offs and you're flowing with whatever is happening.

But if you feel, for everyone listening, if you're like you're stuck on on all the time, which probably a lot of people can relate to. Especially like, I identify as a Type A, super driven person. It's very easy for me to, if I'm not conscious and present, to get stuck on on. That would be the place





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where I would be most likely to get stuck often.

Shelby Leigh

Yeah. And for people like me, I bounce back and forth between both and just in a flash. I can go, I'm scared, I'm frightened, I'm overwhelmed, I've got so much tension in my body. And then I just like, so overwhelmed, helpless, collapse, just this is too much. I can't manage it.

And then something will happen and I'll pop right back up into the upper. And so the cool thing is studying what pushes me out, then what brings me back in? And over time, we get to increase that awareness, and we can really catch it as it's happening and then add a resource, and then there's less and less time where we get out of it.

Maggie

Yes, it's like we get to be -- that's the place where we live most of the time, with visits to the other two. As opposed to living in the other two and occasionally being centered.

And something that happened a few days ago, I was talking to someone who was very visibly -- the things that she was describing, were always in a stress response. She was just in a permanent cycle of hyper-arousal stuck on on.

And I am a Coach, so I coach people with their marriages. But in her case, I said, I think it would serve you to look at that first, right? I'm happy to help you with this. But we need to figure out where your on off switch is located.





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And that's a different type of support that I encourage you to get. And then we can work through the things that are happening in your marriage, because seeing where that on off switch is, will then help you deal with all of the other things.

Shelby Leigh

Absolutely. Yep, if someone is stuck on on, it could mean so many things. They might be in their sympathetic system, like they might be experiencing what we call a high tone dorsal experience, which is in a branch of the parasympathetic nervous system.

And when we can get that regulated, it's like, Oh, this experience of safety, I don't want to be on all the time I get to rest. And when I'm resting, I get to feel safe feeling restful. So getting that extra support is just like gold. It feels so much better.

Maggie

Yeah, so so, so important. One of the things or one of the ways that I thought about the window of tolerance is I didn't really have this terminology until I was studying in your class. But I talk about Coaching homework, and I talk about it in the context of a rubber band.

Because sometimes when you're wanting to create a new result, you're going to feel uncomfortable, and so we prepare for that discomfort, like it's gonna feel a little wobbly and odd. And I tell my clients, like imagine a rubber band where it stretches.

Its purpose in life is to stretch. It is engaging in its purpose when it's stretching, but if it snaps, it can no longer fulfill its purpose. And so whenever I give you like a homework assignment or





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something to experiment with or something new to try, whether it's in a Coaching context or here on the podcast when we suggest something, look for that stretch that feels like a stretch but not like a snap.

Shelby Leigh

I love that so much because there's so much in the Coaching industry that makes us think we need to be wildly uncomfortable to grow. And I've watched so many people go through these epic transformational processes doing that and then crashing really hard. And it's just not a sustainable change.

Maggie

Yes.

Shelby Leigh

But when we can stay within our window of tolerance and maybe just like head up towards the top a little. Like that kind of stretch with support, and then take a breath and come back down into the middle. You know, it's that slowing experience that you named instead of just that gripping experience.

Maggie

Yes, absolutely. It's so fascinating that you mentioned that because the day we recorded this, I literally wrote something that said, "Do the easy thing first." And it was exactly about this. That in personal development and productivity, right? In that very sort of patriarchal mindset of, "Do the hardest thing first," right?





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Which sometimes in some contexts can be useful. We don't want to discount that. But it's sort of like we've taken that and then made that the rule for all things. And it's like no, do the easiest thing first. Become a person who does things, right? Feel the accomplishment in the completion of doing a thing.

And then the window of tolerance expands. And the thing that was harder either gets easier, because now your window of tolerance is bigger, or it dissipates because now you've done all these simple things that big thing isn't even a factor anymore.

Shelby Leigh

Yes, you're talking about, too, the experience of savoring where, when we are in our window of tolerance -- when we're practicing that when it's easy -- when we can savor it. So we let ourselves take a few breaths, really just experiencing it, letting it be here, letting it feel good or okay.

The more we grow our tolerance. So when we can go, "Yes, I got that easy thing done, and I feel successful." I'm going to take three breaths going, what does it feel like to feel successful? How do I know I'm feeling successful? Then we're creating new neural pathways in our brains.

It's just like building a muscle if you're working out. And we go, "I'm a person that likes success. Success is safe. I do successful actions." And then the harder thing is easier.

Maggie





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I love that so much. And here's where I'm just gonna tell everybody a little behind the scenes when we got on the system to record this, I hadn't seen Shelby in a while. And I just was savoring her presence. I was just like, I'm just so happy to see you.

And it's interesting that our natural, highest inner wisdom will do these things, if we let it. We live in a society that tells us, "Rush through the thing, start the thing, do the thing." But when we have those inklings, those nudges to go a little slower, to not do that -- you know, five things in the day do three things in the day -- that our internal wisdom will guide us.

It's like we have that organic GPS inside of us. Our job is to tune ourselves in and tune some of the messages of the world out to be able to hear what our body's already telling us. What do you think of that?

Shelby Leigh

I totally agree that we have everything we need inside and just with a little support instead of like, really intense support, our system will respond so amazingly. Everything we need is right there. And it's just like doing that slowing down, trusting that that's enough -- which is to say a lot, you know.

Maggie

Right. Yeah.

Shelby Leigh

But a huge part of me does not feel safe slowing down, right? And so it's like, yeah, okay, I'm





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gonna remind myself with my cortical brain that this is good for me. It's safe to slow down and then breathe that into my body in moments where I can genuinely give it space and it will respond.

Maggie

Yes. That's so good. We have an episode -- these are things we talk about incessantly on the podcast, because we have, I like to hit things from every possible angle and I know that it lands differently each way.

So we have an episode called Slowing Down to Speed Up with Amanda Hess, who is a brilliant Coach and was one of my clients. We will link to that in the show notes too, because I know there's someone who heard you say, "I do not feel good slowing down," and they're like, "Yeah, I don't feel good either." So we will link to that episode.

So you can just have more inputs on what does that look like? How does that feel? How can you relate to that differently? And one of my favorite quotes is: once a mind is expanded by a new idea it never goes back to its original dimensions. That's something by Oliver Wendell Holmes. I don't know, I think he said in the 1800s.

But it's like once you think this once: "Oh, I have a window of tolerance. Oh, I can expand it. Oh, I can resource." You will never like unknow that.

Shelby Leigh

Yes, it just hit me over the head when I learned it and it changed everything.





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Maggie

Yeah, it's so, so good. So one of the things I like to do when I have fabulous guests on the show like Shelby, is I like to ask them a question from The Questions for Couples Journal. So here's your question Mrs. Shelby is: what is a simple thing that can help you feel happier today regardless of what the future holds?

And I picked this question, not realizing how this is basically resourcing, right? This is a simple way to say: how will you resource today?

Shelby Leigh

Yes. And you know, I love that I'm like, I don't even have to make something up. Because let's see, I have a -- I'm going for a run in 20 minutes. I already wouldn't got green juice for myself today. I have a massage in an hour.

And then I have like a Netflix and chill night with me and my dog just doing nothing. And I have finally figured out how every single day just to offer that kind of support. And I'm like, that's enough. I don't need to even answer your dang question.

Maggie

There you go. You're just describing your day. It's so good. It's so awesome. So what is the best way for people to follow you? How can people reach out to you? Tell us all the ways.

Shelby Leigh





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Okay. Do you have an hour?

Maggie

Tell us the simplest easiest way then.

Shelby Leigh

Okay. You can email me anytime. It's shelby@shelby-leigh.com. There's also a contact form on my website shelby-leigh.com. You know, I have all the Instagrams and Facebooks and things. But I think, yeah, the website, you can find everything there really.

Maggie

Brilliant. So we will link to the website in the show notes. And Shelby shares a lot of her trauma awareness tools, and thoughts, and ideas on her social media.

So if you are intrigued by our conversation today, and you just want to have more of that influence in your life, then definitely -- whether you're on Facebook or Instagram, whatever you'd like to be on -- she is a brilliant, wise voice to follow.

And one of the things I like to do is share wise voices to follow, right? So thank you for being here today.

Shelby Leigh

Thank you so much. I feel so much more grounded and present just being with you. It's awesome.





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Maggie

Thank you. Bye, everyone. I hope that you found this episode so useful. We will be back next week with more ways to help you make your marriage stronger.

