

TRANSCRIPTION OF NO IS A COMPLETE SENTENCE BY LINDY GREEN-JOHNSON

Renae: All right. Well, welcome, Lindy. How are you today? We're so glad to have you here.

Lindy: Hello. thanks for having me.

Renae: Absolutely. Well, Lindy , you and I have have known each other for a bit of time, so you have a pretty good understanding, but to the great people who have logged in to hear a little bit about you today and the things that you have to share, I would love if you could introduce yourself both to everybody here.

Lindy: Yeah, for sure. So my name is Lindy Johnson. We're kind of I entered into this space, was fresh out of graduate school where in graduate school I started learning about things like attachment theory and the brain and where all of these things came together. And I knew I loved the foster adopt space, but I ultimately just cared about family. And so when I stepped into the workplace, I started out of foster care agency and then an adoption agency. Through that, of course, having plenty of learning milestones about family dynamics, how about attachment playing out, especially when it's been hindered early on and we're working towards repair. Certainly, lots of stories that had trauma components in that story and that lived experience moved on, of course, to work at a church and worked in the foster-adopt ministry there. Got to see kind of what that looks like for the community, caring for those who are stepping into really hard stories. I also did a while for just private practice work, got to work with a wide variety of individuals, families, couples. And currently I'm working at a new nonprofit, working on really walking alongside vulnerable families, preventing family separation by supporting mom. All of that while working towards my clinical license as a social worker. But all I would say really themed by and anchored by my deep value of family and wanting to support and quick equip families to be healthy. So it's kind of all over. But there's some anchors there, too.

Renae: Beautiful. Well, I'm really glad you're here. And it was in that foster world that you and I first connected, and we had this great opportunity throughout years to co-present four things and to really be a sounding board for each other in this process of understanding how to unpack the needs of the community. And I think that's something that's been really neat for the two of us, is that I think for both of us, we've been really curious and open about understanding what emergent needs are and responding to those versus saying, well, this is the formula, this is the format, go apply it to everybody, but instead really listening. And so I've appreciated that about you and being able to work with you in this space. So I wanted you to share a little bit about because you just talked about a bunch of spaces in which you have served as a source of hope, as a source of direction, as a source of building space for people.

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And in that, there's certainly been a lot of things that you've learned about how to do that well and a lot of lessons of things that maybe have gone sideways. And I would like to start out by asking you, what is one thing if if, if people only had 5 minutes to hear the talk, are you see what is one thing that you would want compassion-drained caregivers to know going forward if they had to shut off that right after we said this.

Lindy: Yeah. Gosh, you know something I think that I have come back to over and over and over throughout the years. And that's just it's like I'm, I'm trying to prove it wrong, but I have yet to prove it wrong. Is this concept and perspective and approach of when we do our own internal heart work, that may be hard work. There's almost always hard work. That is where we can make major shifts in the like, in the generations after us, in the stories after us and the one person under our care today, or the many that come after. I think there's this whole idea of we have to do it all perfect or whatnot. And that's not the case because we're all going to come into different seasons with different brokenness or pain points. I think when we can pause and embrace that man, when if I were to look internally and to understand where I'm bringing wounding into this moment, call it what it is, find language for it, share it with others, Right. Bring other people into it and start to find healing there. I mean, the pathway forward shifts completely. Now, it might not be 100-degree shift at one point, Right. But that one degree over time is very dramatic. And so I think that's something that whether I'm working in nonprofit space or the church space or foster adoption or nothing to do with foster and adoption, that relates to everybody. And I've seen the power of that work in so many different life contexts. So I think that's just one. Like, I can't I can't prove that one wrong. Right? Like, it still is so lofty and it keeps showing up as this really important moment in people's lives that, you know, it's not one moment. Right? There are many moments of that. But when we start to shift that value and then put in some practice and get some skills of like, I can do this right now and five years from now if I need to. So that's one thing that comes to mind.

Renae: Beautiful. I love it. I love it. I also know that because you bring your authentic self into your work and into your spaces, that in your interactions with people and again, one of the things I've always treasured about you is I knew that the Lindy was getting in front of me is the Lindy that exists. And with that comes a cost, right? When, when we think about what it takes to stay attuned and open. What, why do you think that people and this kind of ties to your just to your previous statement just now of doing your own work and getting that process of realizing that to uncover your full and authentic self takes it takes a tent intention, it takes work. What do you think is the cost that's so big that keeps people or maybe you've heard from feeling like that, that's something they can do.

Lindy: So the question being the cost of getting there? Yeah. Like I want to make sure I understand that because that feels loaded.

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Renae: We can simplify it too. So let's just do that. Let's just do that. What, what is, what is one thing that what you think is something that is just really challenging, that faces people, that makes it not feel safe to maybe be open to doing their work?

Lindy: Sure. Well, one thing that came to mind as far as some, some of the cost, some of the challenge when you're working towards uncovering your authentic self, maybe finding it for the first time. Right. Expressing it for the first time, kind of wherever you may fall there is the risk of others not liking it of, of I know something I have personally worked through is like worrying that it may hurt others somehow, unintentionally, subconsciously, because if people were used to one way that was less authentic or maybe more put together, and if I'm in a season of kind of uncovering that and really getting to the root of who I am or the root of where I'm at today in said journey, I think it is scary. It really is scary to know, gosh, other people may feel different about me in this moment in my uncovering. My relationships may shift with people that I love deeply, right. And maybe in for the good for the better, right? Maybe there were things that needed to change that relational dynamic, but also maybe in the healthy relational dynamics of my ability to participate looks different, or my ability to tolerate different things looks different. So I think that can feel very costly, right? Because relationships matter. The people you love matter, you matter. And so it's kind of this like whole equation in that you have to reorient to. But like the math looks different, right? It's weird, I don't know if that's a good analogy or not, but that comes to mind. And I think we can all relate to that because we risk this like to have dramatic words like this birthing of new version of us, and we don't know where that will land.

Renae: Absolutely. Yeah. The challenge I've seen and experienced that a lot in some of the programs that I have done where I've been able to lead people through a journey. It's been very interesting when we get toward the end of that particular program and they're realizing it's not even that they've changed it's just that they have finally been able to start to express and that that has changed the the environment around them does not really allow for that. And so it comes to a crux. It comes to like, you know, what are you going to do? So that's like more a little more of the dramatic side of it, too. But I know that you have recently been journeying through spaces where you've had to look at what your capacity is and what your ability and your ability to may have to make a decision of how, how much you my showing up for people? Do I have that capacity and and, what does that look like when I've been a caregiver and now my role has changed because I actually need the care? I can't be in that capacity right now. So you can start with whatever part of that that you'd like to make sure you're about learning your wisdom.

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Lindy: Yeah, no, I resonate with the very fresh journeying and that of I am currently in a season where I am the one needing care. Many people here, they get that you're living, that you're walking that right. And so I it's it's been very hard that my role especially my professional role and honestly my role within like my family system is very much to help her. I'm like trained as a helper, right? Like counseling background, social work, background, and whatnot. But the reality is I, it's like daily in this season, I experienced a trauma earlier this year and therefore my, my capacity totally shifted and, and it feels very disorienting. And I can imagine for many fatigued caregivers, it's like you're reorienting every day and you don't know, like what normal is or maybe this is a new normal, but that feels scary because I don't like this new normal or I don't know how to adapt to this new normal. So I can just speak from my lived experience in this very fresh season. Like every day it's different, and that's so stinking frustrating, right? Because what I could tolerate yesterday might look different than today. And the things that should be like a two, like annoying at most are like a full ten as far as dysregulation and like tolerance and my ability to figure out what to do or calm myself down or step away. And it's such a loss when you are now the person having to reorient to the whole world around you. And yet it's completely necessary. Like I, I my honest feedback to that is like, what in the world what do you do with that? It's very it's very painful. And so I, I again can share from my personal experience.

I am surrounded in my, my personal life. I have wonderful, wonderful understanding, gracious people in my community, within my family, who, who get it. But it also requires me to communicate about it. And I, I, I try as best that I can. People have grace when I can't, to communicate like I'm not in a place to give right now. I'm not in a place to reciprocate right now. And I'm glad that you're people who get that right. Not everyone has that, and that's painful when you don't. And yet, again, like the pathway forward is still necessary if you're the one needing care and needing wound care and social care and all the levels in between. So I don't know if I'm getting to your exact question, Renee, but those are things that come to mind. Is there something that would still be more specific or more helpful to dive deeper into?

Renae: I think that you're doing such a good job of talking about the, I would think I would call a cognitive dissonance of that. There's, there's a couple of things. One is when you've experienced something and it is caused a loss and grief regardless of what kind of trauma it is or what kind of disruption, what kind of breakdown it has been, there is a loss and, and there's a grieving process that's healthy to go through. And sometimes the world keeps on going and you're not because you're doing the exact right work that you're supposed to be.

Lindy: Yeah.

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Renae: First of all, people don't understand or have patience with that. Generally speaking, you're not, that's not our culture. I think that's one. And then I think that it brings to mind that, you know, if our identity is, is wrapped up in being a helper, that when we need to receive help or when we can't act in that capacity, as not only have we experienced loss from that trauma, but like the loss of identity as well. And so I'm sure that those are two really poignant things that you might have been experiencing during this time. So I would say if there are any practical, what are some just some practical things that you have done that might resonate with someone else that help you to come back to some semblance of sanity in this and some of your, maybe your anchor points of, of, of hope, some practices for regulating yourself. So how you're taking the external regulation and internalizing it anything along those because it can feel really unmooring I think.

Lindy: Yeah no I mean gosh there's a lot of directions to go there and, upfront these like I don't have all the answers I'm very much speaking from 'I'm learning this in the moment.' Some things that come to mind. I think the biggest, the biggest regulator experience, regulating experience for me is truly like sharing the raw emotional processing with another person. Most often that is my husband. I am grateful. Again, I have many people I can tap on when it can't be him in the moment or he's heard it all, but I still kind of need it all to come out. But he's heard everything and like, maybe he needs a break, which is very fair. A couple of, say, family members or friends, right? Like those have truly, for me been the most regulating. to have someone like Bear witness to the wrongness of it, to the chaos of the emotions and the thought processes like swirling inside of me all the time to sit and just bear witness to it, that that allows me to feel seen. I know for myself, I feel seen in that moment. That is not how everyone feels seen. But that's one thing that for me, it's like that's the most powerful by far. You know, it's interesting too, is many things are regulating for me before this event in my life, do not feel regulating for me in this moment.

That was very frustrating to find out. I used to be a big journal where love journaling. Oftentimes my journaling is me talking to the Lord of just kind of not formal prayers, but just conversations of like me sharing what I'm wrestling with when I'm excited about what's happening. Right? And for me, it's bringing the Lord into that. After this trauma in my life, I realize, here's what's interesting, and I kind of like, hated it, actually, as I put all of this together, but it's the reality here. That used to be a regulator because I felt safe for the Lord. For me, like, that was a regulating source for me. And I'm in the season of primarily wrestling with the Lord. Like at my core, I know who he is. That hasn't changed. And yet I have to work my way through all of these questions and wrestling. And I don't understand. Right? And so that now feels more vulnerable and more intimate, than what I'm able to tolerate right now. So part of what can regulate me right now, it's like just being honest with him. And it's kind of like, this may be a weird visual, but like, it's like I'm passively talking with them. Like I that's what I'm able to do. I'm able to be honest if like, But are you okay? Here are my questions. But do you love me? Are you going to provide all right. So it's kind of this, like

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passive relationship, and yet it's still regulating for me because it has to come out somewhere. So with people, for me, it's also with the Lord looks very different than what it has looked like in previous seasons. And honestly, simple things like I do a lot of Epsom salt baths that, you know, it just it's centering, it's calming. If there's a great show I'm into, I might like prop it up and watch that while I just have like quiet nothing time. Other people may find that inspiring with a song or a candle, you know, whatever you got to do. But those are a few things that come to mind. The last thing I'll mention for me is getting outside as much as possible, right? Like there's we know enough to know why that's beneficial and how that's beneficial for us. Not just sometimes it's outside like sitting on a rocking chair, right? Like just getting that physical, soothing, movement to my body, but in a way that I don't have to like, think about it. Sometimes my emotions will come and I'll process that. Sometimes it's just quiet space. And another thing that's beneficial for me is getting outside, going on walks, right? Like again, my lateral movement. Oftentimes that's when my husband and I process a lot together. So those are things that I really clung to in this season of disorientation and desperately trying to reorient again.

Renaë: Beautiful. You know, for this, I really appreciate your vulnerability. And while I know that the people who are watching this right now are going to it's going to really span. Right? We now it's going to be a whole span of people with different belief systems. But the I think the core for it is that understanding of what I need is for people to be okay, that I'm going to be expressing my full self, and it needs it that needs to be okay and that it's going to, it's going to look different and it's not really even about reciprocity. I think that's the thing that we sort of maybe as adults sometimes miss in, you know, for if we're caring for kids. I see this a lot with, with parents and like, you know, the kids, you cannot expect them to have any skin in the game at any point. That is that is what is going to cause them some real issues in the in the back and forth and the that's what you're experiencing right now is like, I can't, I can't, no one can expect me to have skin in the game in this right now, other than just to be who I am and process through this. So when you talk about rebirthing, like it is like you're, you're experiencing some of these primary attachment, I just need to express my distress and have people come and meet my needs and I will learn how to internalize that as I go. But it is a whole new season. It is.

Lindy: You know, I remember early on in my grieving and the trauma, I was still kind of in this, like, shocked state. Honestly. I remember thinking, I think through tears. Right. And I wasn't even speaking to anyone. It was more just this like experience of like, please don't expect for me what you used to be able to expect from me. That version of myself. I don't know if she died forever. I don't know if she's in a coma and will one day in the far-off future, will come back. I don't know. She's taking a nap, like, you know, and that's kind of the funny language that resonated for me. If, like, you, please don't expect from me, but you used to be able to expect from me because I don't know this version of myself. And that is very frustrating. It's very disorienting. It is absolutely exhausting. And I just I think I felt the pressure of that from like the world.

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Right. Kind of just like ambiguous like people in the world. Nobody was sitting there asking me to, like, be the therapist that I used to be or whatever, right. That I've used to be able to offer. But and yet that was a very felt experience. And I can imagine for many parents who have just been in the thick of it, of they reflect on like we were talking about earlier, right. That identity of who who used to be and I don't have an answer for you. And yet the reality is at some point I think we have to let go of parts of who that person was. Parts of those will always be in us somewhere, but maybe we don't have access to those parts, right? Like, I don't have the answer for that. I'm very much living that. Like when I recognize myself again. And what a grievous unknown. Or do I just have to reorient to this whole new version, this whole new person, and am I willing to do that? And how do you do that? What does it really mean? So, you know, not to get too carried away with that, but, but certainly grieving the person we used to be, whether that was a role, a title, right, a character, or character quality, a personality, right, whatever that was many. I'm sure it's really painful.

Renae: It is, it is. And I know that even when I asked you to do this, and, and we have real honest conversations about is this a yes or is this a no? And in my it's been this whole time for me that if it's a no, it's okay, that it's a no. Right. And if it's if it's a yes, I want to talk about how it's okay to say no because it's like that's actually a form of self-care, and it's a complete sentence. How has that been for you as a person with such a high capacity? You very talked about that and the thing, but what do you, what are you learning about that or are there strengths coming up in this or is this some just some you're just testing it out or what, what are you learning now?

Lindy: It's a great question. I'm learning that saying no is really hard to choose, no matter how necessary it is. Some context that is relatable for me is the reality that like, I have, I'm a part of a big family. I'm one of six kids. I'm close with multiple generations within my family. They all live in one location, right? So there's a lot of opportunity for these really wonderful family gatherings or birthdays or anniversaries or my family is involved in many nonprofits and there's always fundraisers or galas or a dinner or whatever. Right. Some anniversary for those. So there's lots of good, good things to be a part of. I also dearly love my family and I feel very fortunate I also enjoy them, right? Like we can love our family and not enjoy all of it, and saying no to those things is so hard. And yet I have felt the need to slow down to find resourcefulness in my environment as much as I am able, to like just just really retreat now. Like I can't go like live on an island somewhere, right? Like that might be my ideal retreat, but like, where can I implement or try to channel some version of retreating with my today with what I have today? And so saying no is so stinkin hard because they're good, wonderful people and events and opportunities. And yet I just have to have the wherewithal and the self-awareness to realize there's a cost in saying yes and there's a cost in saying no; which one's more costly? And have really, my husband and I together, have tried to apply this lens of are the gains worth it? Maybe it's this fun opportunity or this event or birthday party or whatever. Are the relational gains there or the activity gains there or the time, like what gain is available and is it enough to risk doing it, if that makes sense?

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Lindy: And so I'm just learning how hard it is. You know, I said yes to something prior to this trauma in my life. And it was an event like later on where I was speaking and I was just hoping I'd be regulated enough to do this speaking event, not this one. It was another one. And honestly, even up to the day, I was like, why am I doing this? I don't I don't know that I don't want to do this. I want to get it over with. And it was kind of one of those like, maybe I should have said no or backed out. But also, that felt costly to let people down. There was a friend involved. I love her dearly. The opportunity was supporting family, supporting moms. So, it's something I like valued, you know, and I didn't I don't know if I made the right choice. I don't know. And so I also think for me, there's this pressure of, I'm a therapist. I should know all the right things to do and like, do it well, especially when it comes to caring for yourself, right? But also alleviating myself from that of like, you know, I might say yes to a couple things and not realize I shouldn't have said yes. And I'm going to do all that I can to say no to the right things when I have the wherewithal to do that, because that also takes self-awareness. It takes strength. It takes. Right. Like to make the right decision there. So, so we have to bring in the grace for ourselves also what we're learning to say, give our best yes's and give our best nos. So that's what comes to mind when you ask that question, which is loaded. I mean, it's a lot. There's a lot there.

Renae: There's a lot there. And I think whether we're speaking to parents who realize that the speed of life has to absolutely change during different seasons, whether we are talking to the general public, post-COVID, you know, still, still going. But the impact of the pandemic and realizing everybody's normal is shifted. And if we're trying to live as though it's not, we're in constant little psychosis there, not that I'm not a therapist or a diagnostician. I'm just the reporter, just an observer. And what I'm seeing out there is that when we ask people to exist in a reality that might make me comfortable, but it's not the reality, you were asking them to disconnect from reality, and that's a mental health issue.

Lindy: Yeah

Renae: It's a thing. And so, I like that you can use the word grace because there is this piece of, in grace we leave room for a mystery. Because we can't, we don't know where the beginning, middle and end are and we don't know what it's, what our everything is going to look like on the other end. And we don't know a whole lot of things. And so this leaving this space of mystery for me means in this liminal space, which I know is that you're like, this is not where I like to be, you know, And I'm a little more comfortable with it in most areas of my life. Like this is this is the place I do okay in. But that liminal space if you don't have a place to breathe, right. Like that's the part where you're, is stuck in this threshold that is not yet. And if you can't breathe in that and like, find any safety that's untenable. And so that grace piece, just like creates a little bit of space to breathe. Right.

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Lindy: Right. What and again, I'm grateful I've had the experience, but also would encourage people to keep seeking if they don't have the safe, gracious people to like give you that mirrored tangible space and experience. And I just like I, we wouldn't, my husband I would not have made it through this trauma in our lives without that. Right. And so even if it's just one like one safe, gracious person who can hear you out and provide that grace for you if you're not able to give it to yourself. Right. It's like I want to be able to give that to myself. And also, that's hard. It's just hard when you're the one in not a great place. And so just like letting the humans step into that with you, even when we have just felt the, the, I was going to say the vitality, it being vital, is that the right word. It is so vital. And so that's again, it's just it's been really fruitful for us. And I would encourage anyone in a hard place to seek that as well.

Renaë: Beautiful. And the last thing I want to reflect on with that there, you know, when I'm speaking in in groups and talking about burnout and compassion fatigue and grief and loss and capacity, that for, I don't know why we tend to culturally think that like in a certain point we get somewhere and we all of a sudden have resilience and then we're supposed to act within the space of capacity and resilience From there on out. And I don't know where this myth started, but I think the, I think we're learning a little bit more about the fluidity of it, like the fluidity of our capacity, and that even when we've done stuff before, does not mean that we can do it again. And it doesn't mean that it's lost. It just means we don't have the capacity for whatever reason. There's so many things that go into whether we have capacity or not. There is so many things.

Lindy: You know, I think there's a you know, I'm going to be honest. I think I thought I knew a lot about resilience before walking through the season in my life. And I think what I'm learning is there is such a difference between being and, being resilient, having resilience and, feeling resilient. I don't feel resilient, but I imagine, like if we were to dissect my life, we would all like qualify me, or whatever, as a resilient person. But I do not feel resilient. I feel like I'm losing it all the time. I feel very disoriented. I'm like doing what I can to take care of myself and provide structure where I can. And there's honestly, there's not a lot in my life right now. So some of it is just structure of like, I have the same coffee every morning, right? Like however little it is. And so I think that's something I'm learning a lot about right now of really like taking apart actual resilience and feeling resilient. They're not the same thing. And I don't know that I would have had enough language about that in an earlier season. Yeah, sorry, I kind of got lost in that. What was the original idea? Because I feel like there was another thought that I didn't think.

Renaë: The fluidity of capacity.

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Lindy: Yeah. my gosh. So it is very fluid. And like I mentioned, I think at the start of this right. I imagine for most people here listening today, you know, you know, the feeling of what I could do yesterday is different than today. And the hard part is like we also kind of threw out our conversation, right. The world still like demands the same amount most days. Right? There's still like a general ballpark of what's required or expected, whether it's in my home, in the workplace or anything in between. And first, I just want to validate how frustrating that is to try to navigate that every day. I definitely have had to. All I know I can do is to speak to it again. Like for me, it's very important and I feel a little more regulated and seen when I can just say it to someone around me and say, friend, family member. Often my husband of like just saying it out loud, getting it out of my brain, it helps, right? Like it just does. And then when I can acknowledge my capacity shift, I feel less pressure somehow. Like it's just like entering a whole world that like, somehow I feel less pressured to reach it or to meet it or what I think it should be. But it's not today. And so changing capacity is very real, very frustrating. And to, you know, to the best of my ability, calling it what it is, again, just sharing it with another person to validate it, to just let it exist somewhere else with someone else to care about it as well. That often helps me feel less pressure by the ever-changing capacity of the day.

Renae: Lindy, I know that you are offering some education and support from your wisdom and your experience to our people here. Would you tell us a little bit about that?

Lindy: Yeah. So one, if there's a takeaway from our conversation, I would just point people to finding even one more is better, but one is high productivity and quality, safe, trusted person, right, to just bear witness to the raw realities of what you're living. We all need that. We are hardwired for that. And so I encourage you to find that I'm grateful I've been able to live the benefits of that in this current season, which is the hardest season of my life? As far as a tool, I through connecting here with Renee, I've offered a free trauma webinar, and through that webinar you can just register, you can role, right? It's pretty simple steps. I provided the steps for that, but it basically I'm just going to cover briefly like what is trauma and how it can affect us. Things that are probably already resonating with the audience today. Tools that we can use and incorporate to move forward and prevent ourselves from getting stuck or feeling stuck. And then and lastly, just how to connect and restore relationships with those around us. Right? Whatever our hard thing is or our challenging lived experience is the relationships along the way are very important. And so I always talk about that, there in my material. And so that's one resource as well as access to a full roughly six-hour training via video. It's video resourcing at your own pace. So happy to offer that. If that feels like a support to those here.

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Renae: Well, we're so grateful that you said yes to us and that you did it wholly and fully, that that you that we knew that you weren't going to show up unless you're able to bring your full self with all this stuff. And so I'm super grateful for the truth that you shared and your experience and even the reflections of how it as you're in the midst of the journey, that you can still look back and share. Because for the people who are on there, they're hearing this and they're resonating with you, and they may not have yet found their safe person or people. But to hear you express, you're an incredibly capable, productive, empowered person, that has things to give and share in the world. And for you to be able to say this is different and this is a struggle, it may be a way for people to be able to be seen, heard, and valued at this time. And so thank you for being honest and sharing that. I just really appreciate that about you and appreciate who you are and in grateful to be able to journey with you as well during this being thinking,

All right, all right, everybody check out underneath here. You're going to see a little link and it's going to be where you get to Lindy's trauma training that she is graciously giving all participants. And then, of course, you can access the other course if you purchased the traumatize tool kit. Otherwise, we'll have some more that Lindy magic attached to the site. You'll be able to see other ways that she might be able to resource you as well. All right, Thanks again, Lindy.

Lindy: Thanks, Renae.