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Presenter: Cecily McMillan

Topic: *Get It Off Your Chest, It's An Inside Job*

[00:00:00] **Moderator:** Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to the Fletcher Group, rural Center of Excellency's webinar series.

[00:00:06] Our presenter today is McMillan McMillan, program Director with Sunrise Children's Services.

[00:00:13] Sicily is a dedicated program director within a residential treatment facility. With over 11 years of experience in residential care and youth serving systems. She specializes in program and staff development, policy implementation, and trauma-informed care training. A former foster youth Sicily brings lived experience that fuels her mission to advocate for children who have endured trauma and to empower professionals to prioritize their own wellbeing.

[00:00:45] Author of the scars of the Chosen, she promotes resilience and self care within organization. Outside of her professional work, Cly is a mother of two who enjoys program development, coaching and gardening, reflecting her commitment to growth and healing. Cly, the floor is yours.

[00:01:13] **Cecily McMillan:** Oops. Well good afternoon everyone. Sorry for a second. I thought I had lost everybody, but Okay. Hello. How's everybody doing? I just wanna welcome everybody, but also thank you very much for the opportunity to be able to talk about something that will never get old. I'll just say that. So I wanted to be able to start off by saying that there's gonna be a couple of different resources that you all can take a look at, but I'm a big person of a lot of questions.

[00:01:41] So if you have any questions that you would like for me to answer along the way, just feel free to put 'em in a chat and Jen, and we'll be able to ask 'em along the way. So the title of our class today is called Get It Off Your Chest. It's an inside job and we just wanna talk about, just the different types of trauma, but also talk about the effects of trauma.

[00:02:02] Currently I'm a agency trainer and a director as well. But over the course of years I've done a lot of training. And it's the language of training can be diverse, but it can be kind of different a little bit, kind of just all over the place a little bit. But what I wanna offer today is more of life experiences when it comes to trauma.

[00:02:22] Currently I'm working with youth girls right now, ages 12 to 17 at Sunrise. But I wanna be able to offer a lens where we get away from the feeling of people feeling like they're being diagnosed a little bit when they think about the word trauma. I wanna be able to offer some of my personal experience of things that I've dealt with from a personal aspect, and then also look at it from a caregiver's perspective.

[00:02:44] Next slide please. So here's some of the things that I want you all to be able to ponder and thought or be able to even want to ask some of the questions along the way. It's called Reveal to Heal. I want you to be able to think about what trauma is and how does trauma affect us or you as an individual, and what is trauma bonding and how you, and if you are even aware of your own trauma, think about what are triggers, what triggers you, how do you manage your own triggers, tantrums?

[00:03:13] What are tantrums? When was the last time that you had a tantrum? So ponder in thought a little bit of these questions, and if you have some that you want to actually ask, feel free to do so. So next slide, please. So when I created the training, get it Off your Chest, I actually created this training probably about back in like 20 2018.

[00:03:36] And when I did it, I did it with from a social media perspective. I had gotten an audience over social media over a course of five years at that point, and we began to talk about wholeness and healing. And I remember writing this particular training and I launched it in a private setting. And I realized that I was kind of onto something when it came to what meant for people to be hold, what it meant for other people to become hold.

[00:04:02] And I realized how big trauma really is. And so for most people, they were thinking about trauma in the sense of. Just the things that they feel on a day-to-day basis, but not really understanding the root of trauma. And this is where I started to take a different look at trauma from a childhood perspective.

[00:04:21] 'cause most of trauma that I see in the kids that we serve is coming from the childhood. And as a trainer, the language of trauma had to change

because a lot of people hide behind their trauma. So one of the things I've learned about trauma is verbiage from, instead of asking a person what was wrong with them, we've learned to ask the question what happened?

[00:04:41] Because when you start asking people what happened, you open the door for them to be able to be comfortable enough to begin to share, and not from a shame-based perspective. Next slide, please. While we are thinking, as you're thinking about your trauma, think about what happened and not what's wrong with you, but reframe it to think about what actually happened in your life.

[00:05:04] What has happened to you that has caused you to be where you really are? Because as a person that cares for clients on a day-to-day basis, if I'm not caring for myself, if I don't know my own traumas, if I don't know my own triggers, if I don't understand what has happened to me, then it's gonna be difficult for me to understand what has happened to the clients that we serve.

[00:05:24] And so in this part of the training, it's more of a reflective part of this training for you all as caregivers or people who are taking care of other people. It's, it is more about you reflecting on where you are with your own trauma and how you manage your own trauma and in, and when you do that, it'll help you be able to clear your lens or broaden your lens on different approaches that you can take when it comes to taking care of other clients.

[00:05:49] So one of the things I wanna really talk about when I, as mentioned before, when they did an introduction for me, they mentioned the book that I had wrote, the Scars are Chosen. This book that I wrote was, I wrote this book probably about 13 years ago and when I was writing this book, it wasn't even supposed to be a book, it was just a point of my life where I had gotten to the point where I really knew that there was something going on with me and I had exhausted pretending.

[00:06:15] I had got tired of pretending to show up to perform in the best way. I knew how to perform, trying my very best to be there for other people, but I didn't know how to be there for myself. I didn't know how to ask for help, and so I formed a lot of habits of just covering. My trauma up very well, very cosmetic, being a workaholic, finding different ways to just cover up and hide behind all the things that had actually happened to me.

[00:06:41] And so when I got into my breaking point, it became, I got a pen and a piece of paper and I started really writing about things that were happening to

me. And it just turned into a story. I realized that I had a lot to tell, a lot to talk about when it come to my own personal trauma. And one of the things I really want to talk about was.

[00:07:00] For me it was habits, the habits that we take on when we're hiding our trauma. What kind of habits do you have and what kind of habits do you have that are formed into a shame? When I think about habits, I'm talking about any kind of habits. It's not just about the addictions that people have.

[00:07:17] When we think about addictions, we might think about drugs, alcohol, we may even think about, just, overeating, just overdoing other things. But I'm talking about these other habits that we form in a way to soothe and calm myself when we are having these trigger moments.

[00:07:32] So some of the things I was talking about was, heartaches, these emotional overloads that people experience on a day-to-day basis, and they're trying to figure out ways to process it, but sometimes in doing so, they're made to feel guilty about processing their own feelings. Think about when I think of, when I use the word head attacks, I'm really talking about these intrusive memories.

[00:07:55] And when I was much, much younger and I was thinking about intrusive memories, I was thinking more about movies in your head, the horror movies in my mind where I couldn't turn them off. And here's where I want to take a point where I want someone to kinda help me frame this next slide that I'm gonna come up to.

[00:08:12] I want you to be able to anybody to ask a question about when was the last time that you had an intrusive thought or memory? Or maybe how does it feel for you when you're experiencing an emotional overloads? And what are some of the habits that you have that are keeping you, that keep you from actually processing those moments when you have that.

[00:08:37] So if anybody has an opportunity to put it in the chat, go ahead and put that in the chat for me.

[00:08:46] **Moderator:** Cecily, someone in the chat said, and thank you for sharing this, Natasha. She's this morning, she almost every day while brushing my teeth.

[00:08:55] **Cecily McMillan:** Yes. Yes. So I like when you said, almost every day, because one thing about an intrusive thought when I called them for me when I was writing my book, when I was writing my story before I actually wrote the book, even while I was writing this, I was having to remember, and one thing about intrusive thoughts, doing your day-to-day stuff, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, getting your coffee, driving in your car, doing, sitting around people, in a crowd of people, it's these intrusive thoughts that attack your mental, that attack you, attack attacks, your moves and things of that nature like that.

[00:09:31] Keeping you from really showing up and almost making you shrink back. That's me. That's how I used to do. I would shrink whenever these intrusive thoughts come, because it felt like everybody around them could see it. Does that make sense?

[00:09:44] **Moderator:** Yes. And we have a couple other good examples. Another person mentioned that she tends to isolate, she picks, and that as a child she would rock.

[00:09:53] And she still does this sometimes. And then someone else said, I had a trauma. Oops, sorry. They're coming in fast. I had a trauma trigger just last week due to a traumatic event at work that happened. And sometimes I like this one. I have to sing to myself when people are talking. I like that. She said I could do this all day.

[00:10:15] **Cecily McMillan:** Yes I love that. I love, and I want you guys to keep it coming. I love this is because a lot of times we don't have enough of these conversations. We may have them somewhat in a private setting, but we don't have enough of these conversations and bigger settings like this and being more transparent.

[00:10:32] One of the most, one of the most amazing tools of resiliency when it comes to helping each other or helping the people that you're serving with addictions that have gone through a lot of traumatic experiences is learning how to be very transparent about your own trauma. This is how I get the clients that I work with, even the adults that I work with to open up and stop fearing having to face and process what they action experience.

[00:10:57] Because these things come on an everyday basis, and the more you hide behind them, the more you allow yourself to be under attack. And then of course, when you have these, what I call head attacks, intrusive thoughts, when

you continue to have those things, at some point you, you wanna just escape. So I see where someone was saying isolation.

[00:11:16] There were things that, that I've experienced even for myself, whether it was down to thumb sucking whether it was, twirling in my hair or pacing or, you know, just different things that I was trying to find to kind of soothe and kind of calm and regulate myself. But what I am saying is that even in these habits.

[00:11:35] That I had formed, or the habits that I know that other people have formed along the way. One of the things that I was lacking was that I was lacking the ability to be able to process These are these heartaches, these emotional overloads. I was soothing these things with my habits, but what I wasn't doing, I was not really addressing them.

[00:11:56] And this is the thing about trauma. To be able to get to a place of resiliency, you have to be okay with feeling things that hurt you. You have to feel that pain, actually fill it all the way through and begin to process it. Because what I've come to understand is that when it comes to coping skills, when it comes to different things that we are using to kind of soothe or regulate ourselves or whatever, a lot of times people use their coping skills to cope with the fruit of trauma instead of using their coping skills to help them deal with the root of trauma.

[00:12:30] Does that make sense? So how many of you all think that you are, that you know, people that are using their coping skills to deal with the fruit, or are they using their coping skills to help them deal with the root? Because that makes a significant amount of difference when it comes to resiliency and when it comes to people overcome their trauma or facing their trauma altogether.

[00:12:53] Next slide, please. Here's another thing that that I really have to work really hard about when it comes to dealing with, again, I want you all to remember again, this first part of what I'm talking about when it comes to trauma is very reflective. It's really about us reflecting on our trauma because studies does show, and I did have Ms.

[00:13:16] Erica put into this into the chat that there's an ACEs test that you can be able to take to determine. How much trauma you actually have. There's an ass score that everyone probably has. This is score. I took this score many this test many years ago, and my ass score was extremely high because as a child I had endured a lot of abuse on different levels, and my score was extremely high.

[00:13:40] I was placed in foster care by the time I was at the age of six, and I didn't really get out of foster care until I was almost aging out of the program, out of foster care. I aged out, but my score was extremely high. And so studies were saying that there would be different things that would be difficult for me to overcome due to those those high scores in my ACEs.

[00:14:00] But one of the other things that's inside of the chat as a resource for you to look up is a resiliency test. I also found out by taking that resiliency test that I was quite resilient. And one of the things that helped me become more ex resilient was exposure I had as a child had been exposed to a lot of abuse, a lot of just mistreatment, but also as a part of my resiliency, I had to be able to expose myself to things that will create resiliency in me.

[00:14:31] I had to be able to expose my things self to things that I would normally would've shied away from because the fear of people knowing what my trauma was and the fear of not being accepted. So exposure is extremely important to either be able to being retraumatized or being resilient environment. What kind of environment do you have yourself around?

[00:14:52] Because all these things are factors in your ex, in your resiliency or being retraumatized. Does that make sense?

[00:15:03] I am looking at some of the stuff in the chat just a little bit, just so if anybody wants to know, I'm

[00:15:07] **Moderator:** just

[00:15:07] **Cecily McMillan:** looking at some of

[00:15:08] **Moderator:** your I was gonna say, there's so much good stuff in the chat and I'm trying to get back to everyone and someone, just mentioned that they started not to say anything and I'm replying to them now, but it's so refreshing to see people be so transparent and I think that's what validates us, or at least that's been my experience in the recovery field.

[00:15:25] They've been through the ringer and being able to meet with and talk to other people who understand is really powerful. Just seeing some of this, I see some things that I think all of us do and lean on when we're kind of experiencing. And I think things, there's things we do that we don't even realize and that we see our clients do that we don't always realize is really related back to trauma.

[00:15:48] **Cecily McMillan:** Yes. Yes. I love, I, I'm loving a lot. I'm loving a lot of what I'm hearing and what I'm seeing. I'm looking at and looking both ways or whatever. I'm trying to find the best way to interact due to the webinar. But the thing about it is that, again, I like the keyword being very transparent because this helps other people open up and make them understand that they're not by themselves.

[00:16:10] Oftentimes when I work with people in different fields, whether it be in the childcare field. Or when it, whether it's coaching other people. A lot of times people tend to shrink and shut down and get closed off because they're intimidated by positions, titles, and things of that nature.

[00:16:26] So I oftentimes do my very best to strip away these titles and positions and get real transparent before other people to let them know that not only do I can do, not only I can train about trauma, but I experience. My own trauma and I have to be able to manage on a day-to-day basis things that trigger me.

[00:16:47] I have to be responsible for my mental health on a regular basis because I have been exposed to mu so much trauma as a child. And and the program that I work with right now serving our young girls is that we have a, our part of our program is called Hard Work. It's an inside job. It's something that you'll be doing for the rest of your life.

[00:17:05] You have to work on being the best version of yourself for the rest of your life, and especially when you have endured extreme levels of trauma. This is not something that you can put cosmetics over. This is not something that you can lose 10 pounds, get a new hairstyle, buy a new house, get a new car, get a huge bank account.

[00:17:26] It won't erase that. I've sat with people who've got a lot of money. Who've got they look, they seem like they got it all, all together, but on the inside they're are torn apart because they have been trained and have mastered the art of pretending well, of performing well. But behind closed doors, it's a different story.

[00:17:46] And so just as much of exposure that I've experienced as a child, I've had to make sure that I show up in different ways. I have to expose myself to what healthy looks like. I have to expose myself around people that, that have already overcome and have become resilient. Because at some point in my life, I trauma bonded with people because that's where I felt the most accepted.

[00:18:10] I felt like the people that had been what through I've been, through what I've been through, they will receive me. They would accept me, but they were also understand me, but I was wrong. I was wrong because that's what's keeping me stuck. That was keeping me stuck, was being able to only bond with people that shared my similar background and not getting around people that overcame the things that I overcame.

[00:18:33] Next slide, please.

[00:18:37] This leads into what I like to call superficial strength. Being a mother of two kids and trying my very best to make sure that my sons didn't have to experience what I experienced. When it comes to the levels of abuse, my abuse ranged from anything from sexual, verbal, mental abandonment.

[00:18:57] It was a lot of abuse. Like I said, a lot of abuse that I endured for many years of my life before I went into the foster care system. And even going into the foster care system, it was even some, at some point in time I dealt with being re-traumatized 'cause people didn't know how to deal with me.

[00:19:13] They didn't know how to handle me. And so I had to learn very early on going from place to place as a child in foster care. I had to put on the mask and put appear to be stronger than what I really was to be able to survive the environments that I was in. I had to make sure that when I went into another foster home that I remember all the rules and regulations of that home in order for me to survive.

[00:19:37] And this is the biggest thing that people tend to do when they don't have a place where they're actually addressing, have a safe place to address the things that are attacking them on the inside. They suppress these feelings and they pretend to be stronger than what they really are. So the key thing is that when you're thinking about your trauma, have you mastered suppressing your trauma?

[00:19:59] Or are you on a day-to-day basis finding different tools and different ways to address your trauma? 'cause remind yourself now when you do not address your trauma, you can project your trauma off on other people through your behaviors, through the things that you actually do. So think about that suppressed.

[00:20:19] And I remember, just a quick story. I remember when my sons got to the point where they were in high school and I felt like it was time for me to sit

my sons down and share with them not necessarily in detail, but share with them my family history and some of the things that I had experienced because I did not allow my children to have access to my biological family, and so they didn't really know much about them, so I had to sit down with them and I began to.

[00:20:47] Share with them some of the stuff that I experienced being in foster care, being, and what that did for me or whatever. And in the moment of me sharing that something else happened, another door of my life that I felt that I had dealt with, it opened and it opened in a way that I didn't expect for it to open.

[00:21:05] And I realized there were still certain parts of my life that I had pushed down, suppressed down so deep that if I did not address them, instead of me passing the torture of resiliency over to my children, that I was gonna pass a torch of dysfunction over to them. And so it's so important for us as those who serve in care, caregiver roles from any walk of life.

[00:21:29] I don't care if it's in a nursing home, I don't care if it's in a group home or foster home, an addiction program, you gotta make sure that you're reflecting on what you need and understand that you gotta make sure that you enhance all the tools that you possibly need to address. What you need not. So you can pretend to be strong in what you really are.

[00:21:51] I'm gonna just take a few seconds before I go over to my next slide just to see if anybody has any questions or comments. Ms. Erica, before we go over to our slide and go into the second half of what I would like to talk about,

[00:22:04] **Moderator:** so much good stuff in the chat, I'm like feverishly trying to get to it all.

[00:22:08] 'cause so many people are just willing to share. It's not easy to do. Tracy said, if I'm not transparent and I don't ask questions to learn and figure out what I'm going through and understand, I will never heal, nor will I stay clean and sober. And then another one that I really loved, I'm I'm gonna steal this.

[00:22:25] Let me find it. Anthony said, if you don't deal with your trauma, your trauma will deal with you. Oh yes. I was like, ain't that the truth? Oh yes. I love that he

[00:22:35] **Cecily McMillan:** said that. I love that Anthony.

[00:22:37] **Moderator:** Mm-hmm. And another one, Tracy also said, I'm tired of the mass of acting like I've mastered it. And glad to be working into the freedom of the, of that bondage, of choking down the feelings.

[00:22:50] **Cecily McMillan:** Yes, Tracy? Yes. This is really good because that right there allows us to be, 'cause here's the thing that I've learned in working with working in a world of trauma and dealing with trauma and looking at different tools that we need to use for trauma. It's some of the things that I realize is that a lot of times staff that I work with, clients that I work with, we get this language of trauma and it becomes so big with a different forms of languages that we use when we're talking about trauma.

[00:23:19] But the thing about it is most people feel like when you are stepping to them and talk to them about their trauma, they feel almost like you're diagnosing them. Instead of helping them. And that doesn't feel good when people feel like you're diagnosed in their situation. Because if we wanna be honest, some of everybody that I've come across, no matter what walk of life they come from, on some level, we've all had to deal with trauma.

[00:23:45] All of us have to deal with trauma on some level. And so to be transparent, to be vulnerable is a superpower to me because it allows other people to step into being able to start working on their trauma and doing it in a way where it doesn't feel like it's cosmetics, but it's more transformational.

[00:24:05] Next slide, please.

[00:24:11] Trauma traps. I'm looking at I think this question is for me, Alicia. At what point did you decide to start this up? Is, was that a question for me?

[00:24:31] **Moderator:** Oh, sorry, I thought I was unmuted. I was asking her for clarification to start the trainings. When did you start this work into trauma and start doing the trainings?

[00:24:40] **Cecily McMillan:** So I started doing trainings I think back in 2000, and I wanna say 15. It was back in 2015. And the reason why I started doing the trainings was because.

[00:24:57] For about 20 years of my life for, I want to go back a little bit. About 20 years of my life. I was in the medical field as a nurse. I did a lot of nursing.

And my last client, I worked with his client for 10 years straight as his private nurse. That career once that career ended for me, I was at a crossroad in my life and I know that I love taking care of people.

[00:25:16] That's something I've always enjoyed doing. And but I knew that that part of taking care of someone was over because I didn't wanna relocate. Long story short, I ended up working at a job corps center and when I got to the job Corps center, I was put in a dorm that had. 54 male students, ages 16 to 24 years old.

[00:25:37] And what I saw in that dorm was mind blowing. And I did not, I literally, to be honest with you, I felt like at that point I said, I'm outta here. I don't know what to do with this. I, I can't do anything with this. I'm out. And I wanted to run away because it was so much that I was seeing and I didn't feel like I could be able to deal with, but I just remember.

[00:25:57] The one, one of the most amazing things, and I say this, no, shameless plug, my relationship with God is my source to everything for me. And in through my relationship with God, this is what he was letting me know that this is what I was gonna have to do was work with these kids, work with the children.

[00:26:13] And I'm like, God, what am I supposed to teach these kids? And he let me, he reminded me what I taught my own children nurturing structure. And so when I went back into that dorm full of boys, 54 boys, one person, me with all coming from all walks of life, and at this point in time. This job Corps center, were bringing in kids from different states, Memphis, New York, from different places were coming in.

[00:26:39] So the culture was very diverse and it was very much different. And I wasn't used to it. But what I did found out is that the reason why the behaviors were so large and so big for the kids that we were serving at this particular location or program, is they lost hope. They felt like no one cared anything about them.

[00:26:57] No one cared. Nobody believed in them. Everybody just felt like they were doomed for nothing. And being at Job Corps was just something to get the people that, to get away from their neighborhoods or possibly the judge said, this was your last resort. Possibly just trying to figure out their one last step to do something for themselves.

[00:27:14] And when I, what I come to find out is that I worked alongside. Of those boys for one year, and they were, I taught them things like how to wash their clothes, sit down and have long conversations with them about life and relationships and finances and things of that nature. But I started to watch their morale go up.

[00:27:35] I started to watch the Hope go up. I started to watch how they started to interact with each other, and eventually I ended up moving out of the dorms and becoming the CSIO, which is Center Standards Officer over the entire program that had over 278 kids that I was supposed to be responsible for dealing with their behaviors.

[00:27:56] And so what I found out is that we were we had it all wrong. Everybody was so busy dealing with the kids' behaviors that they didn't understand there was a reason why they were behaving that way. And so I just started getting to work, trying to create or develop very natural programs within this program to gauge, engage the kids and find out what their needs really were because they had not formed or had a mature enough voice to be able to ask for what they really wanted.

[00:28:27] And so this is where trainings and program development started for me, was back in 2015, is when it first started. And I began to use that to prove points in rooms that people didn't normally would want me to be in, or I wasn't familiar with being in or whatever. But I was the person that was in the trenches.

[00:28:45] I was the one that was working alongside of the kids that would, that they had the issues and I could better advocate for them because I worked alongside of them. So that's when I realized that those trainings were gonna become more relevant. And I hope that answered your question. I'm sorry for the long story part of that, but I need to take it there.

[00:29:05] And this, the slide that I wanted to look at right now is called trauma Traps. And this is, this was very important because as much as I started learning about trauma, the more I learned about trauma, the more I could not only use it to address the different clients that I was working with or the staff that I was working with, I realized that a lot of the trainings that I learned in the beginning, they were just for me.

[00:29:29] This is the reason why before we could even talk about trauma-informed care trainings for your staff, or trauma-informed care trainings for

your clients, that youer that you serve, you have to be more trauma-informed for yourself. You have to know your trauma volume. You have to know what triggers you.

[00:29:48] You have to know that you do have tantrums. First of all, you have to validate what you've been through. A lot of us just sweep it under the rug and be like, I'm too old to be still dealing with this. I know people 50, 60, 70 years old, that are mind blown that they have not even began to scratch the surface of some of their trauma

[00:30:05] **Moderator:** we're And

[00:30:05] **Cecily McMillan:** so

[00:30:05] **Moderator:** you never in the chat, sorry, tra I had to point that out.

[00:30:09] Somebody in the chat was like, I've never just and I'm paraphrasing here, but they'd never thought about tantrums. And that's been eye-opening for them. And it was for me too. I've never heard anybody mention that related to trauma. Mm-hmm. And, now I can just replay and see so many scenarios in my mind with clients and different things, and probably if I wanna look deep enough than myself where we do that or we see clients doing that.

[00:30:31] And really, it's a sort of trauma response.

[00:30:34] **Cecily McMillan:** It is, yeah. I used to have 'em all the time. Grown woman having a tantrum grown woman slamming doors. Grow storming outta rooms, shutting down, having a tantrum. Because I had not learned how to advocate for myself, I had not learned how to ask for what I needed.

[00:30:53] It, I, it took me to get angry for people. Like, what does she want? What does she need? Those were my tantrums. Once I got triggered, because see, this is the thing about it. When you don't address your trauma and you learn to mask your way through life, perform very well, do very well. Everybody's patting you on your back, telling you how amazing you're doing.

[00:31:11] But people don't slow down long enough and say, what do you need? How can I help you? That solely only benefits you. That's the world that I was used to since I was a child. As a child, I was made to be an adult before I even understood what being a child was. And so I always took on the form of being responsible for everybody else.

[00:31:29] I knew how to protect other people, but I needed to be protected. I knew how. I knew to feed someone who was hungry while I was hungry. And so as I start as trauma started to try to come up, it would turn into tantrums because I did not know how to ask for what I wanted and then not feel ashamed for it.

[00:31:49] Because some people are so used to what you do that they do not even recognize who you are. And so a part of your trauma is recognizing the traps of trauma. You gotta be able to rap, recognize where these traps, what these traps look like and how they come. When you get triggered, your triggers are an indication of something that you have not addressed.

[00:32:12] And you have to every time I get triggered back when I was started really dealing with my trauma, when I started getting triggered with certain things, I would hear people say, well, that happened so long ago. You should be over that. So I would just try to like, dismiss the trigger.

[00:32:26] Like, you know, well, let me go do something else. So what if the something else we gonna do, is it gonna get you something to drink? Is it go, get you something to eat? Is it gonna get you some drugs? Is it to go get something else to cover up that? Or do you just simply, uh, validate your triggers?

[00:32:40] There's a reason why I would walk past certain stuff and the smell would trigger me. It was a reason why someone standing behind me would trigger me. But it was so hard for me, believe it or not, to sit there and allow myself to process that. Because for years of my life, people said I shouldn't be over that.

[00:32:58] And that's a trigger for it in itself. And so then I would just have tantrums every time things didn't go the way that I wanted 'em to go. I would just blo out. I will get upset. I will have those moments, and if I'm not careful to this day, I can continue to do that. But I have to manage my triggers and tell myself that you have every right to feel the way that you are, but you don't have a right to continue to be that way.

[00:33:22] And so what leads me into another thing called teachers versus groomers. This is something that I work with the clients that I'm, that this is something I talk to with the clients that I serve right now. Even staff, either you are going to be amongst people that will teach you how to overcome, or you're gonna be around groomers that are gonna allow you to remain, to be where you are because that's where they can benefit the most from you.

[00:33:48] I mean, we think about that with sex trafficking. We think about that with poor relationships. We think about all that. When you don't know your self-worth, you are running to groomers that will massage your will, will massage, your egos, massage your low self-esteem. They'll do all that at the same time while they're gaining from you.

[00:34:06] And then when you finally do wake up, you feel robbed. You feel taken advantage of. This is a reason why trauma bonding is very dangerous. You have to be around someone that says, I know how you feel, but let me show you how to get on the other side of that. I've been where you've been at, but let me help you get on the other side of that.

[00:34:25] So triggers and tantrums. They're relevant. They're relevant to what you went through. Address that. Feel, whatever you need to feel and as you're feeling it, process it. I had to do that for so many years to the point when I was writing the book, the Scars of the Chosen while I was writing the book, even though that was not my true story, I just used the characters in that book because I needed to tell the story of what it's doing.

[00:34:49] So many people can talk about different forms of child abuse and trauma and it doesn't move them, and that's sad when it doesn't move us anymore. It doesn't move it. But while I was writing the scars of the chosen at one particular portion of the book that I was writing, I had to put it down for a whole week because I kept seeing memories of my childhood coming to surface that I couldn't unsee.

[00:35:13] And then it got me to the point where I started processing what I had experienced, and I realized how badly I was had been treated. So I began to validate my feelings. I began to validate what I experienced and let myself know that it wasn't my fault. Then it wasn't okay that I went through the things that I went through and was treated the way that I was treated.

[00:35:32] And then I got around people that before I started working on my trauma, I got around people that groomed me to believe that, oh, you did this. They groomed me in such a way where I wasn't dealing with my problems whatsoever. I felt justified to remain to be the way that I am. At the same time, I was putting myself in a disposition because I was ending up in poor relationships across the board.

[00:35:56] Until I started getting around people that were teaching me. To go deeper. Teaching me not to keep continuing to cope with the fruit of my trauma,

but take the, my coping skills, giving me resilient coping skills to get to the root of my problems, of my trauma. And as I'm doing that process now, I know that sometimes when I think about some of the suck, 'cause I'm, I think about 'cause I'm a imp a empath for the most part.

[00:36:22] I think about some of the stuff that our kids go through that I serve alongside with. And sometimes I have to get up and I have to go take a walk and get a fresh breath of air and be reminded that I got so much work to do when it comes to helping other people. But at the same time, I gotta make sure I'm helping myself because if I can't help them if I'm not helping my helping myself, because if not, this topic will go to sleep again and we'll put something else cosmetic back over it just because we don't wanna keep dealing with all of the root process of getting it all up.

[00:36:55] So I'll pause again for a second if anybody has a question or anything, Ms. Erica, that you wanted to share before we go to the this last part of it.

[00:37:04] **Moderator:** You may have answered this because Shane asked it a little while back, but he kind of asked the main difference between triggers and tantrums.

[00:37:13] **Cecily McMillan:** The main difference?

[00:37:14] **Moderator:** Mm-hmm.

[00:37:15] **Cecily McMillan:** The main difference for me is like, uh, I, somebody put in a check about people's, places, things, and smells and tastes. Those are things that are contributing to triggers. When I was taking a walkthrough, when I took a walk through the neighborhood one day in the process of writing the book, the Scars of the Chosen many years ago, before I was, before that book came to life, I remember walking through the neighborhood and as I was walking through the neighborhood, I, if you ever smelled someone doing laundry, I could smell the someone's laundry while I was passing by that house, and it triggered that smell of that particular laundry or whatever they used.

[00:37:50] It triggered a childhood memory, and it made me go all the way back into my tr childhood as if I was still there. And I just remember sobbing and crying because that smell triggered a memory. Now what happens is this, when

something triggers something into you, it can either be a, an opportunity for you to arrest that thing that's triggering you and so you can address it.

[00:38:15] Or you would allow that thing that triggers you because you haven't addressed it you'll have a behavior, a tantrum is just a behavior that people be thinking like, why are you so angry? Why are you so sad? Why are you doing X, Y, and Z? So that's the difference. The difference is something triggers something that happened.

[00:38:34] The tantrum comes when you don't, when you refuse to address it. Like when I was saying that, whenever someone would, say something to me or take a different volume with me or speak to me a certain type of a way, because I was a child that got talked to verbally abused my entire childhood, I was verbally abused a lot.

[00:38:53] And so when people would speak to me a certain type of a way, it would trigger me. And I would have a moment, I would have a tantrum where I would go yelling and screaming and cursing and fussing and throwing things or whatever. And that's what happens because I never addressed how it felt for me to be spoken to that way.

[00:39:15] Does anybody have one more other question? I can, we can an I can answer.

[00:39:21] **Moderator:** I don't

[00:39:22] **Cecily McMillan:** think I see I, I like what Ms. Christina says. I hate when people ask me what's wrong with me. Yes. That's the reason why in trauma, we always use the word, when I'm working with anybody, I'm like, what happened? Like I've learned to make sure that I say what happened because as soon as someone says to me, what's wrong with you or what's wrong with you?

[00:39:39] Now you come to the conclusion that I'm the problem and now I don't have nothing else to say.

[00:39:45] **Moderator:** So true. And a lot of people are just like, this is fantastic, which I already knew, and something that I truly appreciate. Just that. For example, the teachers versus groomers, because for me there's no recovery without accountability and being able to move past something.

[00:40:01] We can't live in it, you know, we should validate it. But I loved that you all from the beginning were like, you want somebody who's gonna help you move past this, move through it, address it, deal with it so you can live a healthy functioning life. Doesn't mean things aren't gonna come up. Mm-hmm. But I think, and I've told you this many times, Cecily, I think a lot of the clients we serve in the substance use field are kids who have gone through what the kids you're helping today.

[00:40:27] Uh, they're just adults now, but they've never gotten the help that they needed. So I don't know if you have thoughts about that or suggestions for, 'cause we see clients act out all the time. You know, they're still very angry and upset. And how do you manage that when you have a kid that comes in that way?

[00:40:42] **Cecily McMillan:** Well, and I wanna go back to saying that again. The kids that we are serving right now, because I'm very mindful about my trauma and the layers of trauma and the layers of healing. 'cause healing does have layers. It has layers. The more mature I get, the more, the more I literally make in, I'm intentional about my mental health because I'm like, I can, I need to go, I need to go a little bit more deeper.

[00:41:05] But what I wanna say to that is this, is that the adults that are still struggling with the addictions, a lot of times it is because someone gave up along the way and made them feel guilty about not getting over things quick enough, fast enough. And so now they hide behind it and say, okay, I should be over it by now.

[00:41:25] You, no one can determine, no one can give you a timeframe on when your trauma, when you can get over anything, especially when they don't have the necessary tools. And that's the thing about it. When you're dealing with teachers versus groomers are going to give you something to make you feel good, that instant gratification, but a teacher's gonna give you a tool that's gonna help you, one, examine that tool and then teach you how to be able to use that tool.

[00:41:49] But the one thing about a teacher is that they're gonna be able to give you certain things that you're not gonna be able to buy in the store. It's called Patience, it's called Grace. It's called just long suffering. It's called the slow burning process of helping people get there, and then one day they finally get there and now they can pass that on to someone else.

[00:42:08] We've got to learn how to slow down long enough to take time. When you are a true teacher, you have to, first of all, as a teacher, you have to be a forever student. You are never gonna stop learning as a teacher. And if you do stop learning as a teacher, then you're not gonna be a good teacher because all teachers know that in order for them to be able to teach, they have to have different teaching styles.

[00:42:32] Because when I work with clients, whether it be the young girls, young boys, or young adults or older adults, everybody learns differently. So I have to learn how to be able to fully equip myself with the necessary tools to make the necessary approaches for the necessary person that I'm in front of. At that time, everybody, you can't teach everybody the same exact way.

[00:42:54] I'm a visual learner. You show me something, I got it. But if you try to explain it to me without giving me some visual stuff to go along with it, you lose me. And oftentimes a lot of what happens is that the people that we're trying to teach or we are trying to help, it's because we haven't continued to teach and help ourselves.

[00:43:18] So this other part that we are about to go into right now. The second part of what I wanna talk, and this is mainly for, this, is mainly for all of us who are actually doing caregivers to anybody in addiction programs, anybody that's in the a residential treatment facility for kids. Anybody that is, even if you're helping someone in your home.

[00:43:38] This second part is really for those of us who are not only dealing with our own trauma, but we're also working with people that are dealing with a lot of their traumas. Because at the end of the day, an A person who has an addiction is their that at that addiction is their bandaid over their wounds.

[00:43:56] That's a bandaid. I know how that feels to put a bandaid over your wound. I know how that feels until it's until the wound starts oozing out and becoming infected. So, next slide please. And this is called caregivers. I don't care what I've done in my life. I guess God is a, God has allowed me and equipped me to be a forever caregiver.

[00:44:20] I'm gonna be caring for people for the rest of my life. And I'm not gonna complain about that at all because I love taking care of people. I love seeing people being transformed. I love seeing people become the best version of themselves. But the reality of being a caregiver is that you gotta take care of yourself first.

[00:44:37] You gotta take care of yourself first. Because here's the thing about being a caregiver it's, it feels different. You gotta know vert different ways of how to care. And when we go into these different slides, it's going to challenge you and test you to see if you are taking care of yourself on in all areas of your life.

[00:44:58] In all areas of your life, are you taking care of yourself? And I promise you it'll make sense in a little bit. The reason why I'm gonna ask you all that question, so ask if some of you will ask the question, are you taking care of yourself in every area of your life or just certain areas of your life?

[00:45:14] So caregivers, this is welcome to the why behind what you do. Next slide, please. Connections as a caregiver relationships is so extremely important as a caregiver because you, when you connect to the people that you are serving, that you are helping, you are gonna be their source of support. So your relationships, caregivers is a source of your support.

[00:45:43] And if you don't have the right kind of relationships, then at the end of the day, it's gonna show up in the kind of relationship you're having with the people that you help. I see that someone said, self-care is my downfall, but God is working on that right now. He's been working on that with me quite some time.

[00:46:01] But connections, that's the first thing as a caregiver connections. Now, here's what I'm gonna say about that. My number one relationship that has changed my entire life and has teaching me how to make sure I am a whole human being is my relationship with God. No, shameless plug my relationship with God.

[00:46:24] From that relationship comes many. That relationship is my number one source. From that number one source comes all of these different resources that help me be able to show up and make the greatest impact. When I'm working with people, I don't care if it's in a grocery store, a group home, a group setting with kids, adults, or whatever.

[00:46:46] I wanna make sure that when I am connecting to other people, that I'm not hurting them, but I'm helping them. So my relationships with me are a direct reflection of who I am as an individual. So the number one thing I gotta, I want the caregivers to think about is what kind of connections do you have?

[00:47:03] What kind of relationships do you have with other people? Because it shows. I have the kind of relationship that I have in my life right now. I have relationships that celebrate me. I have relationships that correct me. I have relationships that will sit with me when I got, when I don't have nothing else to say.

[00:47:21] They just will just sit there with me. I have people in my life that motivate me. They inspire me, they encourage me. I have all of those types of relationships in my life right now. I don't have a lot of people in my life, but the ones that I have in my life, they represent what I give away to the people that are in my life.

[00:47:38] When I'm at work with the girls that I serve, when I'm alone, the staff that I serve, when I'm in the community with people that I'm serving or whatever, I'm showing them that I'm a healthy whole human being. That's most important. Those relationships. You need healthy relationships because those healthy relationships will help you maintain your self-regulation as you are working with people that are escalated to the core.

[00:48:03] I go into work if I get cursed out with by one of the girls or they become defiant, I don't take it personally because at the end of the day, sometimes the kids that are yelling and cussing and fussing and hooping and hollering, they really cussing and fussing and hooping and hollering at the people that won't show up, and they just taking it out on me.

[00:48:23] I'm not the one that causing the pains, but they, I'm okay with it because they gotta find a way to get it out anyway, because it's not until those kids get it out or get it off of their chest. My work doesn't begin until they do, so they gonna take it out on me. Initially in the moment, I'm like, okay, now it's time to get to work.

[00:48:41] Healthy relationships is your number one support system. As you're helping other people, you gotta make sure you have that healthy relationship because if not, you're gonna be exhausted from pretending to be healthy for people that are not.

[00:48:59] Okay. Next slide please. Accountability. When you hear the word accountability, this is something that a lot of people like to run away from. I used to be the queen of run away from accountability. I felt like all the things that had happened to me in my life that I deserved the right to act the way that I was acting wrong answer.

[00:49:19] Accountability for me to help me become more resilient and make the greatest impact when I'm working alongside of other people is a, see, one of the things about it is that it made me extremely upset when I realized how much damage I was doing because I refused to do the work. There were people that loved me, there were people that cared about me.

[00:49:44] But because I was refusing to do the work the first, because I, at some point, I was refusing to hold myself accountable, that I couldn't be the best version of myself and that bothered me. And the two people that let me know were my two sons. They, God used my two sons to let me know if you don't get it together, if you don't hold yourself accountable for what you're doing, at the end of the day, you are teaching them that it's gonna be okay to justify when they're not okay.

[00:50:12] So I say when it comes to accountability on it, if you have been hurt, damaged in any type of a way in your trauma, own that. Own it. Admit it. Say, yes I have, and yes, I'm not okay. And be okay with starting wherever you need to start at Own it. Own the fact that you done been through certain things in your life that you have not addressed.

[00:50:32] Hold yourself accountable for that and start wherever you need to start at. And then once you start owning it, change it. Create your system. When I say create your system, 'cause here's what you need to understand your life experiences is your curriculum. I've been in classrooms, I've got certifications, but the greatest degree I ever got, I tell people I have Christ's credentials.

[00:50:58] I have God said, yes you can. And I say, okay, I will. I got Christ's credentials. He's allowed me to use my life experiences to create CRI curriculums that will help impact the lives of other people that are not okay. You gotta be able to, the only way you're gonna be able to change it is that when you start, you gotta set the bar high, start the system, start creating systems, be non-traditional.

[00:51:21] Stop being superficial. Stop being cosmetic. Change it by owning it. Use your life experience as a curriculum to do that. And then once you turning it your life experience into the curriculum, teach it. Start to teach it. Break it down in sections and sessions. Just teach it. And every opportunity that you get in a classroom or whatever, just begin to teach it.

[00:51:45] Teach it to other people. Next slide, please recharge. Someone said that was self-care was the hardest thing for them to be able to do. Lemme tell

you something, right now, I have my staff currently, my new staff, some of the new staff that I'm bringing on, they getting ready to have to take this one.

[00:52:05] This one amazing test that I did many years ago as a supervisor at another program. I had all of my staff to take the love language quiz. They were like the love language quiz. I said, yes, I want you to take the love language quiz because if we're gonna work alongside of each other, I need to find out what makes you feel loved.

[00:52:25] I wanna get it right. So, you know, a lot of times people don't even know how to take care of themselves because people don't set the bar for them to be able to do it. When we work in facilities, when we in our homes, as long as we're giving people what they want, they're happy with us. But what happens when you take the time out just to give it to yourself and nobody else benefits from that?

[00:52:45] Self-care helps you recharge. Self-care helps your self-awareness go through the roof. You got to be able to, my self-care starts to change the more I invest into it. I have self-care Saturdays and I'm not gonna change 'em. It's a, it is a day that I don't plan anything, don't do anything at all.

[00:53:04] It's all about me on that day. Self-care is how you recharge. There ain't nothing in the world wrong with having a charger and plugging in the, and the plug it into the wall and realize you don't have any electricity. Another way you can recharge is setting boundaries. A lot of us think that we have boundaries, but what we really have is barriers because you not, you have not learned how to meet your own needs.

[00:53:31] Therefore, you don't know how to, you don't know how to teach people how to respect them. So instead of you creating boundaries, you put up a wall and barriers 'cause you feel like nobody's not gonna care nothing about me. Well, have you asked? You have to ask them. You gotta be able to require those things from different people.

[00:53:47] That's how you recharge. You recharge that way by simply removing barriers and setting in boundaries. My boundaries make me feel so. Good about myself. It makes me feel respected from me. I'm loyal to myself as well as I'm loyal to other people, but I have removed boundaries and continue to move anything that looks like a barrier out of my life so I can put boundaries in my life.

[00:54:11] 'cause boundaries is a part of my self-care, my self-awareness, my self-esteem, my mental health, my victories, my accomplishments, my failures, my mistakes that's how I set my boundaries. They represent me as an individual and the people in my life have to honor or respect those boundaries. That's how you recharge.

[00:54:34] Next slide, please. This is the last one. It's called Educate In earlier the slide, we talked about environments. We talked about all kind of different things of that nature. But when you think about being a caregiver, you have to remember to be a forever student, you have to constantly be intentional about learning.

[00:54:56] You gotta put yourself in uncomfortable spaces. Uncomfortable rooms where the people, some people may accept you, they may not accept you. They might think you don't deserve to be there. Whatever the situation is, be uncomfortable with learning. It's okay. It's okay. Once you feel like you've mastered something, get somewhere else where you know nothing about that particular topic at all.

[00:55:16] Educating yourself equips you to be able to help educate other people. And one of the number one things that I'm dealing with right now that I have created a whole system around for the clients that we serve is emotional intelligence. There's five keys to emotional intelligence, and those five keys of to emotional intelligence are self-awareness.

[00:55:39] Self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. If you look at those five keys and you ask yourself, when it comes to like iq, look at your EQ and determine how high your EQ is based off of those five different keys, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. When you look at those different five areas, determine how high your EQ is.

[00:56:10] With that, I'm training our, actually we do a trauma informed care training called EQ two. So our clients that I serve at the, at sunrise, they have a five phase system created off of their emotional intelligence because it's very important for us to have a high emotional intelligence. It's very important for you to know about your self-awareness because you can't teach other people how to be self-aware without shaming them.

[00:56:37] We gotta teach people how to be able to manage themselves, gather themselves, control themselves, but you have to educate yourself on what that looks like. We're not talking about superficial affirmations, we're not talking

about cosmetic tools. We're talking about tools that will elevate you and help you evaluate yourself along the way.

[00:56:56] Education is something that is not just about what college you go to or how many degrees you got. That's not about what education is not minimized today, excuse me. But education is about exposure. Education is about putting yourself in spaces, some of the same spaces and the same places that the other people that you are serving have experienced.

[00:57:21] I would say whenever I was working with the kids before, I didn't like being in the office because I love the, I didn't like being in the office. The office part was just for me to do my administrative duties. I'm best served in the trenches alongside of the people that I'm helping take care of.

[00:57:35] I gotta stay connected to them in order for me to be able to help them. And a last thing, last, but least when it comes to your education the educating yourself is your experience. Let me leave you with this. Just remember, your life experience is relevant. No matter how many mistakes you've made, no matter how many times you fell backwards and kept going, just remember each time you try, it was an attempt to get you a little bit further.

[00:58:03] You gotta remember this. Your life experience is your curriculum. Take that curriculum, use it to help somebody overcome their situation, their trauma, their addictions, whatever it may be. And I know that we've gotten to the point where we're out of time, but

[00:58:22] **Moderator:** that's it. It worked out well, sis, thank you so much.

[00:58:26] We are all, I think everybody is amped up and just ready, go help somebody. It's so empowering. Thank you. This was fantastic. You are welcome. Thank, there was much in the chat. I couldn't even get to it all. So thank you all so much for being in the chat and participating in that way. We appreciate you all and Cecily, thank you again.

[00:58:42] Thank you everybody. Loved it. Appreciate you so much. Thank much. Have a great day. You too. Thanks.