**0:00:20.8** **S1:** Hello and welcome to the joy and pain of the holidays, healthy habits to survive and thrive. We are so glad that you're here. My name is Karianne Gwinn and I am the Verizon Skill Forward Project Coordinator for Alliance for Hope International. I have the distinct privilege of working closely with the domesticshelters.org team, including Ashley Rumschlag, the National Director of domesticshelters.org, Hannah Craig, the Director of Content, and Rachel Myers, the Senior Digital Services Specialist. This webinar is made possible by Verizon. Our partnership with Verizon has allowed us to promote the Skill Forward program. Skill Forward is an upskilling initiative that's designed to help equip you and your community with the professional skills needed to remain relevant in the ever changing job market. Skill Forward offers over 400 courses and over 100 professional certificate programs completely for free in topics ranging from leadership to AI to coding to Excel to graphic design to nutrition and seriously, so much more. In the chat you're going to find an interest form that you can fill out to get started, if you haven't already. And if you're interested in promoting this program to your organization and your community, I would love for you to reach out to me. My email is skillforward@allianceforhope.com

**0:01:39.5** **S1:** We have marketing materials we can send your way so that you have everything you need to start providing this awesome program to your clients and community. So, we give a big thank you to Verizon for providing this amazing program. You will also find in the chat an air table form for our book giveaway. There will be three winners that get a copy of our guest speaker Hala Khouri's book Peace from Anxiety: Get Grounded, Build Resilience and Stay Connected Amidst Chaos. So, what you'll do is you'll fill out the form that's in the chat and then at the end of the webinar we are going to announce three winners and you must be present to win, so stick around. This webinar is hosted by domesticshelters.org as part of our ongoing free webinar series, so check out the Watch webinar section of our website to view past webinars. As mentioned, domesticshelters.org is a program of Alliance for Hope International and our goal at the Alliance is to create communities of safety, hope and healing. To learn more about our various programs, visit allianceforhope.com There are tons of resources for you to utilize in your work to support survivors.

**0:02:53.3** **S1:** And a few reminders, we do have live closed captions available throughout this presentation. All you need to do is click Show Captions to engage this feature and then please be reminded that all attendees are in listen only mode. If you have questions, feel free to utilize the Q and A box. We will be bringing in questions that are relevant as we go, otherwise we'll save them for the Q and A at the end and the chat can be utilized to introduce yourself and connect with other attendees. We love seeing you engage with the webinar content and getting to read about what really resonates with you. And then within a week you'll be provided with a certificate of attendance, a transcript of the entire presentation, a recording, and any other relevant resources. Okay, now that we've got housekeeping out of the way, I am so thrilled to have Hala Khouri on the webinar with us today. I Hala is one of the co-founders of Off the Matt, into the World. She passionately teaches about trauma, restorative justice, and healing. And Hala is also one of the instructors for the Integrative Psychology Institute, which is how we met.

**0:03:58.1** **S1:** Hala trains individuals and groups in areas like trauma informed care, restorative justice, and resilience. She is also a therapist and a yoga teacher. And additionally, Hala has written two books, one of which we will be raffling off today. And the second book is called Practicing Liberation Transformative Strategies for Collective Healing and Systems Change. And there is a link to Hala's books in the chat. Hala, thank you so much for being with us today.

**0:04:27.5** **S2:** I'm so happy to be here, Karianne Gwinn, thank you so much for inviting me and hi to everybody. There's so many people on this call and I'm in my mind just visualizing all of you so that we can be together in person, in my head.

**0:04:39.5** **S1:** Yes, I love it. I know, wouldn't that be amazing if we just had all the energy of people that want to be growing and learning together in one room? I love it so much. Well, Hala, when I was, I'm going through the psychosomatic practitioner training and watching the videos, I was starting to plan for this webinar and I thought, oh my gosh, what am I doing hosting this? I need to ask Hala if she will present on this. So, we are just so thrilled to have you in just your spunk and passion and and compassion. And I'm just excited for everybody to learn from you. So, you are a somatic therapist, among many other things. Right? And for those that are new to somatic work, which is probably a large percentage of this call. Can you give us a little reader's digest version of what is somatic therapy and how is it different than conventional talk therapy?

**0:05:28.9** **S2:** Absolutely. And I want to frame it in terms of even how we have talk about this topic of how do we approach the holidays? So, somatic therapy really understands that our body is our instrument and that until we understand what's happening in our bodies and maybe even re pattern some of the ways that our nervous system is patterned, it's really hard to heal, change habits and patterns that don't serve us and even shift relationships into being healthier relationships. So, in somatic therapy, if I'm talking to somebody and they're expressing something that's bothering them, for example, I won't just ask them what they think about it. We won't just talk about the narrative or the story, as much as that's important. I will also ask people, just like I'm even going to ask folks to do on this call, to check in with their body and notice what they're feeling as they're talking about this. So, if it's okay, can we take a moment and do that together?

**0:06:25.1** **S1:** I would love that, yes.

**0:06:27.3** **S2:** So, I want to invite you, all of you that are here on this call, you signed up for this workshop about the holidays. So, as you think about the holidays, as you think about the joy and pain of it, what about the holidays might feel beautiful and exciting to you. What might feel difficult, you might have an idea in your head of what that is. But I want to invite you right now to check in with your body. So, some of you might be like, what does that even mean? Notice your sensations right now. You might start by noticing, how do you feel in your chest right now? Can you feel your heart beating? Does your chest feel tight? Does it feel open and spacious? How does your breathing feel right now? If closing your eyes lets you tune into your body a little bit better, you can let your eyes close. For some people, eyes open is better, and you want to just keep gazing at something in the space that's pleasant or interesting to look at. So, as you think about the holidays, are there any sensations you become aware of? How's your jaw?

**0:07:38.0** **S2:** How's your throat? How's your gut? Your stomach? To the best possible, let go of any judgment about what you're feeling. And even if you're like, I don't know what I'm feeling or I don't feel anything, that's information. The other thing I want to invite you to think about is, are there any emotions that come up as you think about the holidays? And then before we go any deeper, I want to help us get grounded. Because sometimes just tuning into our bodies feels hard or it can feel like too much. Right. So, the first thing we always want to do is make sure that we're feeling grounded and resourced. So, I'm going to invite all of you to try this. Go ahead and look around the space that you're in, and I want you to take in the different colors and textures that you see. Not things you want to tidy up, just colors, textures. And actually turn your head when you do this. And notice when you do this, if anything settles, do you take a deep breath? Do your shoulders drop? In my experience, about half of you will find this settling. Just kind of looking around, seeing where you are.

**0:09:06.2** **S2:** And then I'm going to invite you to come back and orient back internally. And if there's something in this space that's pleasant to look at, I often notice things made of wood, and I notice the texture in the wood or a color. You keep your eyes open or you can close them. And I'm going to invite you to put one hand on your heart and the other hand on your solar plexus just above your belly. And take a couple of deep breaths. And notice when you do this, when you make contact with yourself in this way, notice if anything settles a little bit, even if it's really subtle. Or you might notice the opposite, that things emerge that you become aware of, sensations or emotions you weren't aware of. So, again, you can't do this wrong. I'm just going to be sharing some tools with you, and I want you to see how your body reacts. Some of you might feel like your breathing deepens naturally. You might yawn or feel your belly gurgle. Those can be indicators of your body settling a little bit. Good, and then release your hands. And if your eyes were closed, you can let them open.

**0:10:40.3** **S2:** So, this is just a little bit of a taste of what it might look like or feel like to connect to our bodies. So, some of you might connect to this right away. You might have a really easy access to your sensations in a way that's not overwhelming. And for some of you, it might be more difficult. So, we're going to talk more about that and how that connects to what happens in the holidays, what happens in these times, but really giving you a long answer to your question, Karianne Gwinn. Somatic therapy has us include our body, our sensations, as we are in the process of healing and trying to understand what might be going on for us.

**0:11:21.9** **S1:** Yeah, I love that I mentioned to you when we were planning that long ago, we had a webinar called One Talk Therapy Isn't Enough. And we talked about polyvagal theory and some of these, just fundamental understanding of how the nervous system functions and why sometimes we get to that point where we're like, I don't want to talk about this anymore. I don't want to go into the whole story of all the things that have happened. And I love with somatic therapy that idea of implicit memory, that it doesn't make us have to necessarily talk all through it, but we come back to the body, where is this felt? How can I offer care to this part? And I loved what you said, that there's no wrong way to do it.

**0:12:09.5** **S2:** Yeah, yeah.

**0:12:10.5** **S1:** That's like the most liberating thing, Right?

**0:12:13.7** **S2:** It's so important because I think many of us have internalized ideas about the right way to be or the wrong way to be. And I think that the thing that prevents healing for most human beings is shame. A feeling of we are doing something wrong or we're not enough. And when we can let go of that shame and have total empathy for ourselves, that can actually allow us to liberate our capacity to heal.

**0:12:40.6** **S1:** Yeah, that is, oh, that's so true. Yeah. So, our goal here is to give our listeners a little bit of like a holiday survival guide because the holidays are complicated. I think back, I have a six year old son and I'm like, oh my gosh, it's so magical for him. I want it to feel magical for me. But the reality is that as we grow up and our awareness of the world and ourselves and others grows, it all gets really complicated. And when you mix in domestic violence and trauma, it doesn't always feel like the most wonderful time of the year. Can you talk to us a little bit about what makes the holidays so stinking hard? Why is it so complicated? Why can't we just be happy?

**0:13:27.9** **S2:** Totally. I want to start by asking folks that are on this call, when you think about the holidays, what is it that comes up? And if you're comfortable, I want to invite you to share in the chat. Three words, right? What are three words? That of how you feel as you think about the holidays. So, tune into your body, notice what are the emotions, what are the sensations, or what do the holidays bring up for you? And I'm going to challenge you to do it in three words. Right? So three qualities of how you feel. And I won't read them all, but just going to take a look to just see what's present in the space. Right. I'll read a few. And if you want to glance at them to see what other people are bringing into the space, you can.

**0:14:14.2** **S1:** So much solidarity. Right? To just read the responses. A lot of comments.

**0:14:17.8** **S2:** Yeah, sometimes to see what's common. Right. So, I'm just read a few, stress, grateful, anxious. Food, stress, anxiety. Inadequacy, anxiety, drama. Right. A lot of stress, a lot of anxiety, overwhelm, happy, shopping, cooking, grief, gratitude, comfort. Love, wholeness, unity, stress, grateful, hopeful. Right. So, let yourself glance at these if that feels useful. I'm glancing at them as well. And so I see the things we often see the overwhelm, the grief, the stress, the joy, the connection, the warmth. Right.? So, the first thing I want to invite people to notice is how it feels, number one, to maybe realize you're not alone, to really take in, in this imaginal space where we're all together, that you're not alone holding the complexity of this time of year. And sometimes that can just really help. Right. So, I want to invite you all to think about on top of the holidays, feeling complicated for you. How many of you add shame about that to the complexity? In Buddhism they talk about the arrows of suffering and the first arrow is the necessary suffering and the second arrow is the unnecessary suffering. So, shame often is that second arrow judging ourselves for our experience.

**0:15:56.2** **S2:** So, the first thing I want to do is invite all of you to the best that you can to have total compassion for yourself for the complexity of the holidays. And then I will come to answer your question. Right, so why are the holidays so complicated? They're complicated for different reasons. And I don't know everybody's story here, so I will name some of the typical things that emerge. So, number one, for some people, the holidays is a time where we revisit our past. We might see people that we don't see all year. We might go to places we haven't been for a long time. Maybe we go back to our family of origin home, or maybe we travel. For some it's the opposite. You are not doing the things you always did. But for some people there is a time traveling because for many of us we have these memories of the holidays. I know when I was younger, whenever I would go home for the holidays, I would notice myself regress, be in my family home where I grew up and there was dysfunction in that home and I felt like I was 15 again.

**0:17:06.3** **S2:** I felt like I was powerless again. And then I would start doing my old coping strategies, which some of them were not so healthy. It involved lots of shame, lots of eating in private. Right? Self blame. And I'm curious if some of you resonate with that, that the holidays bring up old feelings and old coping strategies. Yeah. Some of those might also be good. I want to really be careful not to pathologize or see things as bad. Right. So, you know what? When I was 15, all I had was a box of cookies in the closet. That's all I knew. Right. I didn't. I didn't have the tools. Right? Yeah. Somebody sharing about loss. So some of us go back to the holidays and people that we love that used to be with us aren't there. And it's in our face, it's in our heart in a way that it might not be at other times of the year. Yeah. Somebody's saying, I feel my energy change once I step inside a certain home. 100% Oscar, right?

**0:18:16.8** **S2:** So, this is where a somatic lens really helps understanding that our nervous system does this thing called time traveling. And we can be in a particular space, and all of a sudden we feel different. Now, this is not something we're trying to make happen. It's not a thought or an idea. It's an embodied feeling. So, one of the ways that we can deal with this is noticing it as a feeling in our bodies and going, oh, my gosh, like I feel XYZ. And then sometimes we can use somatic tools to deal with it. And I'm going to get to that a little bit later, but just wanted to plug why, for me, somatics has been a lifeline, because I used to go back home and just completely time travel, go into old behaviors. I didn't know what to do about it. I just felt a lot of shame about it. The other thing that can happen in the holidays that impacts our body is our habits change. Maybe we're not sleeping the same times we go to sleep. Maybe our diet changes, in the holidays, we're surrounded oftentimes with food or alcohol or substances.

**0:19:24.6** **S2:** And it can be really socially acceptable to drink too much or eat in ways that don't feel good in your body. Those also make our bodies get a little bit more dysregulated. So, we can add this perfect storm of the emotional past coming in, confronting loss, being dysregulated, because our schedules are off. Maybe you can't do the self care you normally do, and then here you are face to face trying to engage with other people in the same situation you're in. They are also time traveling. They might also be a little off center because their habits and their self care is off. Or maybe they never did self care and that's hard. So, I just want to pause because even as I'm naming this, I'm noticing I'm like in my own body feeling, oh my gosh, how do we get through the holidays? Because everybody is showing up with all of their own baggage, right? Yeah.

**0:20:29.7** **S1:** Yeah, I love that. I think naming these things and bringing awareness to it is so important because without the awareness, we step into these old situations, we do the old things, we have the old dysfunctional coping mechanisms and all of that. And afterwards we're like, whoa, what just happened? But even naming some of these things is a good reminder that this is likely going to happen. And if we can see it coming, we can make a plan to maybe prevent that or have some better skills. And I am a functional nutritional therapy practitioner. So, when I even think about some of the habits of drinking alcohol and binging on sugar and our blood sugar going crazy and alcohol being something that in the moment, it helps us get through and we're like, hey, I had fun then it's really a depressant afterwards. And I think naming all of this is so important because when we're siloed into our own experience, the way that the brain works is just like, what's wrong with you? You're so messed up that you can't just enjoy this. So, bringing this, this is a normal human experience, especially when navigating trauma and healing and fighting for personal growth.

**0:21:50.1** **S1:** And it's just a whole thing. So, I hope that as everyone is hearing this, you're able to just have kind of a sigh of relief of like, oh my gosh, it's not just me. I'm not messed up. I'm a human. And it is complicated.

**0:22:04.4** **S2:** Yes, 100%. And I'm seeing folks in the chat saying that they resonate with this. And this idea of naming it becomes really important because until we admit and feel how we feel, we can't respond to it in a way that is healthy. So, if I go home and I don't admit that seeing my father is traumatizing because of my history or seeing this person, I'm going to go right to my substance of choice. Mine was sugar, because I can't tolerate the feelings. So again, for some of you, especially with histories of trauma or DV, there might be traumas there that are really a little too much for you. And I really want you to have empathy. And this is where like you said, Karianne Gwinn, how can we think it and anticipate it in advance? Sort of admit to yourself, okay, I know I'm going to be in this situation and it's going to be hard. Can I prepare for it? Can I maybe feel and process some of the feelings before I'm in the situation? So, whether it's doing it with a mental health provider or with a loved one that you trust to say, all right, I'm about to go home or about to see this person from my past and I need to really think about what my self care is going to be.

**0:23:22.0** **S2:** Is this a place where I need to have a stronger boundary? Is this a place where I actually want to have a conversation that is going to be supportive? What are the things I need to prepare for? And I'm seeing in the chat some of you are sharing about other loved ones in your life that come and get triggered and how do you support them? Right. So, I want to just pause because I'm seeing a few things come up in the chat and I know there's a lot and I don't want to miss anything, but I am curious. I want to ask folks to maybe name what are some of the circumstances that can be confronting. Again, please take care of yourselves. Don't share in a place that might be overwhelming, but really generally. So, we can see what's in the space because then I can speak to them directly when I'm giving examples. So you can also whatever is comfortable. Right? So yes, there's death of a loss. Of a loved one, tools to help other loved ones with their trauma. Right? Yeah. Some of you avoid the holidays and that's going to be your self care is that you need space.

**0:24:32.1** **S2:** Right. And I love that someone saying, I give myself a day of healthy choices. Maybe you give yourself a pause, right? After care, I love that, Ashley. What do you do after the hard encounter? And again, just even acknowledging, I just did something difficult, I just experienced something difficult. What am I going to do to try to recover from that? Even just having these questions in your mind can transform your holidays because for many of us, we go into the holidays unconscious. We just do the old behaviors. We're just trying to get through it. But when we can name what it is and ask these questions, then we can start to have answers. I'm seeing divorce and betrayal. Grief, avoiding that grief. Loss, yeah. A lot of loss. Difficult relationships. Ooh, political differences.

**0:25:37.9** **S1:** Yeah. Can we all just call a truce and maybe not bring that to the table when we're with extended family?

**0:25:44.3** **S2:** Oh, hard it is.

**0:25:47.2** **S1:** Come on.

**0:25:47.9** **S2:** Yeah. So, notice again what you feel in your body as you're naming these things or thinking about them. So, I'm going to do another somatic break, if that's okay. Right. So think about all that comes up for you at this time. And so now I want to teach you something. This is my favorite tool, it's called resourcing. Resourcing is about finding something in our bodies, if possible, that is an anchor that lets us feel like we're not drowning. I think about a resource, it's like a life preserver. If you're in the ocean and you're drowning and there's a lot of waves and somebody throws you a life preserver, you can hold onto it, and then even though there's still waves, the resource doesn't change the external circumstance, but it lets us feel like, all right, I got something to hold on to. And now I can just go, oh, my God, yeah, there's waves here. And I'm really scary scared, and I feel like I'm drowning. The resource just lets us have something to support us to maybe start to cope with what's going on. So, we're thinking about these different experiences. My personal favorite resource, we're going to see if you like it.

**0:26:54.2** **S2:** Not everybody has the same resources that they love, is called grounding. Grounding is about feeling something in your body that feels solid, supportive, and safe, steady. I'm going to invite folks to start with feeling either your feet on the floor or your butt in your chair or your back against the chair. Feel for something that feels solid in your body right now. And if that's hard to connect to, try gently pushing down into your feet just to engage your leg muscles a little bit. And don't push so hard that you go into bracing. Just push down a little and then release. You can also place your hands on your thighs and gently push your hands into your legs. Do this really gently, we are just trying to find something that feels supportive. You know you have found grounding when A, you just know. You're like, I feel grounded in my body. And, Karianne Gwinn, I just saw you do this. You took a deep breath and you yawned a little bit. That lets me know that something just settled in you, maybe your breathing becomes a little easier.

**0:28:16.1** **S2:** Now, again, don't worry if this is not your tool. If you're like, Hala, I don't like this, we have lots of tools I'm going to offer you. So, as we're thinking about these circumstances, can you find a resource? The next one that I really like is this is a containment practice. So you're going to cross your arms and you're going to squeeze your forearms with your hands, and you're going to just take your hands across and up. It's like giving yourself a little hug. But we're squeezing up the body. So, what I want you to look for as you do this is if anything settles or becomes more spacious. So, as you're imagining that challenging circumstance in the holidays, offering yourself some resourcing. Some of these things are things you can literally do in the moment. But this is how we practice, we anticipate what's coming. And we see if we can let our body feel a little bit more supported in the face of it. So, we'll just hang here a little bit. You might also use deep breathing as a resource. So, just pick something, deep breathing, grounding, doing that little hug. Just for like another few seconds.

**0:29:54.5** **S2:** As you think about the challenging situation. When you're a little bit resourced, does it change your relationship to that situation? Even if it's very subtle, I want you to look for that. And if you feel a little bit of a difference and just want to share in the chat, was there something different when you were resourced and thinking about the challenge versus when you weren't? Did you feel a change in your body or in your emotions or your thoughts? Feel free to type it into the chat. Yeah. Somebody's talking about using a grounding object, keeping a rock in your pocket. That's a resource. Something we can hold onto that anchors us. And yeah, if you, if you can't get grounded, that's okay. Can you have compassion for yourself? Right. If that's not available. Right? So, some of you are sharing you felt relaxed, yes, this worked. And again, you're not doing it wrong if it didn't. Right? Yeah.

**0:31:22.4** **S1:** One of the things I love so much about a practice like this is you actually can do versions of this with other people. A lot of times I think we put ourselves in this place, like, oh, shoot, now I have to leave the dinner table and go regulate myself as a person who has lived with and held anxiety. There are so many ways that people can do this in public. No one's gonna notice if you're pressing your hands against your legs or alternating pushing one foot into the ground to bring yourself into the moment. And we love giving free resources, right? So, a lot of people that we work with and a lot of survivors might not be able to afford to see a somatic therapist or work with someone in somatics, but we love hosting things like this because we're like, you can do this for free.

**0:32:16.8** **S2:** 100%. I mean, I had to do a lot of work on this with my mom over the holidays because I would notice I would get so shut down around her and then I would feel guilty and ashamed about it. And when I was working with my somatic therapist, she helped me understand that because when I was a child, my mom would always confide in me that my dad was verbally abusive and he was using substances. So as a child, I found it very overwhelming to be around my mom because I was her caretaker, I was her emotional support. And then as an adult, I would notice that I would just constantly. I would immediately shut down around my mom, even though now I'm an adult, I've set boundaries. And so, I would practice with my therapist, seeing my mom, and she helped me really understand that I was overwhelmed around my mom because I was tapping into that 12 year old who was holding space for her mother. But as a 40 year old or a 30 year old, the ages, now I could maybe tolerate some of those big feelings. And so resourcing really helped because then I could be at the dinner table or be in the living room with her over the holidays, start to have those feelings, pause and go, oh, my nervous system is overwhelmed right now.

**0:33:28.0** **S2:** But it's actually remembering how it used to feel to be around her. How does it actually feel today? And then I would find my resource and for me it was grounding. I'd push my feet into the floor and what would happen for me is I would settle and I would take a deep breath and suddenly it was almost like I had a little bit of space from her. I could feel my current self in relationship to her, but I had to use my physical tools to settle my nervous system to access that. And so that is a major thing that people can do, right? You can do it in the moment. I also recommend rehearsing for it like we just did. Think of the situation in advance and then do the tools. Some of you, one of you was sharing the share. I've got my arms up and my legs wide. I'm breathing. You could do all Those big things that you may not do in the moment with.

**0:34:23.8** **S1:** Yeah, I love that. And I was just thinking that a lot of people are saying, oh, that was relaxing. That felt good. When we notice these shifts with grounding exercises, sometimes those of us who have a little bit of a harder time coming in touch with what's going on in my body, that's our indicator. Oh, I feel looseness in my chest now after grounding or resourcing because I actually did have tightness in my chest. So, it's that little flag of like, okay, when I walk into my house and I feel my stomach tense up or my chest feel heavy, these are indicators that the body's like, hey, will you pay a bit of attention to me? Will you come tend to me? I love that reminder. And I think for so many people who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, and really any type of unsafety and trauma, the body doesn't always feel like a place we want to go. And I think somatic work is such a beautiful way of reentering friendship with the body and thanking body for having this protective pattern, hey, I had to brace myself when I was a kid. Thank you for doing that for me. I got you. We don't have to do that now.

**0:35:45.5** **S2:** Totally. And I want to add in to Karianne Gwinn that for some people, the way that you took care of yourself in the midst of trauma was to leave your body was to dissociate. And so, just like you're saying, we. I didn't even know I had the tension. But for some of you, there might be this fear of having to feel the body. And so, this is why we want to try to always try to feel the resource. Notice what's feeling okay in your body. Don't go right to what's feeling difficult. And the truth is, is that sometimes as we get more resourced, we do connect with those more difficult feelings. And so, making sure that you have a lot of empathy and support. And sometimes our resource is another person. So, if being in the body feels like too much and the somatic tools feel like, oh, they tap you in a little too close to things and you worry. It's overwhelming. Can you identify who are some of the people that you can talk to or call or focus on? Sometimes there is a person at that family gathering, maybe you lean on them a little bit more or you ask for support.

**0:36:51.4** **S2:** As much as I love somatic tools, I always want to be careful that people don't interpret that you got to figure it out alone. Right. Honestly, our biggest tools are each other and feeling safe with other people. Again, some people are going to go back in the holidays and they might not have that safety. You really got to rely on your somatic tools, but really make sure who are the other people that can support you, even if it's from afar.

**0:37:16.0** **S1:** Yeah, I love that so much. I think it's so interesting how often in our society we're encouraged to do one of two things with unpleasant emotions. It's either I just repress it and stuff it down or pretend that this is not happening. And I'm thinking that there might be people on the call that's like, well, okay, what good does it really do for me to sit with my physical sensation? Can you talk us through, like, why is this a good option and a good supplement to therapy? Why is this effective?

**0:37:49.3** **S2:** Yeah, I mean, I feel like you said something to the effect of this a few minutes ago, that sometimes when the emotions are too big, we develop strategies to not have to feel them. Right. So, when we're kids, we become hyper vigilant because we don't want something bad to happen, or we disconnect. If we don't go back and feel those feelings, they actually then end up ruling our lives. The strategies to make ourselves feel safe amidst trauma, which were necessary, may not be necessary. Now, some folks, you are revisiting situations where they are actively traumatic and you do have to maintain your hyper vigilance. Right. But if you are now back at a situation where there is more safety but you are using those old strategies, then that becomes the cause of your suffering. There's a metaphor I really appreciate this came from. I think it was Bessel van der Kolk. I'm forgetting one of the big trauma therapists that he talks about how if it's wintertime and your thermostat is broken, you're going to wear a heavy coat inside your house because you need to cope with that, the thermostat is not working.

**0:39:00.4** **S2:** But then, say you fix the thermostat. Now the house is not cold anymore, but you're still wearing the coat. You're still doing the old survival strategy that becomes a problem because now you're so hot all the time, but you're attached to your coat. We get attached to our survival strategies. Those live in our bodies. Whether your strategy is bracing, avoiding discomfort, avoiding your grief. So, a lot of people here talked about grief, loss of loved ones. And so, then we go to the holidays and if we haven't allowed ourselves to grieve, then it all comes up, because now it's in our face, that person is not there. And if we're going to try, then in the holidays to deny it that's gonna take a lot of alcohol and a lot of sugar, right?

**0:39:49.7** **S1:** Yeah.

**0:39:50.3** **S2:** So, allowing ourselves to, so much of our own mental and emotional health is actually not being afraid of discomfort. The more that we can tolerate and survive our big feelings, the more our body can feel like home again. But if those big feelings are things we're avoiding, we then are avoiding ourselves because those emotions live inside of us. So, I think about somatic Work as coming back home to ourselves.

**0:40:23.3** **S1:** Yeah, I love that. I think distress tolerance, or rather intolerance, is such a huge issue in our instant gratification, comfort as king society. And this is something silly, but I recently bought this coat on Poshmark, and I got it and I tried it on, and I thought, this coat is not comfortable. It's not lined on the inside, so it's a tiny bit scratchy. And I thought about returning it or reselling it, and I was like, you know what? I'm going to actually learn to befriend discomfort. And it's going to happen partly with this coat, because I want to do it in these little ways. So, when the big ways come up, I'm not so idolizing of comfort that I can't handle any amount of it. And it's growing on me. It doesn't bother me as much as it used to, but I love the look of it. And I'm like, I'm just going to keep up with this coat. But we increase our window of tolerance by allowing ourselves to just coexist with these things. And I love that in somatic work, we're helping people be in those unpleasant moments in a safe container so that they can get to a place of recognizing, oh, I felt this, and it did not kill me. I've been fearing this thing so much, and I'm actually, I'm okay. I'm okay after that.

**0:41:43.7** **S2:** Yeah. Yeah. And what you're making me think about, Karianne Gwinn, too is sometimes for some of us, our work is accepting the discomfort of who other people are in our lives, accepting them. Right? Oftentimes in the holidays, we are around people that we might not choose to be around other times of the year. And some people in our lives just aren't going to change. And so, what does it take to just accept that this is who they are? Of course you have to be in choice about how you relate to that, what keeps you safe, you know, et cetera, et cetera. But when it's relevant, so I'll invite people to think about situations where it feels relevant to go, this is who they are. They haven't changed in the past X amount of years. Am I causing myself more suffering by refusing to accept it? Because sometimes accepting it allows you then figure out what is my boundary around it. What do I need to be in relationship to that? Right. So, how do we accept the limitations of the humanity of the people that are around us?

**0:42:44.2** **S1:** Yeah, that's so true. Because the more we fight it, the more we're just going to be so enraged. We cannot control other people. I mean, it's so simple. But I think when we do come to that place of I can only control what I do and how I respond. I can't make this person be less racist or less rude or less insensitive or whatever. We get to choose our responses, I think there's so much empowerment that can come from that.

**0:43:17.0** **S2:** Totally. Sometimes I'll invite people to think about thinking about certain people in their lives, often family members, as literally as aliens from another planet. Because if you met an alien from another planet and they were acting all strange, you'd be like, oh, that's interesting. You do it that way on your planet. Right? So, then there's no attachment. Right. So, thinking about that that analogy can be really interesting. Right. So the thing is that when people that historically family members have been close to, they act in a way that we don't agree with, it feels really personal because it impacted us. An alien that's completely impersonal. And so again, I think that that can be interesting to give a little bit of space and curiosity again, when appropriate, because I know everybody's in different situations.

**0:44:03.6** **S1:** Right. Speaking of that, we just had a question come through actually on the chat. How do you know when too much is too much? Like, how do we know when to make this decision to no longer engage with certain family members anymore?

**0:44:18.1** **S2:** Yeah, I think that's so hard. It's a really hard thing. And I've been seeing more stuff on my social media about how quick people are to cut family members off. And there's this trend of like cutting people out and not actually figuring out how to work through things. Look, I think that this is a very personal question. When is too much too much and when is it impacting you in a way where it's not healthy or useful to either relationship to stay in deep connection. And what does it take, you know, what is it that you're needing? You know, and I think it's a complex question. And so I think having support, whether it's a peer supporting you or again, a mental health provider, where you can really think about when do I need space from family members or when do I need support, trying to do some repair and engagement. And this is where again, to bring back the somatics, you, you can check in with your nervous system. If you really realize that it's way too painful, too dysregulating, it's a cost to your well being to continue to try to engage, then something has to change, whether it's a break or a new strategy.

**0:45:27.5** **S2:** I think in this case the question is even more important than the answer, to make sure you're always checking in with yourself. Is this becoming too much? Am I re traumatizing myself? Do I need to step back? I think I often say to people, the questions matter more than the answers.

**0:45:46.7** **S1:** Oh, that's a really interesting way of putting it. The questions answer or matter more than the answers. Because I think sometimes when we realize we're having to ask that question, it almost is the answer in and of itself. And that brings us to another question of someone asked you, have any advice on communicating with family and friends on why you might not be present at a holiday? How do I set this boundary and be heard?

**0:46:13.5** **S2:** Gosh. I have advice, I think that thinking about how to communicate in a way that doesn't create defensiveness or blame. Because if you want to be heard, then how do you think about I statements? Right? This is how I'm feeling. This is what I'm doing. Yep. Somebody said I statements because the minute people feel blamed or ashamed, they're going to shut down and deflect. Now, objectively, things might be those people might have objectively caused you a lot of harm and they should take responsibility for how they're feeling. But if you know, they're not in a place to hear that, then you get to focus on your own experience and then be a really clear, I would say a really clear ask. Like, I'm really clear. I'm making this choice, please do not try to convince me or it would feel good if in a month we had a conversation. Do you have an ask as well? Those would be the two things I would say.

**0:47:09.4** **S1:** Yeah, I love that. That's good. And I think also there's usually, I think we have a Little bit of Brene Brown likes to call it a vulnerability hangover. After we set a boundary, if we have not grown up in homes where it was okay to say, hey, this is not right for me, therefore I need to distance myself. It can feel so uncomfortable to do that. And I loved someone's mention of aftercare. I think when we can even anticipate that, like, okay, I'm going to have this conversation or send this email or whatever, and I'm probably going to feel pretty uncomfortable and question my decision and all of that. I know with so many of us who have been in destructive relationships, we struggle to trust ourselves.

**0:47:57.2** **S2:** Yes.

**0:47:57.8** **S1:** And I think that's partly where the wisdom of the body is so beautiful because the mind can play games on us, but the body doesn't really do that. The body just is asking to be heard.

**0:48:12.3** **S2:** Well, the body can absolutely play games on us. And so, I actually want to say, because we can have a feeling in our body of shame or blame, right? But I think, but I think what you mean to say, Karianne Gwinn, is when we are resourced, we can work through the layers of the body reaction that might be a trauma response and get to the authentic response.

**0:48:36.4** **S1:** Totally. Yeah, it's there.

**0:48:39.1** **S2:** Yeah. And I think that the thing that I think about with, with healing is that we are trying to move away from our survival self into our authentic self. And the holidays are an opportunity to confront that oftentimes some of us can feel like, oh, for other times of the year, we're more in touch with our authentic self. The holidays come and all of a sudden we are just in our survival self. We're doing all of our survival strategies shutting down. We can't find what our authentic self is because our body is confusing us. We are time traveling. So, resourcing practices, naming what we're feeling allows us to go, oh, this is an old feeling. That's my survival self. My authentic self is something else.

**0:49:24.4** **S1:** Yeah.

**0:49:26.8** **S2:** Different.... And so, that's another place where the somatic tools can help. So, being in those situations that bring up the past and then not knowing my body is having this experience, but this is not actually the truth of who I am.

**0:49:43.8** **S1:** Yeah, definitely.

**0:49:45.2** **S2:** And yeah, somebody's saying this makes sense, but it's hard to be yourself when you have so much judgmental people around you. The other thing is when we're around family, another way I like to think about it is we have all these unconscious contracts with family members, and there, many of them are the contracts that don't serve us right. I don't want to be in this contract with you anymore. I don't want to always act this way or be silenced or whatever. And when we start to change our behavior, oftentimes it'll make things a little worse at first because people are going to feel abandoned by you. You start to be authentic, and you start to change that contract. They might feel abandoned. So the other piece, back to being able to tolerate difficulty is being able to tolerate the discomfort of their disappointment. And so, again, how can we rehearse, advance? Imagine what it's like to say no to somebody who expects you to always say yes to them. Imagine what it's like to not validate thoughts or ideas you don't agree with. It's going to inflame things a little more. But I often invite people to think about what's the difference between good pain and bad pain.

**0:50:58.2** **S2:** So, maybe in the holidays your idea is like, okay, I don't want to have the bad pain of the holidays, which is me being inauthentic, me being appeaser. A lot of people go into a fawn response, okay, if I stop doing that, there's still going to be pain. You're going to be in pain either way. So, why not bring on the good pain, which is people are upset with you because you're being authentic. Right?

**0:51:18.3** **S1:** Yeah.

**0:51:20.2** **S2:** So, one way to think about.

**0:51:23.2** **S1:** It's so good...

**0:51:24.6** **S2:** It's going to be better.....

**0:51:25.5** **S1:** At the end of the day, the only person that we truly have control over making peace with is ourselves.

**0:51:31.9** **S2:** Yeah.

**0:51:34.3** **S1:** How much better to say, well, that was a show, but at least I was true to myself.

**0:51:42.5** **S2:** Absolutely. You know, for me, it was, I'm such a appeaser. So, I used to always go home and be very appeasing to my dad because, like, if he had alcohol, if he was mad, he was very unpredictable. And so, I always had a stomachache because I was always trying to figure out who to be to please him. Right? Well, okay, it already sucked. Right. But then I started practicing, and in this case I want to name, I was physically safe. There was not physical abuse in my home. And so, it was more about me tolerating the emotional stuff. And so I was like, all right, I'm already struggling, why not change it and start to speak my truth and know he's probably going to get more mad. And so, I've got to practice tolerating that but at least I am being in my truth, right? Yeah. And it can be more triggering. Somebody is saying that might. There might be more shame. It's complicated. This is why for everybody listening, pick your battles. Think about what is a goal you might have for yourself in the holiday. So, as I know we're winding down, we talked about so many things, so I want to invite everybody to think about what is your goal?

**0:52:45.9** **S2:** Do you need to have stronger boundaries? Do you want to have more self care? Maybe pick something and let that be something that you want to work on. Don't try to do all the things. Don't set yourself up for failure. Pick one thing that you feel like, feels possible. Yeah. And maybe put that in the chat. What's one particular goal? It can be very tiny. Right. I want to be breathing when I'm at the dinner table. Right. I want to drink less, I want to exercise. I want to say, speak my truth. Making new traditions, that's a really powerful robin. Right. What do we want to create that's meaningful rather than defaulting into things that might not be meaningful anymore. Respecting my own boundaries. Yeah. Type into the chat if you want. What is a particular goal you have for yourself? Oh, I really, you know, two of you are saying about wanting to be engaged and wanting to be present. That's always my goal in the holidays because I feel like I just, I'm usually the host and I'm so busy and I forget to slow down. So, my goal is often to slow down. Yeah. And feel free to read each other's goals because that might inspire you. Focus on the important things. I want to feel heard, let myself relax and enjoy.

**0:54:09.1** **S1:** I love it. Deb said, find spots of happiness. I like to call it pockets of peace too. Because even amidst chaos, it could be something, and this is one of those grounding and resourcing things. It could be as lovely as a poinsettia that you're looking at that you're like, those leaves growing like this, this is amazing. And just these little moments of happiness, because they are there. Someone else said the good stuff is there, we have to look for it a lot harder sometimes.

**0:54:39.4** **S2:** Yeah. I like the term glimmer. It's the opposite of a truth. The glimmer.

**0:54:43.8** **S1:** So good. And just stay there for as long as you can. I love it. Awesome. I love seeing all these goals come into the chat. And it is, I hope that you all can just feel like the positive energy and joy of being even in this virtual space with so many people who are also attempting to keep growing, to not regress, to set new traditions to be the new self in an old environment. So, as much as we are not alone in the difficulty of this season, you are also not alone in the good striving of this season. This is like an army of people who are really wanting to move forward in such a beautiful way. Oh gosh, Hala, I wish that we could go on and on because I just love hearing your wisdom and the way that you deliver these messages is like so beautiful. Thank you for being with us. This has been such a gift and I... Good. I know that people are leaving with so many tools and also just this blanket of validation and understanding and even just language to put to things that may have been unnamed before.

**0:56:01.5** **S1:** Like that in and of itself is such a powerful thing. So we're going to announce our winners of your book, from Anxiety. Okay, y'all, you need to be here to be to win. Okay, so we've got Amanda Johnson, Nicole Burke, and Yadira Murray. If you are here, give us a woo woo in the chat so we know that we can send your book to you. And Halo, what would you say is what are people going to get from Peace from Anxiety? Can you give us a little blurb about it?

**0:56:31.8** **S2:** Yeah, I feel like Peace from Anxiety is like a user manual for your body and your life. So, really the first part is about somatic tools, like lots of stories to bring it to life on, like how can we befriend our nervous system and our bodies? And then it's about relationships, like really thinking about how we need to be held in relationship. I say that the book is really a journey from personal well being to collective care. So, it really ends with understanding that until we think about our interdependence, it's going to be really hard to be well. So, my hope is that depending on where people are in their journey, they'll get. They're going to get something. There's lots of storytelling. I share a lot about my own journey with anxiety and healing. And yeah, I hope people enjoy it.

**0:57:18.7** **S1:** Oh, I love that so much. Yes, the books are available on Amazon. And also, Rachel, will you reshare Hala's book link to her website? Hala is it better if people join or buy the book via your website or Amazon? Does it make a difference.....

**0:57:32.4** **S2:** Any bookstore, maybe your local bookstore if you have one, or something that's not Amazon, but yes, Amazon too. And on the link you can get the introduction and chapter one for free as well to look at it there.

**0:57:48.2** **S1:** I love that. And then for people who want to be more involved with the work that you're doing, I know you have some ways to that you're building online community. Will you give us a little blurb about that?

**0:57:58.5** **S2:** Yeah, I have an online membership community and all that is also on my website, halakhouri.com under membership. Membership is sliding scale. Never let money be an issue. You can absolutely have it for free. And in the membership, there's access to tons of Somatic practices videos. Right now we're not doing live calls, but it's really a bunch of content. So, you'll see all the different topics. One of them is about the holidays and there's meditations and movement practices. It's just a whole world of information that could be supportive. And lots of yoga classes are on there too.

**0:58:33.1** **S1:** I love that so much. Thank you for sharing all of that. I am like fingers crossed that people actually take advantage of that because in our Skill Forward program that we're giving people all these, all this access to skill building courses and things related to their professional life. The way that we are approaching this program is that we also need to be growing in our personal lives, in our resilience, in our nervous system regulation. And that's the foundation for hope, for forward thinking, for dreaming. And so, I really hope that people take advantage of this amazing resource. And we are just beyond thrilled to have you. Thank you so much for being with us and everyone thank you for joining. We're grateful that you're here and we hope that you not only survive, but that you truly do thrive through this holiday season.

**0:59:21.7** **S2:** Absolutely. Thank you so much, everybody.