

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Full Episode Transcript



With Your Host

Simone Grace Seol

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Hey there, I'm Simone Seol. I'm the Korean mom that you didn't even know you needed. I whisper encouragement and slap down the unnecessary bullshit that keeps you frozen and disenchanting. Let's do this.

Hey, everybody, guess what? Today's episode is an episode with unicorns. I have invited three unicorns to my podcast, to have a conversation. And here's what I mean by unicorns, straight cisgender men in the coaching world, and they truly are. These three are clients of mine in *Joyful Marketing*, and yes, they are a vanishingly rare breed; straight, cisgender men who are... I mean, I'm not saying that's all they are, but you know, whatever. Who are deeply thoughtful, deeply aware, are constantly working to dismantle some of the unuseful systems we live in, and are genuinely trying to make a difference in the mental health of the world starting with some other cismen, or just men in general.

I adore the humans you're about to meet so much. And we just gathered here today, to have a conversation about all these topics; the power dynamics in the world, how they intersect with mental health, and how we live our lives. Knowing how incredibly thoughtful these people are, I know it's going to be an amazing conversation.

Simone Seol: So, welcome, Israel Smith, AmarAtma, and Pete Sibley. Would you please quickly introduce yourselves? Let's go in the order that I just called. Israel.

Israel Smith: Right. Hi, Israel Smith, based on the east coast of Australia. I really focus my work as a coach on wellbeing and emotional resilience for men. I think that that's one of the core pieces for me, that is important in men being able to embody all of themselves, and not simply live and operate in this kind of construct that society has been presenting for a very long time. And I feel like there's so much more I could say, but I won't rant at the style. I'll let the other gentlemen introduce themselves, as well.

Simone: We'll come back to the ranting really fast.

Israel: Yeah, absolutely.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Simone: All right, AmarAtma.

AmarAtma: Yes. Hello Simone, so good to see you and be with you. This is awesome. I would say, I'm a grief coach. I'm located over in California, on the West Coast. I've really dedicated a lot of my life to really helping not only men, but also women as well, young men, and grow into the experience of the ability to heal from grief and have a way to integrate life after loss. I'd like to say that I'm an emotional scuba diver that swims with the dolphins and the turtles. I have ability to connect light into the dark, be able to go into the depth, and make fun and play out of it. In that we try to find the jet streams towards the shore of peace.

That being the goal of helping us come through really remarkable transformative experiences that we, as men, tend to suppress, repress, push away these deep dark feelings. And help to really bring us into a space of integrating life after loss.

Simone: You were also a hospital chaplain at one point, right?

AmarAtma: Yeah, and before that an acupuncturist. And so, I incorporate end-of-life care, palliative care, work in oncology, and adult and pediatric work, along with energetic medicine from a Chinese medical point of view, and somatic work. So, that's how I tie in a lot of the kind of multifaceted aspect of grief with a lot of emotional work.

Simone: Well, fucking badass. Thank you, though.

Pete: I was like, can we just coach with these guys?

Simone: Like, well? Pete, you are wearing... I mean, you often wear nail polish and it gives me life, and in this moment, you're wearing my merch. Which everybody's like, "Where is the merch?" I'm like, merch has only been exclusively available to some clients of mine so far. But Pete's shirt now says the thing that I say, which is, "Show up with love. And if they don't like it, fuck 'em." So, welcome, Pete.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Pete: Thank you. Oh my gosh, love it. How do I... Let's introduce Pete, ADHD, as you could probably hear from the get-go with the excitement. I am a life coach that works with adults on shifting that inner narrative that is negative, abusive, just in general unkind. And shifting it into a kind, supportive, generous, understanding, soothing inner voice, inner narrative. For a long time, I called it self-kindness. But I think with the work here and the support of these other beautiful men here, I'm getting more brave and actually calling it what it is. Which is just a self-love journey.

Simone: All right. Words that you don't often hear coming out of the mouths of straight men, I've got to say. Listen, we have rants to get to, but I would like to open with this question. I would like to ask each of you, what are some of the lenses in our world that are so default, that we don't even see them as lenses? It's like fish swimming in the water, and you don't even register its water because it's just all around you. What are some of those things?

Israel: I'll jump in. For me, a huge one is, "Men are always strong. Men are always capable. Men don't show their emotions." There are all these stereotypes. I've been in this work for a couple of years as a coach, but I feel like I've been doing this work for probably 15 or 20 years, as far as managing and navigating my own mental illness and mental health journeys. And I still come up against this myself.

It is just so prevalent, this idea that men have to be, I don't know, like made out of stone or something for us to be valid and approved by society. That's bullshit, but that's a huge piece of the water that I feel like I've been swimming in my whole life. That I don't even see unless I really pay conscious attention. And I see that in my clients, as well.

Simone: Feel free to jump in you guys.

Pete: Yeah, I feel and again, I'm going to be coming from obviously a Western viewpoint, but in my mind, the lens is that emotions is the realm of female, and there's two emotions for men. And that's either totally pumped and juiced, like, "We're going to fucking do this shit!" Or, it's like, angry

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

about not getting the fucking shit going. And you can cry if your mom dies, but that stoic tear, where you're just standing there, and like...

Simone: The one tear.

Pete: ...The close-up zooms in and the one tear falls...

Israel: Is running delicately down the chin.

Pete: That's how strong this man is.

Israel: Just one.

AmarAtma: Yeah, I'll tap into that, because I think that the lens that I feel we struggle with as men, and the lens, you know, swimming in the ocean, is that we are actually emotional. And we do feel, and we feel a lot more than we give ourselves credit for, or we allow ourselves to feel. And that we are not compartmentalized in it, we are actually feeling a lot. I think the lens that gets stuck in it, is that we don't have a vernacular, we don't have a vocabulary for how we feel. So, then we react to it, and we go reactionary, to stimulus, to action right away. To try to fix it, to try to heal it, to try to problem-solve through it.

Or, then we do reactionary behavior, like becoming violent, or becoming uncharacteristic to our integrity. We are doing things that are going to be harmful, either to ourselves or to others. We're going to eat that thing, we're going to drink that thing, we're going to watch that thing, we're going to be a part of that world. And all the while, we're swimming in an ocean of emotion [inaudible]. And that somehow, we're disconnected from that, when we're actually not. We're disconnected to the intelligence that comes into the experience of naming it, feeling it, having a pause within it, having a relationship to what's going on.

Developing the relationship of the difference between anger and frustration and annoyance and irritability, and coming into much more sophisticated terms. That gets me. That's the part that truly rubs me that way because that's a denial piece. We actually can be better, we actually can do better,

I Am Your Korean Mom with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

why aren't we doing better? And that's an accountability piece there. That's owning up to it. We feel a lot more than we give ourselves credit for. And that ownership, that's on us. We got to do that work.

Simone: So, in a social, cultural milieu, where pretty much everything is stacked against you guys ever having these thoughts and realizing these things, I'm so curious as to how each of you individually came to these realizations. Like, "Maybe I'm allowed to have emotions. Maybe I'm allowed to hurt. Maybe I'm allowed to be vulnerable, and I don't need to choose between pumped up mode and angry mode. And then, maybe there's a third option." How did how did you all come to that?

Israel: Sorry, you're not talking about nuance, are you? What?

Simone: I'm going to crush the enemy! I get people say, "Oh, you're always angry," at the men. I'm a heterosexual woman, I love men. What I hate is that it's so hard for me to have real conversations with them. I always rail about the patriarchy, not because I hate men, but because the patriarchy makes it so hard for me to have real meaningful relationships with them. It makes it hard for me to get to know who they are underneath all the walls of 'I have to be strong. I have to be the man.' Right? And that breaks my heart because I love all humans.

Pete: Yeah, yeah, no, that makes me think of that's one of the lenses, Simone. There is this lens around intimacy. And I think what you're talking about is the affinity. Like, when the three of us met. Just one time, offhand and I brought this word up, and I think we had this great conversation around intimacy, right? And it's like the unspoken lens, I believe, is intimacy is like this, and it has to do more with a sexual or that type of relationship.

Whereas intimacy is this whole breadth of human experience, right? But if men haven't been given the tools to understand the level and different degrees of intimacy... Which I feel like, at times, that's almost something that I'm a little bit jealous of with women. That there is this freedom of intimacy. You could talk about, "Oh, I just love my girlfriend so much. And she's so pretty and beautiful."

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

And I feel like the lens for a man is, I can't say, "Oh, I love my friend. And his eyes just take my breath away," when they really might take my breath. He just might be a beautiful human being, but that allowance of intimacy...

Israel: The default there is, "Oh, are you gay?"

Pete: Exactly. And we all learn the lens, or at least the lens that I learned growing up on the eastern side of the United States, a lot of times, in the hetero world of men, I feel like we default to the lowest common denominator, which is usually the biggest, strongest, loudest. You're in the locker room and the biggest, strongest dude is pummeling on this other guy, the default is down to the lowest common denominator. Instead of what we think we would want to happen, is rising above. Or if you're with a group of guys, and they start cat calling girls...

Simone: You mean the lowest standard of human behavior is what we [crosstalk] to.

Pete: Yeah, we all become the lowest thing, but that's like, safety/protection, at least in my world it was. "I'm going to be safe and protect. I'm not speaking up over these guys that are calling out to these girls," but it's fucking making me want to vomit. But I sit there. And that's on me. And I think that's how I started my journey, to answer your question in a long-winded way. I'll let somebody else speak.

Simone: We'll just weave in all the different things at some point. But I think because men aren't allowed to have intimacy, unless it's sexual intimacy with a woman I just thought about what that must be like for a man to be able to receive no intimacy, except from in a sexual way with a woman. Right? That means they don't get to be witness for who they are. They don't get to be seen and understood and loved and accepted. And to be told, "You matter," because to be told that would be an attack on... "What do you mean? I'm strong...." And that must be really painful to not be able to receive intimacy. And I feel really bad for you guys.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Israel: Thanks, Simone. But to me, this is like another lens as well, which is that so much of our worth is dictated by all of the external stuff. We grow up in... And I know this is not exclusive to men. But as the male stereotypical role as the provider and the protector, when there's anything that deviates from that, or when we experience challenges where we aren't fulfilling those roles, when we suddenly find ourselves where we can't be the protector, or our business or our job falls into question, and we can't provide financially for the people we care about, there's a huge identity crisis that comes up there. There's a big loss of self, I think.

Because in that sense, suddenly everything we believe we should be as a man, according to the way we've been socialized and conditioned and programmed, is absent. And in that absence, in that void, what do we do? Who the fuck are we? So, that's a big lens. And that, to me, is actually, it's funnily, that's, I think, a large part of where my story is started. I ended up, and this is another curveball, I got postnatal depression after my son was born. I didn't carry him for nine months. But I experienced...

Simone: Oh, wow. I just have to pause. I'm astounded to hear that, because I've never heard of postnatal depression in men. This is literally the first time in my whole life that I've heard of it. But now that you say it, I'm like, that makes so much sense. Tell us more.

Israel: Okay, so the short version is, and I could talk for six hours about this because I care about it so much. The stats in Australia are, about 1 in 10 new dads experiences this and has it diagnosed. And as we can all imagine, men are less likely to ask for help and speak about things. So, the real figure is probably significantly higher. But apart from the physical carrying and birthing a new child, a lot of the issues that face men correlated to what the family is going through.

Like added responsibility and other mouths to feed, anxiety and fear about the future, what's happening, all of the broken sleep as a purely mechanical piece. That was a big trigger for me, just all the broken sleep that comes with the newborn really messed with my headspace. So, all these pressures that we feel, and that we carry silently, without that opportunity to

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

connect with the mothers' group equivalent, being a dads' group, because there isn't any. We just had to sort of buck up and carry on kids, you know?

And that, to me, was too heavy. I learned through that process. And I actually started doing some work with a charity in Australia who deal with male and female postnatal depression/anxiety. I learned how common it is. There are so many dads suffering silently, because there's no dialogue around this. There's no awareness around this. This is actually a real thing.

And so, that led me down that path of 'what even is my life all about?' And breaking that identity piece of 'I'm the strong protector.' I wasn't strong, I was a fucking crumbled wreck.

Simone: I feel like the only way it's okay for men to get together to get help is when you've hit rock bottom, like Alcoholics Anonymous. Or you have some, very serious, debilitating psychiatric diagnosis and you're in real fucking trouble. And it's either you're the big strong man, or you're... So, there's nothing in between. There's nothing that holds men in between, and that really breaks my heart.

AmarAtma: Yeah, it's deeply true. I mean, it's super sad. And Israel, I appreciate you sharing so much about the postnatal pain there. Because I think the some of the stories, which is why I like to do grief work with people, is getting into the root causes of where a lot of the issues come from. And from my Chinese medical background, we're always kind of looking for the root cause to disease processes.

What often seems like stars in the sky that seem so random, from an energetic point of view or from traditional medicine perspectives, or either Chinese medicine, indigenous practices, they could see the constellation through the stars, and see this sort of seemingly random symptoms as patterns of a similar piece.

And I think that what I hear us talking about around intimacy and around not being able to have space and being held within our emotional aspect is a profound loss of innocence at a young age. I think that for men, when

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

we're taught to not feel or to feel connected to our emotions, that starts at a really early age, that's not an older age experience.

I think that when we speak about patriarchy, we have to see the systems of oppression that come across. Where patriarchy is taught to men at a young age not to feel, violence and anger only being able to be expressions to express. That to actually have forms of intimacy maybe only with your close relationships, like mom and sisters, but not to other men. And that when you're doing it with other men, you're not, most likely, yourself. You are with those men and thus your peers, and so you become uncharacteristic to yourself.

Where if you're with a spouse, with a sister, with another male partner but a one-to-one, is not necessarily the same conversation if you're in a group, or in a locker room style conversation. And so, bell hooks book *The Will to Change*, was a real eye-opener for me around the sources, around the conversation. And she named it as a grief response. I was so enthralled by that. Because that really spoke to me as a sense of 'oh, this is something that's bred. This is a form of oppression.' And for men to then grow out of that experience that's like, wow! Like, wow.

To come into an authentic, emotional, vulnerable, intimate relationship with themselves, and thus to the people in their life, is so frickin powerful. That is allowing feelings of failure. That is allowing fear to come in. That is allowing for shame to come through, without it being there's anything wrong with us. But an experience of saying, "That I'm a natural human being that is allowed to feel these things, and that through feeling them I'm actually beautiful. I'm actually remarkable. I'm actually somebody special. I actually have something to offer somebody. I don't have to fix problems. I can be with people. I can empathize. I can be sweet."

And so, to come back to your original question for me, my story was exactly that. I couldn't negotiate that emotional part of myself. I was called "Girl" so much growing up. Not only did I look like a girl because I wore my hair up. As a Sikh, as a tradition, we wear our hair up, and so I wore a bun on my

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

head. And my features were just naturally feminine. But I got weaponized. It was a weapon the other boys used to use against me, calling me “Girl”.

I remember, at a young age, I mean, it was like... Oh, that's still like a trauma for me. “Girl,” oh my god, and it was the worst thing. What I was so surprised by that, as I grew up, I was like, “Oh my god, one of the best compliments.” Because the feminine attributes that I had, that I couldn't negotiate with myself, beyond the toxic masculinity and the Alphaville bullshit that is existing around my life, all over, and the privilege that was existing everywhere, I was like, “I don't want to be that. But I'm not a girl. So then, I where am I in all of this?”

And that journey of discovery was profound dark nights of the soul. Like 10 years of suicidal ideation for me; 10 years. It was so dark, and pulling myself out of that and finding authentic... And saying, “Hey, actually, I am really beautiful. And my thoughts are not ridiculous. And I'm not stupid for the way that I feel. And these things *are* really beautiful.” But what I ended up turning into, which was the hardest part for me, and this is what patriarchy I think does to us, is that not only was I bullied, I became a bully.

And not only did I become a bully to other men and other people in my life, I bullied myself. I was the shittiest, I am still the shittiest person in my [inaudible]. I am so much the worst enemy, the one that cuts me down. And I have to work at that. Today, our preparation for this podcast was like impostor syndrome all over the place. I am working through those thoughts so diligently because of how deeply ingrained it is.

That stack is against us as men, because how do we come through that bullying, worst enemy, the worst haunting thoughts about our own self through that patriarchy? That's the lens. And that, to me, is the grief experience. That, to me, is the loss that we are perpetually feeling over and over and over. Yeah, that's the work. That's the work for us.

Israel: So interesting to me. I had a very similar experience preparing for today's podcast. I was filled with, wracked with, these feelings of shame and unworthiness. And who am I to have anything meaningful to contribute

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

here? When where I'm at in my coaching business and journey is so different, and so not where I want it to be. Because of this belief in my head, or this image in my head of what I need to be to show up. Or what I need to be to have worth and to have value in this conversation, in this space.

And one of the most beautiful things was, I popped into the group chat that the three of us had, and I said, "Hey, anyone else feeling like this?" And AmarAtma goes, "Yeah, all morning, man." And I'm like, "Oh good. Okay, not alone. That's a relief." So, we were both able to share our experience and name it and declare it with honesty and vulnerability. And that in itself, that experience, that was healing. I was like, "Ah, whew."

AmarAtma: It totally helped me when you sent that message out, to be seen in that way. And it was so beautiful, because I was like able to vocalize it, I was able to be witnessed.

Israel: And that's the power of what is available as men, as I suppose the privileged, advantaged part of society who have all of these. Patriarchy is just as harmful to cisgender men. It's fucked, it's just fucked. And it's, it's still jarring to me to hear, and this is one of the funny parts about this for me, this dialogue, it's still jarring to hear 'fuck the patriarchy' and all of the, I suppose, the swipes at the toxic man or toxic masculine that come from, say, your social posts, Simone or the dialogue in *Joyful Marketing*.

Because there's a lot of people working to dismantle the oppressive systems, and largely it is patriarchy. And so, there's a part of me that stings, because of that self-identification as part of the problem. But then there's also a part of me that's like, "No, for sure. These systems are broken. They're not serving humanity."

Simone: And they hurt you. Is what it sounds like.

Israel: Yeah, absolutely.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Simone: You know, this conversation is not only historic for my podcast, but I just realized it's also historic for me personally. Because I just realized that never once, in my 37 years of life, have I ever sat down with a group of men and felt this safe. And felt this... I just feel my whole body relaxing, and I feel so deeply, deeply safe, and hearing you talk about your vulnerability. I'm just sitting here, and I keep swallowing back tears because I realized this has never happened before.

It's not like I feel super unsafe every time I talk to men, but there's always something. There's always a wall of we're either being professional or I am pulling down this wall like 'you're not going to see me sexually.' Or you have your man illusions of you need to feel like the big man and I'm going to play along with that. There's always some kind of bullshit thing happening.

And it's kind of jarring to be talking to three men and have none of that. It's like, wow! And it honestly, is kind of making me want to hire a coach, like one of you, to help me parent a little boy. Now I'm like, I need to raise my boy in a way where he's going to have a little son and he's going to be able to have, he's going to be able to access these parts of himself that society is largely set against him being able to achieve.

Pete: Simone, thank you for sharing that. Because yeah, I'm witnessing these men in the same light. And I want to say, that's what's on the other side that I feel like gets me so excited. And it comes from you creating spaces, where me, as a cis, white, hetero American man; talk about like, dude, do I look like the patriarchy or fucking what, right?

Simone: Well, you do your nail polish, so there's that.

Pete: And I get to sit in a space that you have created, that is so inclusive, even though you never once made a direct invitation to white, cis, hetero, American men; that I can step into that space. And also, that it's so redemptive. That this is the conversation I feel like it can get so exciting, around this work of men. Like, hold on. It's almost like part of what we could do mentally is, "Alright, time to... Let's hand over to that the divine

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

feminine,” because in this new role that you get to sit in, it's fuckin mind blowing.

The shit that men were told to go for, is pittance compared to the experience of actually sitting in the transmuting. This is, I believe, what the wisdom of the ancient mystics were talking about. Of spinning base metal into gold. This experience of spinning that narrative and transmuting it into something brand new. I'm with these men; the same thing. After my daughter was born, I got so sick that I actually kicked in an auto-immune response and became type one diabetic. So, I'm still diabetic from that experience.

And so, Israel, to hear you talk about that, I was like, “We've got to talk, brother, I want to hear more.”

Israel: Absolutely.

Pete: Last night, I stood in the bathroom with my two kids; I have a 15-year-old daughter and a 12-year-old son. And we were laughing, because I was sharing with them the moments that I was so upset with them. They had so triggered me, that I was sharing the stories with them. And they were laughing, and they were almost comparing who did daddy respond the worst to? My daughter, she was crying so much.

It's like three in the morning, I used to be a touring musician, and we were out on the road with her. I was just trying to drive around to get her to go to sleep. I pulled over on the side of the road and I got out of the car, and the car is just running, and I'm like walking away from the car because I just could not deal. And so, that one was great. So, my daughter Leah is like, “Oh, Daddy...”

And then my son. One time I was going to change his diaper and as I was laying him on the floor, I laid him down, and he reached up and kind of did this, like pushed me away. Like, “Don't change my diaper.” I stood up and I punched the bathroom wall. And of course, that's right where the stud was

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

so I fractured my hand. I come to find out that there's like very few men who haven't done this, the boxing fracture.

And so, there are two stories that I was most ashamed of. And I was spinning out in depression at that time, with my kids. Years later, I'm standing in the bathroom, and we're laughing. And we're giggling about it and we're hugging each other. That's what I want to just put forward. And AmarAtna, you were talking about that so beautifully. Of that power of witnessing it, right? And how that just the witness thing, alone with my kids, became this. And all of a sudden, I walked away, and I saw my wife and she had that kind of knowing smile.

I was just so proud of the dad that I've become because of this coaching work. And I think it's just like, here we go. Right? And that's what gives me so much hope for my son, and for my daughter too.

Simone: Your kids experienced that, in you, as their dad, and they're going to have a new standard for how they get to be with their intimate partners, and what their standard is for their intimate partners. It's like, if someone identifies as a man, like they get to be that and be able to open up like that, right? And how, yeah, how powerful is that?

Israel: I feel like we should have a little contest to see who has traumatized their children the most. There are some stories I can tell, as well, you know?

Simone: Listen, it does not take a penis to traumatize children.

Israel: No, this thing, the heavy toxically masculine kind of expressions of that though, you know? I mean, it's funny and it's tragic, but I feel like there's so much value in being seen and being recognized, acknowledged, as a flawed human with grace. And I think in this moment, that's, to me, what you were experiencing, it was like divine grace, visiting you in the bathroom with your kids. Because you can take this thing, and then you're able to alchemize it into a beautiful healing experience for you and for the family. I think that's amazing.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Simone: So, here's my question for the last part of this conversation. How do y'all, in your marketing, get through to men? So maybe...

Israel: Cue the shame.

Simone: No, but all of you have, to some extent. Listen, when you say, "Cue the shame," like that's a joke. But look at what we're up against, right? There's no way we're going to be successfully getting to all the people that we want to get to right away. But you have all worked with men, and do you find that... This is something I'm wondering about, as somebody who is devoted to bettering the coaching world and making coaching more accessible and inclusive. I am wondering for my own self. Because I work heavily with basically any demographic that is not cis, hetero man.

I work with a lot of women, people who identify as women, and trans people, queer men, but very few straight men. So, it just makes me wonder, do you sense that there is a rising awareness and curiosity to do more of this work? How has it been for you? What have you found to be effective for getting through to people? Or do people already seek you out because they're already curious?

AmarAtma: I think I'm going to jump in here. I think that in terms of coaching and marketing, I think that Simone, actually, you do a really good job of this, I think that three men found you. You didn't search us out, you didn't see, because in some ways you kind of push us away. But it's not true, actually. You might think that, but it's not true at all. Your attack on the patriarchy is exactly why I hired you as a coach, why exactly I found you. I don't feel comfortable... And I've sought out other coaches, and I've seen the world of coaching and the patriarchy that exists there, but not really the patriarchy. It's a sort of masculine, competitive, comparison...

Simone: Gets tough, and crushed the competition. That kind of thing.

AmarAtma: Yeah, but it's also vulnerable. And you see a lot of women in there. And actually, before I got you as a coach, I hired a coach for that, and I paid a lot of money for it. I thought I would be able to having

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

somebody who was a little bit more on the nurturing side and a little bit more on the human side. But it ended up being a woman who's actually kind of bought into the patriarchy mindset. That confused me so much. So, I think the awareness is so bigger there.

For me, I think that it's been really powerful for me, as a coach. I don't work specifically with men, nor do I work specifically with women, nor do I work specifically with men who identify and women who identify in varying ways. I work with people who are working through grief and wanting to do that kind of relationship, that work, and life after loss, that is the dynamic. And so, through that process, though, I speak a lot to emotions.

I think one of the most powerful things which you taught me was the Garbage Post Challenge; take up space, be vulnerable, show up. And the scariest thing for me was to show up, to show my faith. The faith that I felt constantly abused by growing up, and post 9-11. Things that people said about me, that was my winning result. That was my overcoming my fear; was to put my face in reels on social media.

And something had happened very profoundly, because men are following me and I'm having connection with men and men are seeking me out for work. And it's surprising because it's this energy of vulnerability. Every man is emotional. But men are not taught how to be vulnerable. And showing my vulnerability online, showing my emotional affairs, expressing my fears, expressing my concerns, showing that redemptive quality.

Working on understanding that loss of innocence is the core loss that a lot of our men feel, and the loss of being able to be in touch with our emotions, that emotions are normal for us. And helping to normalize that, I think is profound modelling, which I think we need more of. There's a lot of men who are doing that, that I follow on social media and take them as sort of a model. But I do it in my own flavor and my own way. I think that's really powerful.

And I wish more people found your work. Because I think that more men who are coaches could find a really safe space to be able to take their

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

marketing and take their coaching to a whole nother level. Because then they would then feel safe and have permission to really be who they actually are.

That culture, society, moms, dads, have all denied us to be. And that permission was magical for me. That's exactly why [inaudible] in fucking France to visit you, and to say, "What up?" to your parents and to say hello. Because part of it was my wife's and I 10-year anniversary, and we haven't been actually traveling. I wanted to honor and celebrate her.

But in some ways, it was like a recognition of, thank you for giving me, a man, permission to be a man. And to not feel shame for being a man. Like, that's Fuck, yeah, thank you. You know, that's so big. And to give other men permission for that same thing is the vibe, that collective vibe. I think that's making a difference.

Simone: And I'm humbled.

Pete: AmarAtma, I just want to say I'm so glad you're putting your face out there, because, this is the space that I can say it, you have a beautiful face. I could just stare into your eyes, and just I love it. I'll just put out here, if I need to calm down, I'll just put you near my feet and I'll be like, "Ah." I think that's the kind of intimacy, that of being held in strength, is the intimacy that men don't get either, right?

So, that's not okay, I feel like, to say out there in the world that I want to be held by a strong man, and I fully identify as hetero. Someone actually sat with me, I think this came up, this isn't answering your question, Simone. But I think if there are some cis-het men listening that are curious about this, find a coaching friend that can walk them through the exercise of questioning their pronouns. That is a beautiful experience. And actually, a fellow peer coach in *Joyful Marketing*, Yolanda, invited me to do that one time.

Simone: Yolanda O'Bannon, we love you.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Pete: She's the one. A shout out.

Simone: Okay, what does that mean?

Pete: To question your pronouns?

Simone: I mean, I know what that means. But like, what does that process look like? Like, Hey, are you a he? How does that work?

Israel: Yeah, I'm [inaudible] so puzzled.

Pete: During COVID, I started painting my nails with my daughter, it was fun. And then I noticed that I wanted to keep doing it. And then I found that there's this whole movement of men that paint nails. I mean, some of the toughest guys that I thought out there, like Metallica, like all of a sudden, I look and they're on their guitars and they have manicured beautiful nails, right? And I'm like, what is going on?

So, there were all these things that I feel are attributed to women that totally appealed to me. But might be more something that I would think would be of somebody who identifies as gay or queer that would be wearing bright, vibrant colors. I don't know, whatever shit is in my head, right? But it's all just the stuff in my head.

Simone: It's kind of like gender anarchy in your in your brain.

Pete: Right, and being okay with it. I think that's where my marketing comes in, to answer your question. You share, in your world, if people are listening and they're not part of *Joyful Marketing*, this idea of a winning result. I remember one of your winning results that hit me, it felt like it knocked me over, which was, "All of me makes sense." And from then on, all of a sudden, the marketing starts becoming like all of me makes sense. I love talking about this, and that makes sense. And so, all of me makes sense. I don't need to explain that, "I'm saying this, but don't forget, I'm cis-het. I'm saying this I'm but I'm cis-het." It's like, no, all of me makes sense.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Simone: You get to be, without having to overexplain yourself and caveat yourself.

Pete: I think the men that have come into my coaching realm and have sought me out are attracted to that. Like, what is that? What is that about?

Simone: Ah, gives me so much hope for humanity.

Israel: I love that. To me, that's the conversation, Pete, about embodying and embracing the divine masculine and the divine feminine that's contained within all of us. To me, they're different flavors of energy. And there might be a tendency to express more of one than the other, but doesn't mean they both don't have a place. My operating premise is this belief that we all have both. A lot of women in high-powered careers are actually doing themselves a disservice by showing up too much in their masculine. And they're embodying what would be typically male behaviors and male traits of alpha and competitiveness and power over and all this sort of stuff.

Simone: But a lot of it is, for those women, a survival mechanism.

Israel: Absolutely.

Simone: They wouldn't have been seen as legitimate, they wouldn't have been given space, a platform, credence, any of that. If we lived in a world where it was safe to be, to live, in more what is traditionally considered feminine characteristics.

Israel: Right, that's a great pick up. Because I, in no way meant to judge or anything like that. But I also recognize that the issue too is that the culture, the paradigm, and this is probably a deeper part of the 'why' for me, men have created all of the power structures. And they've created them from that place of fear and scarcity, rather than from a place of love and inclusivity. And so, all of the worst aspects of masculine, power and action and strength, and all of those sorts of characteristics dictate the culture.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Men are the people in the positions of power that get to hold the big levers of what we do and what we don't do, and how we show up and how we don't show up. And so, for women to get a seat at the table, obviously, they've had to play that game.

And so, that's what I do, what I hope from the work, the sort of the bigger kind of question of 'why' that I've tried to answer for myself behind this work as a coach, working specifically with men or principally with men. Is because I believe if men can do as the three of us gentlemen are doing and working to embrace more of who we fully are, working to honor all of the aspects of ourselves with the combination of vulnerability and accountability so we can go there emotionally, with ourselves and with the people that matter. And we can be responsible for our fuck-ups and take action to mend and to heal.

From that place, I think the world can heal holistically. I think humanity has a chance. That's the hope that I hold, as like the North Star, behind trying to encourage alpha male tradesmen who drink beer every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday and gamble on horse racing and scream at their children and fight with their wives and ignore anything emotional. I believe that's a huge opportunity for growth, of the change there.

And it feels like banging my head against a brick wall sometimes. But I know that the men that are in power have gotten there by being a toxic masculine. If they are able to be reached and to say, "Hey, listen, there's this other way. There's this other paradigm. There's a new way of operating that will not only help you feel better in yourself, and help you feel more embodied, more whole. It will also bring better to the team that you're supporting, to the organizations that you're leading to the structures that you're perpetuating."

Simone: Well, we just came up with a cure for humanity.

AmarAtma: Simone, do you mind if I jump in?

Simone: Yes, please.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

AmarAtma: Yeah, I feel inclined to talk about a part of this that I think is so important and so powerful, because divine masculine has come up a couple of times. I think there's some reference and context that can be very helpful for this. In Hinduism, Hindu culture, the polarity of masculine and feminine is not the same as it is in the West. The sort of Source of Creation that comes from the Big Bang and the dualism that comes from that, and the masculine and feminine forces; the masculine energy is actually not the doer, not the fixer, not the change, or not the magic maker of life. That's the feminine energy, the divine feminine energy.

Divine masculine energy is the presence holder. It is the space holder, is the listener, is the container. The Divine Feminine is what creates life, it's the creation, it's the dance, and it's also the one that is the warrior. And so, this aspect of the Divine Masculine is so powerful to me, because we've sort of lost a little bit of a relationship to what we're really talking about when it comes into this identity crisis, that as Israel has mentioned about, where we as men are or where we're at.

We need a model, we need foundations about thought and culture and perspective and leaders to think about divine masculinity through this divine, through this identity crisis. Because we know that fight-flight response is the survival mechanism. That's the fear response that we all have. But for women, I learned through psychology, it's actually not the same. Women don't necessarily have the fight-flight response; they do but in a different way.

I understand now that when women are confronted into a fear or survival experience, their response is not competitive, alienation, fight or flight. But collaborative, community, tend and befriend. And that's why we need more women in leadership. This is why I love *Joyful Marketing*, you being at the helm for it, because I love you as the leader for this process for us, and to be a follower, to take the step back, and to allow that in an intentional way.

Because that actually leads me then to my divine masculine. And through my mindfulness practice, through my somatic work, through my deep meditation experience. I mean, not just the 5-10 minutes of quiet time, but

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

spending half hour going into a deep silence-based internal meditative experience, we start to open us into a very different realm of our own being. And that beingness I think then starts to help create the movement and the motion that we're looking for, for that identity. It's coming back home to ourselves.

And then we can then relinquish the need to be in power. Because we are fighting and flighting, we are creating wars and greed, and creating all the problems. Allowing women to be in that place of power then becomes an opportunity for the world to find that fucking peace, dude. Like, that is what we're all about here. What we need is more world fucking peace.

And how do we do that? How do we relinquish that power? Actually, how do we come into safety within ourselves? And that is the quiet that is in the depth, that is in that place. And so, I think this Hindu concept is very useful to really give us modelling work for divine masculine energy.

The last thing I might say to this, is that any man work, any personal work, is relationship work around their father. This becomes the lineage of work: How are we raised? How are we taught? How are we spoken to? And so, this becomes the healing process that we kind of go through. I mean, obviously I could speak a lot about this and have a lot of passion and intensity around a lot of this.

But I feel like there was an important word here to kind of tie in this Divine Masculine piece here, because we often look to our fathers for the Divine Masculine. And I think that sometimes it gets us a little distorted. And then we come into this God and Heaven mindset kind of idea. And this is a spiritual phenomenon to what we're talking about, with Divine Masculine, and that we have to speak to.

Simone: I would love to do a whole other podcast just sort of deconstructing and getting out of the Western Christian concept of masculine, feminine and what else is there out in the world? That would be an amazing topic. So, I just feel like that's a "mic drop". Like, I don't know what to add to that. Before we close, just tell us really quickly who you work

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

with so that people... And we'll have all of your links, to all three of you, in the show notes so that people can find you, follow you, and hire you. Just really quickly, yeah, who do you work with? And who would you invite to reach out to you? Israel first.

Israel: So, the guys that I love working with are the guys that are small business owners, usually dads, and particularly the ones that are really in, I suppose to be honest, where I was 10-12 years ago when my son was born. Have all of the things, have all of the should haves about society, and still feel fucking miserable. Or, in trouble in their marriage, and just really not feeling like anything they're doing is working. They can't keep up, everything is in overwhelm, everything is in stress, and that's manifesting in anger and arguments and those sorts of things.

In those behaviors, in those spaces, that's where I can work some serious magic with people, and help them come home to themselves and to heal themselves. Which then ripples out into their life and starts to transform their relationships with their partner and their relationships with their kids.

Simone: Thank you. AmarAtma?

AmarAtma: Yeah, it's my work as grief coach. So, I would say people who are experiencing loss in their life, or at a loss of a family member. Or has an anticipatory loss, so anticipatory grief. Or people who've gone through major life changing events; divorces, job changes, issues around finances and so forth. These are the experiences of loss that I help people with.

And the way that the nature of my work evolves, that it's programmatic. And so, a lot of times people get confused that grief coaching is like therapy, and that it's this long process of years and years, that kind of evolved. But it's not, it's actually programmatic. Where we teach cool skills and emotional resiliency and help to identify grief emotions, and how to move through them in simple and gentle and easy ways.

Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

Like I said, emotional scuba divers that plays with dolphins and turtles by the jetstream to the shore piece. So, it's like a playful, fun kind of experience about how...

Simone: I don't know how you turn grief coaching into something that sounds fun that I want to do.

Israel: Right, in my head he's like that cool turtle in the EAC (East Australian Current), *Finding Nemo*. Like, "Yeah, yeah, come on dude, it's great!"

Simone: Wow, some serious magic. Thank you. Pete?

AmarAtma: Thank you.

Pete. Yeah, I'm working with mostly, I'd say adults, on that internal narrative. So, anybody who's kind of sick and tired of the internal narrative that seems to keep showing up. Usually, I put the spin on it that it's a negative narrative, and you want to kind of shift it. But it can be even just like a self-doubt narrative. So, learning how to take that narrative and shift it into something that is just loving, generous, kind, and understanding. It doesn't have to always be a positive.

Simone: Amen. Okay. Well, thank you all so much. And I don't even know what to say, this conversation was magical. Thank you.

Pete: Thank you, Simone.

Simone: This was so healing for me. And I hope that all the awareness and insights in this conversation ripple out to so many hearts in the world, and create new ways for us to relate to ourselves and each other. Okay, friends, thanks for listening. I'll talk to you all next week.

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Ep #241: Non-Toxic Masculinity

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