

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Full Episode Transcript



With Your Host

Simone: **Grace Seol**

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Welcome to *Joyful Marketing*! I'm Simone Seol, and I teach you how to get your life coaching practice fully booked, without having to pay for ads, buy Instagram followers, or complicated sales funnels. It's not rocket science, and you can do it too. Listen on to find out how.

Simone Seol: Hi everyone. I am here today with my friend and colleague, Alex Ray, to talk about something that we both get so many questions about; an immensely important topic, not just in coaching, but if you're leading any kind of space, anywhere, which is; how to create a safe space in a non-performative way.

If you're teaching a group container, if you do anything, if you hold an event where people get together, how can you make sure that you are an actual safe space? People ask me all the time, "How do I signal to people that I'm a safe space?" And I'm always, "You can't signal that you're a safe space if you're not an actual safe space. And if you are an actual safe space, then people will feel that." It's not necessarily a strategy of, "How do I signal it?"

I could not think of a better person to have this conversation with, than Alex Ray, who is a client of mine in *Joyful Marketing* as well as an instructor inside *Joyful Marketing*. And who teaches the coaching calls that we hold monthly, for our members who are exclusively part of the LGBTQIA+ community. So, welcome to the show Alex. Please introduce yourself, we're dying to meet you.

Alex Ray: Thank you so much, Simone. Hi, everyone. My name is Alex Ray, I am the Queer+ confidence coach. Simone covered it; what I do is I help LGBTQIA+ people stand up for themselves, have their own back, and enjoy being their authentic self. This conversation on creating real safe spaces and doing it in a non-performative way is something I've been really passionate about, lately. In particular, as I've been kind of coming out of the closet with being honest about negative experiences I've had, within the coaching community, where I felt I was being performed inclusion, too. And

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

even being part of the performative nature. Almost, “Hi, you can be our token queer person.” You know what I mean?

Simone: I want to talk about that. We don't have to name any names, but just because this behavior, it's everywhere, lots of people...

Alex: Oh my God, everywhere.

Simone: Let's just name some things that we see, that we may have even done. If you're listening to [inaudible], “Oh, my God, I might have done that.” The intention isn't to point fingers and say, “Oh, this person's evil,” it's not that. It's, let's name the things that are not okay, and examine why we're doing them, so that we can change it. So, tell us. What are some things that we've seen? Let's talk about it.

Alex: Well, I think, I'll just come out first with; how have I been a problem? I know, oh, my God was it two years ago when George Floyd was murdered?

Simone: Oh, my gosh, was it? I think it must have...Shit. Yeah.

Alex: I was going to say last year; it's two years ago, now. Anyway, I know I immediately wanted to be helpful, and realized, in hindsight, “Okay, great, this is my white savior complex. This is me wanting to jump in and be helpful.” More, yes, I wanted to help but also, there was an aspect of shame and guilt for, maybe, my own negative contributions to the world. How I've been an unintentional racist, and, “Oh, well, I can hurry up and fix it by running a little workshop, or being really helpful, or reaching out to my black friends.” That was not helpful.

Thankfully, I did have some people that were bold enough around me, to point out, “The way you phrase this is kind of offensive. Why did you choose this?” In my head, I thought I was being really helpful, but realized there was a lot I had to learn and it was not my time to speak. It was my

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

time to sit back. I am a more silent participant. I'm more just holding space for others without elevating myself, putting myself on the stage.

Simone: So from my experience of having done the exact same thing, don't you think that happens when what we're really after is solving our own emotional discomfort? As opposed to trying to learn more.

Alex: Definitely. Curiosity is something that's really important to me. When I'm doing that, I'm not curious about other people and how they're doing. I'm so focused, like you said, on my emotional state and how can I solve this.

Simone: At the same time period that you're describing, what I was going through... One giant epiphany that I had was I thought I was exempt from the conversation because I'm not white. And I was like, "I'm not even white. And my parents are immigrants. I got the short end of the stick; this whole conversation doesn't apply to me."

I had completely, completely skipped over examining my immense privilege and collusion with white supremacy culture. That was not fun. I've since then, have gained a lot of awareness and started talking about how, first of all, being not white doesn't mean you don't have privilege.

And also, being a light skinned Asian means that you have so, so, so much more privilege, compared to so many others. Because, at least before COVID era, nobody was afraid of light skinned Asians. Nobody was threatened by light skinned Asians. We were not subjected to systematic disenfranchisement and violence, for the most part. There have been things, but you know.

It became very uncomfortable the moment I realized, "Wow, I benefit hugely from white supremacy. I am not off the hook at all. And how am I

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

contributing to, not just white supremacy, but toxic capitalism, all these things that are related? All the answers were terrible.

Alex: All this laughter is nervous laughter.

Simone: Yeah, we can't cry, so we're just laughing instead, to fill the void.

Alex: Right. Exactly. Yeah. Were there any other areas that stood out to you, that you noticed? The sort of systems we're talking about. Besides two years ago? Were there other areas where you were like, "Oh?"

Simone: That's the part that makes me want to cry. That's the part that makes me really want to cry, I should say. The whole George Floyd thing, kind of... We started recording this podcast, because we're like, "Alex and I have things to teach you!" And now it's just like, "Let us tell you all the ways we fucked up."

So that, but the whole George... It's set off a chain of inquiry, I should say, for my own self. Where I was examining my own contribution to collaboration and collusion with oppressive violent systems. And it wasn't a one-time thing, it wasn't even a one-month thing. It's been a continuous journey since.

What I have uncovered along the way, is that my coaching containers weren't always a safe space. And in fact, that it could be a gaslighting place and a violent place, and a place that undermines your self-trust and self-belief. When I am supposedly, offering them the exact opposite. When I'm selling them empowerment and self-belief.

And sometimes, my containers offer them the exact opposite. It's like, "No, don't trust yourself; trust me. No, your judgment is probably wrong." That's sort of one big cluster of things. And another cluster of things was when I realized that, as a business coach, I had been unwittingly holding up a very

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

toxic, harmful hierarchy of value that's based on money, and amounts of money.

Even as I'm talking about this, I kind of want to cry because it's so insidious. The reason that we don't often even realize it, is because it is so in the air that we breathe. It is so in the water that we drink. It has seeped into our own souls, into every cell, so we don't even know which part of this is internalized, toxic fuckery, and which part of it is us and real.

I realized that I have been telling people this whole time, that you are the one who gets to determine what success means to you. You get to feel proud of yourself and celebrate yourself on whatever part of the journey you are. But also, it is better if you make a lot of money, and you should follow me and trust me because I make a lot of money, off of you.

Alex: That's the thing I always felt so weird about, from the other side. I entered into the life coaching sphere in 2017, and very much, I saw that bullshit right away. It was like, wait a minute. We, all of us, who you're telling, "Oh, you can be rich and powerful if you just pay me money, and I'll help you," and I'm like, "Yeah, but all of us are, kind of the support for your rich and powerful throne."

Simone: So, that's why people are like, "It's a pyramid scheme."

Alex: Right. But it's, it's actually the same fucking pyramid scheme as religion. And I realized... I grew up in a very conservative fundamentalist Christian... They called themselves a church, but let's be honest, it was a cult. And, was told how terrifying the world was. How everyone out there was going to hell. We were the majority.

I looked up this denomination recently, and it's one of the tiniest denominations in the country. I had no idea. I thought it was huge. Anyway, everyone was going to hell, especially queer people. Although I only knew that the gays and lesbians existed and had no idea there was anything

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

else. Anyway, point of the story is, leaving that and deconstructing from that was so aware of, “Oh, my God, these people are just selling ideas.”

Simone: You had a nose for culty shit.

Alex: Yeah. And then, I went right into a new one. Because when you’ve spent your entire life from infancy through adulthood, in that way of thinking, I really didn't trust myself to make decisions or to know right from wrong. So, I was always kind of looking for other people; whether it was a romantic partner that could do that for me, friends, family. I always was kind of outsourcing, looking for someone else to have all the answers for me.

And so, I ended up joining this fitness and nutrition company. That total cult mentality, really toxic environment to be in, very gaslighting, very much based on self-doubt and lots of blame. If we didn't sell enough product that month, “Oh, my God, you didn't work hard enough. You didn't try. You didn't honestly, try. You need to examine yourself and figure out why you didn't try.”

Simone: Sounds a lot like some other worlds I've been in.

Alex: Exactly. And then I was like, “Oh, this is a cult,” after a couple of years. Then I was like, “I'm never doing that again.” Then, I found a life coaching cult and joined that one.

Simone: Oh, my God. I want to cry.

Alex: Yeah. By cult I mean, another environment where it was encouraged to believe other people had better answers for me about my life, than I did.

Simone: And that there is a there, ‘there.’ Where, “When you get there, it's going to be better than here. But we're going to tell you that here is just as good as there. And, also tell you that there, is better than here,” so that you're really confused.

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Alex: Right. I mean, if we just pick you up and shake you enough, right? Give you a good concussion. You'll be so confused; you'll definitely buy my program.

Simone: I wish that was a joke, but it's not.

Alex: It's not. It's serious. And, it was really horrible. I didn't realize that I had done it again until last fall. And I was like, fuck, and I had so much embarrassment. I was so embarrassed. Well, I started...

At first, I didn't really want to talk with the leader of the community. I didn't want to ask for a refund or anything. I didn't really want to address it because I was embarrassed that I didn't meet the goal in my business, that I was supposedly going to hit. I thought it was all my fault.

And then, I started talking with other people and finding out that I wasn't the only one. But I had the impression that I was. I was like, "How, wait, there are others, too?" But I thought that everyone was doing well. I thought I was the only one out here kind of struggling to make it as a life coach. I really had this impression that it was highly likely, that if you're a life coach, you will become a millionaire. And, it won't take that long.

Simone: Well, I mean, we're laughing, but how can you be faulted for thinking that when that is literally, aggressively marketed to you all of the time? "Why did you ever think that? That's stupid." Because they told you that, a million times. And told you, and told you, and told you, until you gave money.

Alex: Right. That money could have bought me a car. But it bought someone else's car. And therefore, they had more evidence that it works, right? Meanwhile...

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Simone: If you just gaslight people hard enough, you can make, you can buy all of the cars.

Alex: You can buy all the cars. And then, “If they, actually, instead of following what you directly told them, but rather follow your example, oh my God, they can do the same thing. We could all gaslight like that. We could all be successful.”

It was so funny, because I was so conscious about observing those two different things. I think by then, I kind of developed that lens to be, “Wait a minute. What am I actually seeing through example versus what am I hearing?” And it was, these messages aren't matching up. If I want to actually follow the success formula, I have to do things that feel really unethical to me, and I don't want to do that.

Then I realized, I just wanted something different. And, I wasn't willing to change in order to make that money. I also started watching these cult documentaries on Netflix, at the same time. And I'm like, “Ooh, gross! It's the same thing everywhere. Ach!”

Simone: Yeah. I want to share my story, too, but I want to know, what happened after? Because right now, you just exude power. And not abusive power, but genuine power that comes from knowing yourself deeply and loving yourself deeply. And, not having defenses up, therefore being available to truly care for others, and be curious about others. That just drips off of you.

What was it? I don't know if you can even tell the story in a single podcast episode. But what was it like going from that moment of, “I don't want this. I'm out of whatever this is,” to where you are today? Because I bet a lot of people are also sort of in this position of, “I don't think this is working for me. I don't think I agree with this. This is not good for me. This is not where my values are.” And then, thinking, “Where the fuck do I go from here?”

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Alex: Yeah, I did have the benefit... I was actively, last year, I was getting certified as a life coach through the community college back in Maryland, where I used to live, and the cool thing there, they are the only community college that's ICF accredited. They have this amazing program. The center of all of it, was self-trust and autonomy and finding your right way, and curiosity.

I was like, "Oh my God, wait, this fully aligns with how I feel the world should operate. Oh." So, that kind of helped me pull out of the other situation that I was in and have hope that this actually, is life coaching. You can life coach in a way that doesn't include gaslighting, doesn't include pretending. It can be very realistic and really trusting people to know what's best for them. And, I can know, trust myself to know what's best for me.

What if I really lead my programs like that? Which I think for the most part, I was doing. Not totally, to be honest. I wanted to tell people what to do, often because then it could stroke my ego and make me feel like I do have the solution. But I think that program really helped me let go of it, and I started seeing way more success with my clients. As I was doing that too, I'm like, "Wait a second. I think I have found something here. And..."

Simone: Do you mind saying what the program is? Because I bet lots of people are like, "Wait. What is that program? I'm going to go take it."

Alex: Yeah, it's Anne Arundel Community College, aacc.edu. Just look up, Engagement and Life or Life and Engagement coaching. Not engagement as in getting married.

Simone: Engaging life.

Alex: Yes, exactly.

Simone: Love it. So, wait, hold on.

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Alex: Okay. I want to hear your story.

Simone: Is there more? So, you found this life coach and then you kind of blew up your business in some ways. I mean, in many ways, actually. Right? How did you go from there...?

Alex: I did. I started getting photos of unicorns and stuff.

Simone: Yeah, you started getting naked, ...

Alex: I started getting naked mentally and physically.

Simone: On any given day in *Joyful Marketing*, Alex has the most fabulous makeup and fabulous photos. You became yourself; you unleashed and you created programs around that. They're selling like hotcakes because, newsflash, when you unleash what is actually genuinely, authentically you, people want that shit. People want to be around you, not because they can be like you, but because you remind them of what is possible, when they also become more of themselves.

Alex: Yeah, I want to put a real honest footnote or whatever in there. It's not like I've just suddenly blown up and I have all the... I'm not making what I would love to be making, but...

Simone: What would you love to be making? I'm just nosy as a business coach.

Alex: Well, in five years, I definitely want to hit a million dollars.

Simone: Okay, love it.

Alex: Because I do want to be on a consistent monthly basis, helping at least 100 LGBTQ+ people between the various programs I run. And, doing speaking engagements. I also want to write a book. There are a few things.

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

I think the most significant change in my business yet; now I'm actually bringing in consistent income that does support me and does support my lifestyle. It's not excessive, but it's enough for me to get by and not be, super worried all the time, and afford an assistant who works with me part-time.

Simone: Isn't that the dream? Having the money for the things you need, and something that you don't need. To have some support. That is the dream. I want to say, I wish we could normalize that. That's fucking amazing. And anything more than that is just top .0001% shit. Which is amazing if you have it. But also, you're already killing it if you got to where you are now.

Alex: Yeah. This year, I want to hit \$100,000. That's the financial goal this year, and I think I'll do it. If things go according to plan with the next programs and stuff, it will. But yes, you are right, I'm already living the dream that young kid me was like, "Holy shit." If I could put pictures of me online wearing almost nothing, with a unicorn, how am I even allowed to do that? I'm not going to get stoned for it?

Simone: No, you get money for that.

Alex: Exactly. What? Sometimes literal physical money; I just started dancing.

Simone: Oh my gosh, I can't even go down that many rabbit holes with you because it's [cross talk]. Reigning it back, reigning it back, okay [cross talk] to my story. Talking about gaslighting abuse, all that. So, I feel I should be honest about my experience, as well. Because my experience was different from yours.

In that, I didn't come from a culty background. I don't think at all, that I engaged in anything in a culty way, where I was outsourcing my authority,

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

trusting another more than myself. I actually think that I would go into these situations with a ton of self-trust and a ton of self-authority. And with the willingness to be like, I'm going to take what's useful for me and whatever doesn't land with me, I'm just going to ignore it.

And some of it, I'm going to adapt to make it make sense for my brain, and whatever else I can just discard. So, I had a very core... From the *years* of fucking therapy and coaching, of the kind that's truly taking care of your soul, I felt I had healed enough. I'd come into myself enough to be able to go in with that kind of confidence, that kind of self-authority. And because of that, I never felt gaslit because I never gaslit myself. I never allowed myself to feel gaslit. So that's not...

Alex: If someone was gaslighting you it sounds your reaction would have been like, "Oh, you're just telling a story. But that's..."

Simone: Okay, people have tried to gaslight me and my thought is "Okay, I'm not going to take any of that on. That's your thought. It's fine. It's not your fault. You have your thoughts; I have my thoughts. That's fine." I don't know; there's many things.

If somebody tried to deny my experience, or contradict my experience, in a way that would have felt very hurtful, if I took it very personally, I was always like, "I don't really care what your thought about it is, because I care what my thought about it is," right? So, I let that slide off of my back. And I didn't feel gaslit because I didn't allow myself to feel gaslit.

So, here's the important part. The reason that any of these culty things are very attractive is because there's a kernel of usefulness. There's a kernel of truth, sometimes many kernels of usefulness and truth in them. And, I felt I was able to take that and just discard everything else and make it super useful for myself. Those were very powerful things that I learned, that I took on, while making it work in my way. And so, I thought everybody else was like me, right?

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Alex: Yep. We always think that.

Simone: We always think that and so, I think that part of, when I look back now, ... I'm not saying this in a way where I'm hanging my head in shame about it. That's not the point, to be, "Oh, I was bad," that's not the point. But at the time, I was doing harm by not being able or willing to see that not everyone was in the same place of having a relationship with themselves that I was in.

And that it was my job, as a leader of a space container, whatever, to be curious about that and care about that. I think there have been times when I failed at that, because I was like, "But you're never going to be gaslit if you just don't allow yourself to be. Or, it's within your power and responsibility to have your back, have your own back."

Which is not, not true. But it's also, do you know what I mean? There are ways you can use that, in an unempathetic, uncurious way, where it's just, I'm just shoving my agenda at them.

Alex: Yeah, I think it's also speaking to people where they're at.

Simone: Exactly. And, that's a skill that coaches can cultivate or not. I see a lot of coaches... I am not just directing this outward; I'm literally telling you, there have been times when... I am sorry, I lost my train of thought, what did you just say? Oh, meeting people where they're at. ...where I did not meet people where they were, and I thought it was a choice that I was making, but really, it's because I wasn't skillful enough.

I didn't have enough awareness about where they are and where I am, and how to bridge the gap skillfully, in a way that makes the client feel safe to take that step forward towards that transformation. And so, if you're constantly... There are times when you just have to let the gap be there and trust the client to jump.

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

But if you're consistently having an experience where your clients are, confused and feeling unsafe, and you're like, "No, you've just got to jump," then that's actually unfortunately, a question of your skillfulness. You are not able to meet them where they are, and that has everything to do with your efficacy as a coach. You should work on that. That's not your client's problem; that's your problem.

Alex: Yeah, I think speaking to my audience, queer people y'all, there are a lot of people that are not ready, not skillful enough to speak with us in a way that's supportive and empowering. Because they don't have our experience. So, if you feel like you're constantly jumping through hoops to make everyone else comfortable, then, some of those relationships or scenarios, containers, whatever... You have the stamp of approval. You have our full encouragement to leave. They're not supportive for you.

Simone: Yes. I did not question myself in this way, until I kind of woke up to how much harm it was doing. I was willing to examine my role in it, without shaming myself. And also, when I observe how somebody, like my husband operates, who has a very different personality than mine, and nothing that anyone else does ever gets under his skin...

So, his advice for anyone who is upset, or heard about something, is grow up don't let it get under your skin. And, that works for him. And, it does not fucking work for me. To be told that over and over is extremely gaslighting, because not everyone is in the same place and that is not a problem.

It's one thing if you're just friends or spouses, that power dynamic is very different from when you are a client and you have a coach. There's that power differential and the coach has been entrusted with the growth and care of this person, when it comes to this specific Subject area, whatever, and then you have a responsibility to not do what my husband sometimes does, "You need thicker skin. Who cares? Don't worry about it." That doesn't work for everybody.

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Alex: Can we talk about BDSM in Dom's and Subs here, for a second?

Simone: Yes. Oh my god, please. Can I just tell you? So, BDSM... In my Mastermind, my non-mastermind, whatever it is; the Mystery Room we have in our Slack channel. We have different channels and there are two channels where you can ask for coaching; one is called BDSM Coaching, and the other is called Vanilla Coaching.

Alex: Oh my god. I love that.

Simone: If you want it, sometimes you want it BDSM style. Sometimes you want someone to come at you with a paddle and give you a little spanking. And you go ask for coaching, when you consent to that, in that channel. And when you're like, "No, I just need it nice, please," then you go to Vanilla.

Even in the BDSM channel, you can say the safe word and we'll stop coaching you. If you're like, "You know what? I need to process this." So, I just had to tell you this because I thought it was really funny.

Alex: Oh my God, I'm obsessed with that. I think I might borrow that for my...

Simone: You can totally steal it. Anyone of you who's listening, and is like, "I want to do that." You can borrow it.

Alex: I love that. So, I call myself a Business Dominatrix because, with power play, it's a roleplay. I love that it's such a good example of what life actually is. A Dom needs a Sub in order to perform their Dominant role. Without a Sub, they're nothing. So, they both need each other just as much as the other one. It's not that one has power, and the other one does not have power; as if they're both playing different sides of the same coin.

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Simone: Like, you need to exercise your power to play the Sub.

Alex: You do. So, I don't even remember why I brought this up? It was just because we're talking about oh, with coaching, right, with coaches to really think about them in that way that like, "Oh, no, no, no, no. Hold on." Though I might be taking on the role of Sub here, sometimes or maybe even frequently, it's a role. We are playing. This is only with...

Simone: My own pleasure, and growth, and evolution.

Alex: Yeah. And, I can call it quits when I want to. And also, this is just as much mine as theirs. I'm totally allowed to be like, "I don't like this."

Simone: And the other person cares just as much about your safety and whether you're enjoying it, as they care about their own safety and enjoyment. So, I think in a truly, consensual, healthy, BDSM relationship, which I don't know that much about except theoretically, but I've never done this in my life. So, here's something TMI about my sex life.

What I have learned is that, everything is consent-based. Everything has to be based on safety and consent, and it's for mutual pleasure. So, if it stops bringing you... For the Dom, it's very important that the Sub is having fun, and that they feel safe. And as soon as that becomes threatened, both are equally invested in fixing that shit.

Alex: For anyone listening, if you're in the position of being a client, and you're consistently not feeling safe, and you're like, "Okay, well, the same thing, restraint... Tying someone up with ropes can either be sexual assault, or a really fun time, depending on consent here.

So, if you're constantly feeling like you are being tied up, and then blamed for things, okay, well then, doesn't sound like that coach is behaving in a consensual way with you. Have you spoken up? What can you do?

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

Ultimately, it's okay to be like, "You know what? This feels abusive to me. I don't really know your intentions. Maybe they're perfectly fine, but I'm feeling abused. So, this isn't really helping me grow."

Simone: Those words, exactly, you can write them down if you need to, and say them. You know, I understand that it can be hard. But it starts with you exercising the power to say, "No, this does not feel safe." I have told clients, where I was sure there was consent, "Listen, you're full of shit. You're totally not taking responsibility for yourself. Grow up or make a decision to stop doing this anymore." And they were like, "Oh, yes Simone, give me more. That's what I need to hear." And, I love doing that.

Some people have a style of coaching where that's their thing, and I like to go there sometimes. And it's double, triple, it's an infinite infinity employment, if that's what you do to make sure, make sure that your client is truly in it with you. They want it, they're getting pleasure out of it. And, that they know that they're actually exercising their power.

So, it's not about, you always have to be soft and whatever. It's not about that, you can take a paddle and you can give out some spankings. But how much care are you putting into being curious about where the other person is and how safe they're feeling?

If you are not putting as much care into that, you might just be abusing as opposed to engaging in fun BDSM coaching goodness. I'm just saying this with full awareness that I have been abusive in the past, because I was not skillful enough, I was not curious enough, and I feel a lot of remorse about it.

Alex: Same here.

Simone: So, now that Alex and I just confessed all our sins on this podcast, and we're still here, and our businesses are probably not going to burn down, as a result of the conversation... If it does, you'll find out. I just want

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

this to be an opportunity to remind everybody that... I just want to normalize being accountable. I want to normalize talking about places where we messed up.

I think the reason that so much of the industry is slow to change, is because we've made it not okay to talk about these things, to admit to these things. To examine the places where it's like, "You know, I really messed up here. I regret this. I wish... I'm willing to take responsibility for it."

When you make that not okay, then there's no reason, there's no incentive for anybody to do this self-examination work. I want to normalize this. If you want to engage in the same process of exploring your own roles in this, and you want to make some changes, it's okay. I'm not saying you have to talk about all over the place.

But one, you don't have to have shame about it. Exercising your responsibility and being accountable is not the same thing at all, as being ashamed about something. In fact, it's the opposite. If you have shame, in the sense that where you're thinking, "Oh, no, I'm a bad person. I'm fucked up. I'm unworthy," that is exactly the thing that prevents you from being curious about how to do differently.

Alex, I think it's worth talking about how, if you're alive on planet Earth in 2022, you probably mostly grew up with precious few examples of a healthy power dynamics, healthy leadership that was accountable and caring, and consent-based. I could say, probably zero. I saw zero, close to zero examples. And, especially zero when it comes to people with lots of power.

So, if you didn't get something perfectly, because it literally was never taught to you, it was never modeled to you, and it was never discussed in any way that you've ever seen, anywhere in your life. Are you going to sit there and shame yourself that you didn't get it right? No.

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

The more I think about how it's structural and cultural, the more I want to take responsibility and be accountable. But the less I'm willing to turn it as a weapon against myself to feel unworthy.

Alex: Absolutely. Yeah. If we don't see it modeled, it's very hard to just kind of come up with it. Although, I think there's one tool to do that, it's to be aware of... I always have these thoughts. I think, again, we assume that other people do the same things, so I don't know, maybe I'm the only one.

But I know, when I've been in scenarios where there was a power dynamic, there have been things where I was like, "Oh my God, I wish that this was there. I would feel more safe." But then, when I went to go and implement, as I've run my business and everything, I wanted to do it the way that I was seeing other people do it, not the way that as a customer, I had wished that things were.

Simone: Okay, speaking of which, can we segue into talking about the kind of standards and policies that we have created for our containers, to make those ideas of accountability and safety explicit? To build it into how people experience containers.

Because I was just talking earlier, as we hit the record button, about how we came up with incredibly similar policies for our advanced mastermind containers, without ever talking to each other. We independently made these decisions that were incredibly similar and I know I would love to talk about that.

Hey, there you've listened to part one of this conversation. Stay tuned for part two being released on this podcast tomorrow.

Hey, if you want a shot of fresh inspiration and actionable tips to improve your marketing every single week in your inbox, you better get on my email list. Sign up to receive my free e-book called, *20 Unsolicited Copy Tips*. It's

[Joyful Marketing](#) with Simone Grace Seol

Ep #198: Safe Spaces and Accountability in Coaching Containers with Alex Ray - Part 1

been known to get people to come out of the woodwork and ask to work with you. So, get on that link, in the show notes, and I'll see you in your inbox next time.