

Ep #61: Healing Trauma and Pain with Julie Cantrell



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kim Guillory

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Welcome to *More Than Mindset*, the only podcast that bridges the gap between spirituality and success. Go beyond the mind with clarity and confidence coach, Kim Guillory, and learn how to integrate your passion to serve with your skills and experience to create a business you love. Let's get started.

Kim Guillory: Hey, guys, and welcome back to the show. I have a very special guest today. We have Julie Cantrell in the house. Julie is a New York Times and USA Today bestselling author whose books have received numerous literary awards and have found readers across both faith-based and general audiences. She's known for tackling tough topics with an empathetic lens and for using the power of story to bring hope and healing to others.

I'm going to add my little experience there also. Julie is a heart opener. When I read her books, she just turned these emotions on for healing. It was amazing. Her words just flow through and truly ignited this amazing sense of healing through my entire emotional body.

That's the best way I can explain it, Julie. I had to reach out to you, and I was like, "Okay, girl. What is it behind these stories?" Because every one of your books that I have read has just given me some sense of healing during it, after it. I was like, "I just have to share this."

Julie Cantrell: I'm so happy to hear that. That's my goal as an author, is to make people feel something. I joke sometimes that I love to make my readers cry. It's not that I want to torture my readers, but I do believe there's power in tapping into those deep emotions that we don't always access. So, I'm so glad when I hear readers come to me and tell me the story made them feel something. Thank you for saying that. I appreciate it.

Kim Guillory: It's so real, and just the work that I do myself is we can't heal what we don't feel.

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Julie Cantrell: Exactly. I think you just tapped into the key of life. You really did.

Kim Guillory: This is a really sneaky way to get in there.

Julie Cantrell: Well, you're right. I tackle a lot of hard truths through fiction because people's barriers are down with fiction. When we read a memoir or non-fiction, we tend to go at it with psychological barriers up thinking either this would never happen to me, or why did he or she do these things? It must be their fault. They must have deserved this.

We go at it with these insecure judgements and defensive barriers, and we don't let it shape us in the way that fiction can. When we enter a fictional world, there's no threat to us. It can't possibly happen to us because it didn't happen to anybody. It's all pretend. It's nobody we know. It's nobody close to us. We don't have to be defensive.

So, we can enter the lives of these other people, and we can either heal through similar traumas that my characters have experienced, or we can build greater empathy and compassion for people who have experienced things we haven't experienced in our own lives. That's my goal as a fiction writer, is to just carry us through those places that we don't want to go in real life.

Kim Guillory: That is so good. I'm like, "Hold on, hold on. I want to sit with that one for a moment." I feel that move through my body. There is such truth in that because in the coaching world, it's about getting through that defense, through that fight or flight mode. That's exactly what you just said. I'd never even saw it from that perspective. Thank you for bringing that to my awareness. We really want to experience. That's why we go on roller coaster rides, and that's why we go to the theater, and that's why we read books.

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Julie Cantrell: We want to feel. We want to feel again. It's in our purest state of being. We are emotional, spiritual beings. We come into this world so pure with the most open heart. We aren't guarded in any way. We trust and we love with this pure, open heart, and we feel what we feel. If we're sad, we cry. If we're scared, we yell. If we're happy, we dance, and sing, and laugh.

We don't shield ourselves from any of the real raw true human emotions, but then life comes swinging at us from all directions, and we start to carry wounds. We get hurt again, and again, and again, and again as we grow, and if we don't have healthy ways of dealing with those wounds, and processing the pain that comes with those wounds, then we start to resort to unhealthy ways of moving through the world.

By the time we reach adulthood, many of us are so damaged, and so hardened, or so numb, or so moved, or separated from our true selves, we can no longer enter healthy relationships. We can no longer open our hearts to love and be loved. That's why we all start to try to get back to at some point in our lives if we are doing the introspective work that most of us try to do.

Kim Guillory: Yeah, and the true selves, that's the curiosity, and even the confidence, right? My little boy, when he first started talking, we were in the grocery store. He would look at everyone. He would say, "Hi, hi, hi," and he would smile.

Now, once you've had a few experiences, just like you're saying, if it's rejection or not feeling good enough, you're kind of afraid. People cross on the sidewalks and never even look at each other. They're looking down. But I, for myself, love connection and love talking to people, but I have that fear also that if I say, "Hi," it's like, "Hm."

Julie Cantrell: Yeah, I think we've become a culture of disconnection, which is really interesting right now. We're recording this podcast while

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most of us are in social distancing mode right now with the virus, and I think it's made many of us aware of some of the unhealthy patterns that we've adapted to in our culture.

But we are so disconnected from true relationships with one another, and I think ultimately, our entire human journey comes down to loving and being loved, and entering in truly open, intimate healthy relationships with one another and with God. If we don't allow ourselves to do that because of these barriers, then we're missing the whole point of our life, the whole reason we're here.

Kim Guillory: The experience, expressing, contributing, connecting.

Julie Cantrell: It's what it's all about.

Kim Guillory: It's what it's all about. So, after I read your first book, which you're going to have to say it for me because it's the one I always forget the name of, but I love it so much.

Julie Cantrell: The New Orleans one is called *The Feathered Bone*.

Kim Guillory: That one. After I read it, I was swooped in with the relationship, the intensity. There was so much in there, and there was the dynamics of all of the characters. I was able to feel into all of their experience. I reached out to you. I didn't even know who you were, but I was like, "I have to know who this girl is."

Julie Cantrell: I love it when readers reach out to me and say things like that. They're like, "I feel like I've known you forever," and they just start opening up to me and telling me their truths, their deepest secrets that some of them have carried for 70, 80 years, some of them. It's so powerful to me. I never expected that when I started sharing my stories and publishing books. I didn't know the power that these stories would have to impact other people's lives.

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I hoped that it would. I hoped that my writing would bring healing and hope to other people, but I didn't understand the true capacity those stories carried out into the world to shape other people's lives. The feedback that I get from my readers is just so inspiring to me and so healing to me to hear how these stories have shaped them and felt them, again, connected.

Kim Guillory: Take me to when you first started because you sound surprised that it led to this.

Julie Cantrell: I'm surprised I'm an author at all. I tease. I'm a Louisiana girl, so I say I came into the publishing world through the back door with bare feet, and it's true. I didn't have a clue what I was doing. I had just always been a reader. I grew up in rural Louisiana. I did not have a model for living a life in the publishing world or being a writer.

I never knew anybody who did anything in the arts as a profession. I had been advised that's not a realistic thing to study. You don't go to school to study writing. You go study something practical that's going to bring you a good paycheck and benefits, which is very good advice for a girl coming from middle-class America.

I'm glad that I became a speech language pathologist, and I have relied on that career, still do today, but there is room for us in our human journey to tap into our creative sides too. I think it's so important that we don't lose that piece of ourselves because those creative outlets are the things that allow us to process those emotions, and tap back into our spiritual side, and grow into a fully whole integrated human being.

Kim Guillory: So, there was an unrealistic belief, yet, obviously, there was a desire or a passion. Tell me.

Julie Cantrell: Yes, I always wanted to be a writer. I didn't know what that meant, or how you would be a writer, and I was given different advice along the way, some good, some bad. What I've come to learn about that is that

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we all know who we really are, and what our gifts are, and what we have to offer, and what we can share with other people.

We know at our core what route we're supposed to be taking, but sometimes along the way we listen to the wrong voices. Some of those voices have really good intentions. They're people trying to help us in the best way they know based on what they know. Some of those voices are deliberately destructive. People who intend to deliberately destroy us.

But until we learn to listen to our inner guide, and be more discerning in our lives, we don't always know which voices to listen to, which people to trust, which people to let into our hearts and be close to. So, that leads us in all kinds of wrong directions in the world, and sometimes we get hurt badly, and sometimes it's just little things like we take the wrong career or whatever.

I think what I've learned ultimately is to trust myself, to know myself enough to listen to my own voice, and to listen to the voice of God in me to guide me on the right path. As long as I can go to bed every night knowing that I'm doing what I feel is right, that I'm not ever causing any intentional harm in any way to anybody, then I can feel good about the life I'm living.

Kim Guillory: It's like a reaction to something within themselves.

Julie Cantrell: Oh, definitely. It took me a while to learn that. I was carrying a lot of hurts for a lot of hurt people. I was carrying crosses that weren't really mine to bear.

Kim Guillory: Not really knowing what to do with it, right?

Julie Cantrell: Not knowing what to do with it, trying so desperately to heal the people that I loved, to hold on against some of the toughest storms imaginable, and just carry all the pain. Sometimes the people we love just can't love and be loved, or they don't choose to love and be loved.

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They haven't found a way back to their true self, to open their hearts and love and be loved. Then sometimes the more you try, the more they resist, and you can become swallowed whole by their pain if you let that happen. So, we just have to get back to basics and stay on the route that our little soul is on.

Kim Guillory: Yeah, I think that was the toughest thing to understand too, is that when we say the deliberate part, that everyone is just trying to get by, just don't have the resources or the coping skills just like we didn't at one point, but there was just something. I would love to know what the difference is because we could look into this, it's just this experience we have in this lifetime. It's just the role that we get to play.

Somebody has got to be that person in order to get that to come through, in order for that to evolve, and we can go down that route, but it's a very slippery slope because then there's this allowing all of this stuff. I call this shadow dancing. How do you love, and forgive, and have compassion for that when you were at the other end of it?

Julie Cantrell: Yeah, I think it's easy for me to forgive and have compassion, and that sometimes puts me in spaces where I don't necessarily protect myself because I'm so worried about protecting other people or making sure other people have their needs met.

So many of us are like that. That can be particularly damaging when you enter into an unhealthy relationship, which is why it's so key for us to have these hard discussions. Not to judge other people, or blame other people, or criticize other people. I have no intention to ever do that anyway.

But to start spreading the understanding and teaching the knowledge of what is the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy relationship because if we don't know what's healthy, we call the wrong things love.

Kim Guillory: If it's all we've ever seen.

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Julie Cantrell: That's right. Our normal is our normal, and we only know what we know. So, if all of our lives we've been taught that, for example, and I'm just using an example here. Let's say somebody is in a situation where they're being hurt on a regular basis by someone in their family that they love. That could be a parent, a sibling, an uncle, a neighbor, somebody in their inner circles.

Again, and again, and again, they're told that person loves you, that person is doing the best they can. She can't help it. He can't help it. Again, and again, and again taught to silence it, to deny it, to hide the pain, to hide the suffering, to hold it, to accept it, to swallow it, and to call it love.

Well, what are we going to do when we become adults? We're going to go out looking for love that hurts us. Love that we have to hide secrets about, and protect from the truth, and keep trying to forgive and carry. It just destroys too many innocent, good souls who are calling that love. Yes, we can still love those people without allowing them to destroy us. I think that's the key.

Kim Guillory: I feel the healer is awareness. We are aware.

Julie Cantrell: Yeah, you come through it, you find your way through it, and then it's only natural, if you're whole again, to look back and want to shine your light and tell other people, "Hey, I know the way. Follow me." You don't want to see people suffering. You don't want to see people in pain. When you feel like you have a way through it, you want to show them the way.

Kim Guillory: Yes, desperately almost.

Julie Cantrell: Desperately.

Kim Guillory: I'm like, "Is this passion, or is this desperation?" But I just know that once we come out of the suffering hole or whatever it is, if it feels

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like being in a pressure cooker that you just don't know how to get out of the intensity, and I just remember if ever I figure this out, I will spend the rest of my days sharing this, just giving other people an option or sharing something.

I remember I was trying to figure out how to be married, trying to figure out how to be a parent. Where do you go for this information? Where do you go for it to be different from your patterns? If it's not there, it's not there, so the way you do it is access to some of that stuff. I remember even reading *Perennials*. Am I saying this right?

Julie Cantrell: Yeah, the fourth novel is called *Perennials*. That's right.

Kim Guillory: That sibling rivalry, it doesn't need to be inflictfully painful. It's that defense that comes out. It's that lack of vulnerability of being able to be seen fully and wholly. I was having a conversation with someone this morning about this, especially, when you have this exuberating talent. How is that for you in your world when you actually became successful in your writing?

Julie Cantrell: That's a really good question. I think you learn pretty quickly that there will be people in your life who respond to different moments in your life in different ways that surprise you. Some of the people you think are going to be very supportive, and encouraging, and happy about your success may find your success threatening to them in some kind of way, especially if they preferred you in a small, little box.

They may do anything in the world to keep you back in that small, little box if there's a piece of your life that they no longer can control. Sometimes people who rise out of their normal state that the rest of their circle wanted them in pay dearly for that.

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On the other hand, you might be surprised by who rises up to meet you, and wants to elevate you, and wants to see you be the best version of yourself you can be, whatever it is you are being called to do.

Kim Guillory: I think it's such an important part of the conversation because I know in the work that I do with the emotional healing process, very often, that is the story that comes up, is they overheard someone saying something. I know for myself, most of my stories are out there now, but I remember being in sixth grade, and we had a drawing contest.

So, I had the coloring book, and I drew the picture, and it was fabulous. Matter of fact, I was accused of tracing. I didn't trace. I did not trace, but I for sure made up a story in that point, in that moment, that it is not safe to win. It is not safe to be good at anything because now, they're not my friend.

Now, they're mad at me because they didn't win, and I was highly sensitive. Well, I still am highly sensitive, and it really rocked my world, and I carried that. It was not just in that, but other things that I was naturally good at, and this is a big problem.

Julie Cantrell: You have hit a really interesting subject and an important one because, I think, especially as women, especially as women of faith, especially as women as faith in the South, I will say, because I grew up Baptist in Louisiana, and there's nothing wrong with that. I'm not being critical of that. I'm just sharing my experience personally and the experience I've heard from so many others.

We are day-by-day taught, conditioned, whatever word you want to use, to be as small, and quiet, and submissive, and invisible as we can possibly be and still live. Any women who dares to express her opinions, or her thoughts, or raise her voice, or differ in any way, or, as you say, stand out from the herd a little bit by using the gifts you've been given to do the best you can do at something, can sometimes find some feedback or flashback

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that is very damaging and very hurtful because you didn't win that art contest because you were trying to do anything wrong.

You won that art contest because you were given that talent, and you did the best you could do. What's wrong with that? That's a beautiful thing! You created something beautiful in the world and dared to share it with other people. That's what we're called to do, create. That's the most sacred act there is, creation.

So, there will always be people in our path. I say, we meet people in our path at every step of the way. Some of those people will nudge us towards the light. Some of those people will nudge us towards the dark. It's our job to learn and grow enough to figure out who is doing what, and to listen to the right people, and surround ourselves with the right people, and engage with the right people.

We can still love all the people we pass and offer love to everyone, and we never want to nudge anybody else to the dark. We always want to encourage people to come with us to the light, but we've got to be careful about who we follow and who we join.

Kim Guillory: Yeah, and it's that it doesn't feel safe to break the tribal agreement, that shame barrier. Like you were saying, I'm Southern also, and there's really a lot of, still, oppression and judgement, and there's a lot of division. I notice this even in business. When just starting out, there's a lot of support from your friends or from certain people, and then when you get to that point where you're actually successful, then that support stops.

There becomes this, "Well, they don't need it anyway." It's almost like there's this entitlement if you reach that certain point, then you are entitled to do whatever back. I was like, "That's interesting." What had hit for me was it felt like abandonment all over again even though it was through business with clients.

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It's like these stories just continue to run until we're awakened to the awareness of it that it's there. I brought it up because you have been so successful, and I just know that that's just the breeding ground for the stuff to come up.

I don't necessarily think it's a fear of failure because I found myself in the position that I was deathly afraid to fail, but I was just as afraid to succeed, and so I was stuck. I was stuck between the two. It was like I couldn't do either. If I exceed, then they won't like me, and if I fail, I will be so ashamed. There was no win. There was no upside.

Julie Cantrell: There's a safe space to stay in life. That safe space is a very small, little, tiny space. We can spend our entire lives living in that safe space and not drawing any kind of judgement, or criticism, or anything toward us. Or we can dare to live our lives fully, and freely, and truly as we were born to live.

That may bring some hard consequences our way, and we may find out truths about the people around us that we didn't want to know. We may find out who is really with us and who's against us. We may realize that not everybody considers life a shared team sport. Some people are really out with cutthroat competition. I never thought of life that way, and I don't relate to life that way.

So, I don't understand when people want to pull each other down, but it does happen, and, again, I think it goes back to their own wounds that they haven't processed and healed, and how they feel about themselves. What we have to be careful about, the only thing we can control, we cannot control how other people respond to anything we do in life, no matter what we do, but we can control what we learn to believe about ourselves.

When other people start throwing accusations at us that are untrue, are spreading lies about us that are untrue, and it's so hurtful, Kim. As you

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said, you feel at times so judged or condemned, or criticized at different points in your life when you haven't done anything wrong to deserve that.

But if you start believing that you're wrong to have had a business, or wrong to have entered an art contest, or wrong to have succeeded in any way, you start to crumble in that shame and those lies. We start to carry the wrong truths about ourselves, and we can get lost in that. We can.

Kim Guillory: When our mind starts to look for the evidence. We say it, we think it, so then we're basically telling our brain, "Hey, can you go get me some more evidence of that?" Because, really, we just want to know.

Julie Cantrell: You said it. Once we know the truth, we can deal with truth, but when our heads are spinning, especially if you're being gaslighted or messed with psychologically, that can destroy a soul faster than anything I've ever seen.

When your reality becomes false, and a false reality becomes your truth, you get so lost in the pain and the spiral of lies, and hate, and hurt, and confusion that are coming at you. You don't even know which way is up anymore. That is happening to so many people, and it's something we don't talk enough about.

Kim Guillory: I call it emotional manipulation. There's this shunning, and I remember having this conversation. I was like, "Hold on. This happens in the Amish community." I remember reading about this. You have the opportunity to stay in the tribe, but if you leave the tribe, you're out of here for good.

We wash our hands, and that is it. It is pruned off, done, and that emotional manipulation is so stinking strong. If you don't do what I want you to do, or what makes me feel a certain way, because there's the belief that you can make someone feel a certain way, then the price for that is going to be ignoring you. There is nothing more painful than being invisible. I have not

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found anything more painful than being invisible. Beat me, slap me, hit me, do something, but not be able to acknowledge me, see me, hear me.

Julie Cantrell: I call it being erased because if a person is so broken and so fragile that they can't even face the existence of you in the world because you are what they can't be. You offer the love they can't feel, or give, or receive.

Or you offer the talent that they wanted and couldn't tap into, or you offer the kindness, or the forgiveness, or the strength, or whatever it is that you have that they want, and they get this pathological envy because they can't face themselves or bring themselves to wholeness, then what they ultimately want to do is destroy you.

If they can't have it, they don't want you to have it, whatever it is. Whether it's success, whatever they define as success. It could be money, it could be a family, it could be whatever, your weight, your looks, whatever it is that they want that they can't have.

Some of the people, the most disordered people, and we can go all the way to the spectrum of extreme psychopaths, and they will do anything it takes to devour you, destroy you, and what I call eventually erase your being from this world if you allow them to. They'll stop at nothing.

Kim Guillory: It's so unconsciously done, that you don't even recognize it. Even for them, it's unconscious. They don't know what to do with the envy, and the jealousy, and the rage. It's actually a lack of safety. If they get better, if they do better, if they succeed, they won't need me anymore.

I work with a lot of couples, and if there's a threatening part that when the women start doing really well, that the guy is afraid like, "You'll leave me if you get bigger than me, if you get more than me." It's done out of love, if that makes sense, but it's done from the mind. Listen, when it comes down to everything, we just want to feel safe.

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Julie Cantrell: Everybody wants to feel safe, and everybody, I believe, wants to feel loved. I think that due to different damages along our way, some people don't ever feel safe or loved, and because of that, they start to behave in different ways. You tapped into one piece of it.

I think it can be that an unhealthy partner is jealous, or insecure, or worried that they're going to lose that person. So, they try to break that person down to make them feel less and less so that they won't leave. We're talking about intimate partnerships here that are dysfunctional.

It can go to more extremes than that. You could be with an unhealthy partner who is so controlling and such a master manipulator, that they can't handle not having control of every piece of you. So, if there's a piece of you that they can't control like, say, your artwork, they can't control what you put on that canvas, or what response you get if you hang it in a gallery, or what price you get if that painting sells. They don't like that.

But that doesn't mean that what they're doing is okay or right, or that you should continue to crumble and try to yield to their demands because to be honest, Kim, it doesn't matter how much you yield, or submit, or forgive, or give, or love, or understand. You're never going to become small enough or erased enough to make them feel whole and healthy again.

They will devour you, and they'll still be broken, and then they'll move on to just break somebody else. So, the key is love them, but sometimes you have to let them go. You can't allow them to devour your soul. We have this one soul we've been given to shuttle through this world.

One little soul we were born with, and it's our job to carry it through this life, through all the pains, and the hurts, and the hurdles, and the journeys, and the lessons, and still keep an open heart, and love and be loved. So, it's our job not to allow anybody to stop us from doing that.

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Kim Guillory: The part that I find that is so hard to understand or to master is what's really going on behind the scenes. There's so much shame. So, the whole story is not taken, and they go to people, maybe it's the priest, or maybe it's the counselor, and give parts, and then they're looking for that trying to do it right.

Being the perfect student, or the perfect Christian, or whatever it is. Maybe it's just like, "I have to keep the family together," or, "I was destroyed because my parents divorced." So, that would be the worst case scenario, and not seeing that actually maybe it's not the worst case scenario.

Julie Cantrell: Definitely. We carry the wounds that we carry, and they affect every choice we make moving forward. Unfortunately, and the reason why I believe in the power of talking about all of this stuff is because I do believe there's a solution.

I do believe there is a way to learn to process our emotions in healthy ways, and to analyze our wounds and our truths, and face them without the shame and the barriers, and grow as healthy human beings, and interact with each other in healthy ways, but we weren't taught those skills in our culture.

We are taught a lot of unhealthy things. Stuff it down. Numb it. Be quiet. Don't talk about it. If you're a woman, hush. Don't make a scene. If you're a man, get tough, don't cry. None of us have been given healthy emotional releases or channels to process these emotions.

Half of us don't even understand what our emotions are. We don't even have words for them, for what we're feeling. We don't even know what we're feeling. We just know we don't feel good. Something is wrong. That's all we know.

Kim Guillory: When we lack that awareness, it's the obvious. We look for the obvious as, "It must be you. It must be you, or it must be that, or it must

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be the President, or the person, or the behavior.” That's because there's that lack of awareness, even what the emotion is.

Julie Cantrell: It's easy. The easy way is to look externally and blame everything else. The hard way, but the only right way to do it, the only way through it, is to look internally and see what can I control? I can't control anything that's going on outside of me. What can I control, and how do I need to do this in a better way? But that's harder work, so we look at externally.

Kim Guillory: What role do you see pain playing in the healing process?

Julie Cantrell: Let me break it down like this. Let me make clear, I'm not a social worker. I'm not a counselor. I'm not a minister. I'm not a life coach. I have no certification to qualify me to give life advice in any way, and I don't ever try to pretend I am or claim to be an expert in anything.

I am just a girl who's known a lot of hurt, and loss, and grief, and suffering in my own life, and I have a deep compassion and empathy for other people in the world, and I don't want to see other people suffer. So, if I can help in any way guide other people to healing and wholeness, then that's what I feel called to do.

It's as simple as that for me. So, take it or leave it. What I say, it just comes from my heart. That's all it is. I believe that healing and our success in life, our success in healthy relationships comes down to two things. Our ability to process our truth and our ability to manage our pain. Two things that we aren't really good at as human beings.

So, if you want to break it down first and look at truth, as we've talked about a little bit today, we've been conditioned to silence the hard truths and not talk about things. Thankfully, our culture is changing. We're experiencing a shift right now, and some people are scared of it. It scares some people so

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much, they are feeling anger, and rage, and hate toward the truth tellers, the people who are speaking out.

I do think there's a healthy way to process truth, and an unhealthy way to speak the truth, and it should never come from a place of wanting to do harm, or danger, or revenge to anybody else. But I do believe it's important for us to examine all of our experiences, the good, the bad, and the ugly, in an honest way instead of shielding ourselves from those hard, hurtful points in our lives because those are the lives that have shaped us.

I try not to be too preachy, but I do have a deep faith, and I use these historical teachings. To me, they've stuck around for 2,000 years from the Bible for a reason. There're important lessons to be mind in there, and one of those stories is the story of the fig leaves in the garden.

Fig leaves, to me, represent the armor or the shield that's separating ourselves from our true selves because of the shame that we've carried. Separating ourselves from true, open relationships with one another, and separating ourselves from God. So, first thing we have to do is strip away those fig leaves, strip away the armor, strip away all the mask, and all the barriers, and walls that we've built around ourselves to survive this pain. That's first.

Once we really look at the truths, and we examine those. We have to go there. We have to go back to those memories and those painful experiences all along our lives and figure out what we have to learn from those moments, what we can gain. Then we have to deal with the pain we feel when we go back and look at those things because it's going to be painful. It's going to be hard to examine who hurt us, and how, and when, and why, and what part we may or not have played in that hurting.

Sometimes we're the ones doing the hurt. Sometimes we're innocently just victims of someone else's hurting, but we have to be able to look at that, and then process that pain. I've loved so many people that I've watched

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make terrible decisions in their own lives that have been destructive to them or to the people they love. I've spent my whole life trying to unravel those choices that people have made and try to figure out what led them.

These were not bad people. These were good people doing the best they could with the skills that they had. So, how do we stop this destructive cycle? How do we prevent ourselves from passing this generational pain onto our children? How do we help every soul heal?

In my mind, I've framed it this way, and again, I don't pull this from any science. This is just my heart telling me that we tend to deal with our pain in one of four ways. We either heal it by going back and look at it, processing it, and facing it all, and doing the hard work, and becoming whole again so that we don't hurt others or ourselves with it.

Or we do three unhealthy things with it. We can numb it. If we don't heal the wound, we can resort to numbing that emotional pain. We do that by turning to drugs, or alcohol, or porn, or sex, or social media, or work, or money, or adrenaline rushes, or food, or whatever it is that makes our pain stop for even just a second. We just don't want to feel it, so we numb it. All that does is lead us farther and farther away from our whole healthy selves.

The second unhealthy thing we can do is transfer our pain. Some of us transfer our pain in healthy ways. We go exercise, we run, we meditate, we process it through creating things, art, music, writing. We're transferring that negative energy and creating something positive with it. We're doing a chemical exchange in a way.

But others of us transfer it in negative ways, and we do that by pushing our pain onto other people. So, we can transfer it to another person physically by doing physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse to destroy them, financial abuse, spiritual abuse, psychological abuse.

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There're all these ways we can take our hurt, and throw it at somebody else, and make them carry our pain because we aren't strong enough to carry it. We can also transfer that pain onto our own bodies from our own souls by doing self-injurious behaviors like cutting and things like that. So, we want to feel, but we don't want to feel the hard stuff so we're going to make ourselves feel something else, something we can control.

We can slide that blade across our skin, and that's easier than dealing with the emotional pain that we don't know how to process. We still have to do something with it, so we're transferring it in some kind of way. That energy has to go somewhere.

The worst way that we deal with our pain is by ending it completely, and by that, I mean suicide. Our suicide rates are increasing like crazy across all ages because people are carrying more pain than they can bear. The world has become so hard, and cruel, and lonely, and they can't take another wound. They can't take it anymore.

When they're the kind of people who don't want to transfer it to other people, they don't want to hurt other people. They haven't found enough ways to numb it enough, and they just keep getting hurt. They don't know what else to do. I don't believe these people want to end their life. I believe they want to end their pain.

Kim Guillory: I think you said it. I can't really say it better than you have. It's just, "How do I end it? I can't get out of it. It does not stop. It doesn't go away."

Julie Cantrell: We just talked about the ways people transfer their pain, or process their pain, or end their pain, and it's showing up on every level of our culture. If you want me to, I'll share some statistics with you because I've done so much reading about all of this. Again, I don't do the research, but I research the research because I want to figure this out, Kim. I want to find solutions and make our world a healthier whole place for our children.

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We're going the wrong direction. We are really moving the wrong direction, and the all the statistics support that.

You can see now after almost four decades of decline, homicide among domestic partners is now on the rise again. More than three women a day are murdered by our spouse, our boyfriend in the United States. Nearly one in four women in America experience violence by a current or former spouse or boyfriend at some point in their lives. These are just the ones who actually report it, and we know very few people report it.

Elder abuse is on the rise. Every 92 seconds in our country, sexual assault happens. Every nine minutes, that victim is a child. Mass shootings are no longer a rare occurrence for us. It's become our norm. It happens almost every day depending on how you define a mass shooting. We're the third worst nation in the world for human trafficking. We've had a steep rise in sex trafficking with victims averaging 11 years old for boys and 13 for girls.

These are heavy statistics, and I'm not trying to bring anybody down. I'm saying these for a reason. Our drug use is on the rise, especially for teens. Our American teenagers are twice as likely as European teens to turn to illicit drug use. Why? They're numbing their pain. And, as we reported, suicide is on the rise. So is eating disorders, cyber bullying.

The number of young people joining gangs across all races, and one out of six American children are now taking psychotropic prescription medications. Why? Because we aren't teaching them healthy ways to cope with their pain. We have got to shift this mindset in our culture. I really believe it all comes down to trauma. It's all about trauma and how we heal.

Kim Guillory: I'm with you. I am with you. Unresolved trauma, crisis that's residing in the body, and then the next incident, on top of the next incident, on top of the next incident, on top of the next incident stacks the triggers too much, and they don't know what to do with it. We don't have the coping

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skills. One thing, you said it just now, and I 100% agree with where we need to stop it at, and I have a huge place in my heart for mothers.

I believe it does need to start in the highchair, that we're trying to target this from the electric chair, which is way further down, but we have an opportunity to stop the generational patterns with us right here, right now. We chose to be here in this time and space. We chose to be here in all of this.

Julie Cantrell: I know it's easier said than done, and I can't say I've always made the right decisions in my own life and protected my own children in the way that I should have, and maybe that's why I'm so passionate about sharing what I know now. I've made plenty of mistakes. I have never once in my life intentionally hurt anybody, but there's two kinds of ways of hurting people, unintentionally and intentionally.

We all cause harm in different ways to one another, but most of us are sorry about that, and we try to learn from it, and make amends, and make things better. That's the key. I think we're all going to make mistakes, but we have to go back and look at the things we've experienced. All of it.

Kim Guillory: For sure. So, I'm a mother of five. I had no idea what it was like to have a mom and dad in the house. I didn't have that support. I never had the upbringing of a mother at all, so trying to figure it out and not knowing where to get the resources. I don't know how to do this, and I surely, like you, didn't want to intentionally hurt anyone.

I know for a fact that I have. I have this conversation with my children. They laugh at me about it. They love to bring it up and say some of this stuff. I'm not going to say it here, but some of the things that I did as a parent. I was like, "You have no idea. I was just trying to survive. I was trying to get by. I was actually trying not to kill myself."

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My husband had three children, we had one together, and then I had a one. I had a six-month-old, he had three babies, and then we had one together. It was a lot of learning each other, being in each other's environments, just figuring all of this out. So, I'm right there with you with saying I probably did not do it all right, but I know for sure that I was always trying to be aware, and I was always trying to figure it out.

How can I share this experience with someone else where they maybe won't have to experience the intensity of the unknowing, or the intensity of the pain, or trying to figure it out themselves? I do love that we're even having this conversation about awareness. This is why I'm so passionate about the integrative life coaching, is we bring in all of these aspects, even the financial, so a lot of pressure.

Even in the animal world, and there's just an intensity of pain, and we're feeling this collectively. You talked earlier about being an empath. We feel this. Some of us feel it stronger. I do believe that's why we are the healers who are called to do this emotional healing work. That's not coincidental. I'll just put that little plug in there for you.

I really believe when I read your first book, I was like, "She's one of us." This is just the tool that you use to bring that work forward, so I'm going to ask you to maybe take that a little bit deeper here. You're a person of deep faith. What role do you see that faith has had in your own healing, and how do you think that might be an important piece of the puzzle?

Julie Cantrell: I love that you asked that, first of all. Thank you. I know it's a topic that, especially in today's society, we try to steer clear of, and I understand why. I consider faith and religion two different things. So, I want to be careful and acknowledge the fact that many people carry spiritual wounds, our deep trauma wounds, because they've been abused within a church system or a religious system.

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They don't want to talk about religion, think about religion, be a part of religion, and I get it. So, I'm very careful because I don't want to make those people feel like I don't understand or I don't care about them. They are just as much a part of this story as the rest of us.

I see faith as something totally different. Religion is a practice to help guide us along our spiritual journey, and everybody has a different practice they've been taught, or have been raised in, or found that works for them. That's fine. There's pros and cons to all of that.

Faith is deeper. Faith is believing there's something bigger than us in the world. Faith is believing that we're here for a divine purpose in this life. Faith is believing in the great mystery, that we don't have all the answers, and we're not supposed to yet, but we're supposed to be searching constantly for the lessons that we're given, and the meaning behind them, and ways to grow and be better people at every step of our way.

That, to me, is faith, and that is something I believe any of us can tap into and rely on when life gets too hard. So, that's what I speak of when I speak of faith. Now, because my upbringing and my spiritual practice has been Christian, I turn to the Bible for many, many lessons that I've learned in my own life. I like to use those stories in my teaching.

That doesn't mean I'm trying to be a preacher, or a minister, or pretend I'm some kind of theologian. I'm not. Again, it's just a tool that's helped me, and I hope it can help other people. So, when I look at faith, I believe the role is that the root of all violence, the root of all negative energy in the world, is that we have become separated from God. We have become separated from love. We have been separated from our true purpose and our true selves.

That's what it boils down to for me, and that's why I consider faith or spirituality a big piece of the healing process. We have to get back to the realization that we all have the sacred energy force within us that I call

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God. It is a positive energy source of love, and when we separate ourselves from that love, we are not living the lives we're meant to live.

Kim Guillory: Saying that, I'm going to just reveal a little bit about my story in here because it is so in align with this. The part of about how do we either heal it, numb it, transfer it, or end it. For myself, it was to end it. I know this to be true, what you just said, because I had such an innocent mind at the time.

The reason that I chose to end it was so that I could eject this world and go to heaven. That was my understanding. I found the Bible at a very young age, and it basically was my parent. It was the little, red book, the New Testament that you get in fourth or fifth grade.

I don't know, they used to have them at school. We would walk to catechism school back in the day. I was scared, I was alone, I was by myself. I didn't have experiences that were reminding me that I was unsafe and that I needed to be afraid. I would go to the back of that, and I would look at fear. Then it would tell me where all of the scriptures were, and I would follow it.

So, I don't even know where I got that resource from or how I understood it other than it's something inside of us. I remember writing the letter, the suicide letter, and I, for sure, was going to heaven. I needed to reconnect with myself, and I knew that's where myself was. Does that make sense?

Julie Cantrell: Yes, it does. It does to me. I understand.

Kim Guillory: It's just confirming what you're saying is from a practical standpoint. Yes, that's exactly it. I would hear, "Oh, it's so selfish," or, "They shouldn't have done it," or, "It's a sin. They're going to go to hell." All of these stories. That was the furthest thing from my innocent mind at the time. I just knew I was going home. It is too painful here. I changed my mind. I've got to get out of here.

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Then my huge disappointment was I woke up. That was a whole other level of rejection to actually be rejected by heaven. Like, "Oh, my God. God even God rejected me. What the hell? I'm stuck here." I was coming from such an innocent place. You could hear my voice. It was so real. I have just a huge compassionate space for who are thinking about ending it.

It is actually yourself that you are looking for. It is your connection to divine that you are looking for. It is a connection. You have separated from yourself. You have separated from God. You've separated from people. We were meant to be connected, and I think that's why we're seeing so much of it, is they're feeling that disconnection and don't know how to get it. So, it's like, "I need to reconnect. It's too much pain here. I've got to get out of here. I can't stop this."

Julie Cantrell: You said something. It hurts me to know that you felt that way before, but I think so many people have. They don't talk about it. They don't share it, but so many people have been brought down to that bottom moment of life where you just throw your hands in the air and say, "I can't do this anymore. I can't take it anymore. What do I do?"

But you know what? I'm glad that you woke up. I truly believe that every single one of us that are here right now living and breathing today are here because our job is not done. We still have work to do. There's a reason you woke up, Kim. Maybe it's just to do this podcast today.

Maybe there's one person on the other end of this speaker hearing hope, a message of hope, and maybe that's why you're here. But whatever it is, we're here because we have important sacred work to do, and that's what we have to start focusing on. That's it.

Kim Guillory: So, what is it that you want the listeners to know? Even if it's resources that you love on the topic or on things. This could be anything, Julie. Where's the passion driven from for you to write? I'm realizing now that you didn't know that was a gift that you were bringing into the world.

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That you were surprised. How has it impacted you knowing that now, even me confirming it?

Julie Cantrell: Well, it's changed my whole life in every way, every possible way. I had no idea. When I wrote my first novel, I had no plans to publish it. I just felt driven to write it and see if I could do it. I didn't know then that it was a tool for me to heal, or that it would be a tool for other people to heal. I had no idea.

I was just telling the story that was coming through me just for a fun personal challenge because I loved to read and write. It has grown into something so much bigger, and so much bigger than me. I just try to take it one word at a time and hope that each word delivers hope and healing to the people on the other side.

Again, if you take it back to Jesus, even he said, he used the power of story. He was a storyteller. He said, "Come sit by me and let me tell you a story." He knew that on the other side of that story, there would be people with ears that could hear and eyes that could see whose hearts would open.

But he also knew that there would be people on the other side whose hearts he could not open because they refused to take away the barriers and the shields in front of their eyes, and their ears, and their hearts. Even he couldn't change that, and he knew that. So, that's my goal as a writer.

I can't save everybody. I can't heal everybody. I can't reach everybody, and I certainly can't please everybody. But if there's one person on the other side getting the message that they're supposed to be given, then I believe I'm doing the work I'm called to do, and I'll just keep doing it one word at a time.

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Kim Guillory: That's so good. So glad to know because I have more reading to do. I'd like if you could put a plug in for the books that you've written.

Julie Cantrell: Well, I've written two little children's books. They're called, *God Is with Me Through the Day* and *God Is with Me through the Night*. Then I switched to historical fiction, and my first two novels were *Into the Free* and *When Mountains Move*. Then I went to contemporary fiction, so I wrote *The Feathered Bone*, which is set in Louisiana, as you mentioned, and *Perennials*.

Then I just published with another person, a collaborative work of creative non-fiction. It actually tells the tale of a man who is healing from his trauma, which was my first time to approach that kind of wounding from a man's perspective, so I enjoyed that.

Now, I'm doing a couple of other little projects, but nothing is slated to be published quite yet. I'm writing two novels. Someone else's memoir that I'm ghostwriting, and then this journal that I'm hoping will offer a tool for people to go access their truths, and then process all the pain and work through it through the power of word and story.

So, I'll be providing prompts to people each week to help guide them back through those painful moments, and mind the lessons, and the healing that they need so that they can open their hearts again and love again, which is ultimately our whole reason for being here, to love and be loved.

Kim Guillory: I love that. That's a project that I'm working on with the integrative life coaches right now, is the storytelling, and really, we have a creative in the group, and so she's helping to take them through that, so I love that you're doing that with the journal.

So, guys who are hearing this, you know that that's coming up, that that's something you can be looking for. I have one more question for you, and

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then just kind of plug into where these people can find you, whatever you want to share. The floor is yours. What nugget of information do you want listeners to walk away from our conversation right now?

Julie Cantrell: There's two things. I think the bottom line is that when it comes to emotional pain, we have to allow ourselves, as we said, to reveal it, to feel it, and to heal it. If there's anybody out there feeling hardened or hopeless, I just want them to know there is a way through it, and there is a way to get to the other side and find healing. It all starts with the truth.

Then I want all the other listeners out there to just feel empowered to live their best life. I want them to learn to listen to that still small voice inside of ourselves, and try to follow the people who are guiding us toward the light, and try to be one of those people in other people's lives. Just remember that we have this one little sacred soul we're carrying, and that our only call is to love one another, and to love God, and to love ourselves.

Kim Guillory: What a beautiful way to end. All righty. I enjoyed this so much.

Julie Cantrell: Thank you, Kim. I have too. It's been a joy to share this time with you, and I'm really happy and honored to be here. Thank you, I appreciate it. I do have a website. My website it just my name. So, it's JulieCantrell.com. My books can be found anywhere books are sold. Some of them are a little older now, so you won't find them on the shelves, but any bookseller can still order them. Or you can order them for my website, or you can usually find them in libraries too.

Kim Guillory: If someone is new to feeling their emotions, which book would you tell them to start with?

Julie Cantrell: I think every one of my books are different, and they all reach different people in different ways. Every reader has different books that they feel have spoken to them or that they consider their favorite, and

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it's really just kind of an individual thing. It really is. All of my books tackle hard topics. Sexual abuse, suicide, addiction, domestic violence, trafficking.

Lots of topics we don't like to talk about, but I try to do it in hopeful, inspiring ways that are healing. I never try to be voyeuristic or graphic. I don't try to go to extremes with anything, but I also don't avoid the truth. I just try to look at how we can face the worst of the human journey and get through it with our souls intact.

Kim Guillory: You talk about tackling the tough stories, but I never feel that way. I never feel afraid to turn the page or jumping off the edge of my seat. I always feel they open and do something. So, maybe there is something in your writing that we get the idea, we get the picture, but because you don't go there, that's why they feel safe. Is that an assumption I'm making?

Julie Cantrell: I hope so. For me, it's not about what's happening physically. I don't have to give you the gritty details of what's happening to someone's body for you to understand the spiritual, and emotional, and psychological journey that they're taking.

So, that physical part, we get enough of in this world. That's all we get in this world, is this physical stimulation. I don't care about that. I want to take us deeper. That's what I try to do with my characters.

It's all about relationships and the way we respond to different situations in healthy or unhealthy ways. The physical part is just the part to get us through the story, but that's not the part that carries the weight for me in the storytelling.

Kim Guillory: It's kind of even with Corona, right? This is just the thing that presents the opportunity for the other stuff to come up.

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Julie Cantrell: Sometimes we have to have that physical barrier to make us stop in our tracks and take a look, but that's not the part that really affects us.

Kim Guillory: All righty. Well, we are going to end it here. So, until next week.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *More Than Mindset*.