

**Candice Schutter:** Welcome back to The Deeper Pulse and the 'cult'ure series. Just a quick heads up that following today's release, I'll be taking a short break between episodes to focus on some behind the scenes production. But if you're itching for something more in the next couple of weeks while I'm on break, head on over to Patreon where there's a slew of bonus episodes and where content will continue to drop weekly. And this week it includes a very special follow up to the conversation I'm about to share with you.

So let's get to it.

Now, back in the day, I would've described myself as someone who is spiritual but not religious. And yes, I would've said it just like that, very matter of factly with a hint of arrogance. Because as a spiritual but not religious person, I considered myself more savvy than the average bear. I didn't literalize the stories of prophets. I didn't attend church or pray to a bearded white man living up in the clouds. No, I was living at one with my body and the elements, practicing a sense of connection to oneness and the whole of life.

I was entirely convinced that there wasn't anything dogmatic about my beliefs, because I embraced so-called universal truths that all spiritual traditions have in common. Never mind the fact that I never bothered to ask who it was that was defining these so-called truths.

Logical fallacies aside, I came by my beliefs honestly. But it turns out the spiritual but not religious dogma that I was imbibing wasn't in fact as progressive and inclusive as it imagined itself to be. And in some ways it was just as oppressive and delusional as the fundamentalist religious frameworks that I had long shied away from.

I recently looked up the word religion and I found three definitions.

"A particular system of faith and worship."

"Belief in and worship of a superhuman power or powers."

"A pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance."

In retrospect, it turns out my sort of spiritual was all kinds of religious. For years, I placed my wholehearted faith in metaphysical teachings, devoting countless hours to body practices and thought re-patterning that promised physical, emotional, and spiritual salvation.

I won't say that I ever really fully bought into the literalized notion of enlightenment, but I did spend years and countless dollars clamoring up the ladder of human potential, hoping to grow beyond my ego and achieve something close to transcendence.

Well, that's what I told myself. Practically speaking, I was just doing the best I could to outrun a lifelong battle with anxiety and depression. When I look back through my journals from the early aughts, I can't help but cringe at the dissociative affirmations that I find written over and over again throughout those pages.

And yet at the same time, I also feel immensely grateful for all the ways in which my new age religion came along just in time. Saving me from a full-blown mental health crisis in my mid to late twenties.

Spirituality, religion. These can be lifelines and I'm not suggesting they are without merit, as long as they remain fluid and individually expressed. But when our collective beliefs concretize into dogma, that's when shit gets culty.

I've spoken to this before, but in the new age world, a lot of near enemies are operating behind the scenes. Something helpful, such as mindfulness, can end up functioning more like complacency or dissociation. In the circles that I ran in at least, presenting one self pleasantly became much more important than showing up real and authentic. And the higher order of things is made to matter more than what is happening deep within our own hearts and in the bodies of those around us who are suffering.

And all of this happens even when the best of intentions are operating. It's such a slippery slope, the fine line between belief and dogma. And I'll be honest with you, I'm a little afraid of it.

In an earlier episode I shared about how strange it is to be in this world of cult recovery while living 20 minutes outside of Sedona. Now, in case you don't already know, Sedona, Arizona is a new age mecca of sorts. Listen to episode 40 for more on that. And it's only really since I've lived here that I've really come to understand how new ageism is a modern day religion of sorts. New age spiritualists speak a very common language, and in these parts it can be a little over the top. It's sort of like I've landed in the fundamentalist sect of new age religion.

The point is just like I don't much enjoy hanging with folks who are hell bent on spoonfeeding me passages from the Bible. I am likewise disinterested in attending local light worker events that appropriate and commodify indigenous traditions into a paternal system of so-called spiritual advancement.

It all, quite honestly, makes my stomach turn these days, and it's probably because I see myself in their commodified promises. I recognize all the ways in which I was not only complicit, but actively participated as proselytizer and purveyor back in the day.

But I gotta admit to you that I didn't so much choose to walk away from that life. It sort of just happened to me. It's something that's still happening. Because walking away from any religion means losing not only faith, but friendship, a common language, a sense of belonging, and a persona I had spent over a decade perfecting.

I hung on as long as I could and tried like hell to spiritually bypass all evidence that continually contradicted the limited worldview I'd been taught to inhabit. But after a while, that shit just stopped working.

In the 1980s, John Wellwood coined the term spiritual bypassing, defining it as "the tendency to use spiritual ideals and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks."

It's a word that's now commonly thrown around in new age circles, but it's rarely understood.

First of all, spiritual bypassing isn't all bad. It can be extremely beneficial when life happens all at once, when we're emotionally or situationally leveled by circumstance, overwhelmed by change or sudden loss. Used as a temporary strategy for psychological relief, a spiritual bypass can be soothing, emotionally stabilizing. It really only becomes problematic when it is employed excessively, when it becomes a way of life.

Psychotherapist, Robert Augustus Masters, quite literally wrote the book on spiritual bypassing, and he defines it this way.

Spiritual bypassing is "a spiritualized strategy, not only for avoiding pain, but also for legitimizing such avoidance in ways ranging from the blatantly obvious to the extremely subtle."

He continues:

"Spiritual bypassing is a very persistent shadow of spirituality, manifesting in many ways, often without being acknowledged as such. Aspects of spiritual bypassing include exaggerated detachment, emotional numbing and repression, over-emphasis on the positive, anger-phobia, blind or overly tolerant compassion, weak or too porous boundaries, lopsided development, debilitating judgment about one's negativity or shadow elements, devaluation of the personal relative to the spiritual, and delusions of having arrived at a higher level of being."

If you've been listening to this series, this all sounds strikingly familiar. There's a lot of overlap between what happens in spiritual bypassing and cult dynamics. I could spend an entire episode offering examples of all of the above, but there's really no need because none of this is novel or unique to religious frameworks. The truth is, there's no way to extricate spiritual bypassing from white patriarchal norms.

For example, spiritual bypassing has a whole hell of a lot in common what is known as tone policing, which feminists and anti-racism advocates have been calling out for over a decade. Tone policing is the thing where people with greater privilege and proximity to power disregard the points being made in an argument, focusing instead on tone of voice or the emotionality with which the argument was expressed.

It's essentially a form of gaslighting. It's hearing, but not listening. Telling a rightly outraged person to calm down in order to avoid the discomfort that results from having a difficult conversation.

Tone policing is something that happens in any hierarchical culture, and it's been ingrained into me since childhood. I have to say that I have long been a good soldier when it comes to diplomacy, to such an extent that I often leave out content that is supercharged for me because there is a tape playing in the back of my mind, cautioning me against critiquing, expressing strong emotions, or passing judgment on others.

I mean, there's just so much here. I'm gonna stop there for now because I really wanna get into today's conversation and what we're really here to look at which is how the messages of new age wellness culture are themselves indoctrinating. And how as helpful as they might be at certain times in our lives, perhaps we were always intended to outgrow them.

Now, longtime listeners of the podcast may recognize today's guest. Monica Welty was featured in episode 29, almost exactly one year ago. And in that first conversation she shared intimately about the tragic loss of her newborn child, Harvey. The episode released on what would've been his ninth birthday, and she's back to share with us how the new age dogma that she had long imbibed around the time of his death, didn't provide a sense of solace, but instead made her grief all those years ago all the more unbearable.

Here's my conversation with Monica Welty.

Good morning.

**Monica Welty:** Good morning.

**Candice Schutter:** So how are you doing this morning?

**Monica Welty:** It's like just this whole week I've been waking up with just the most intense anxiety. Like the thought comes into my head of like whatever thing I'm remotely worried about and that it's like the end of the world.

Like this morning I woke up and I was like, what am I even thinking going onto this podcast and talking about all this stuff and it's like, so like pointless. And, you know, whatever. Like it's does, it's not, doesn't mean what you think it like, and it's like, it took me about a week. So I think it was like two days ago, I was like, oh yeah, this is the body memory, right? Like of something terrible is about to happen.

That really is the worst thing, right? That really does elicit this level of anxiety. And it's like, even though it's been 10 years, it's it's still there. And every year I'm like, what the hell's going on?

**Candice Schutter:** Right. Catches you off guard every year.

**Monica Welty:** Every year. Every year. Cuz I'm just pretty much like going about my life, you know. And then it's that kind of thing where it's like, oh, this feels like an out of, um, you know, overreaction, right. To whatever's happening, but, um, but it's not a reaction to what's happening.

**Candice Schutter:** Right. The body's remembering.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Right. Yeah. I find it really so interesting that we circled back. I mean, you and I stay in touch, that's just a thing. But that we circled back to what's sort of come alive and, and what really has sparked in the last few weeks for you around the content that's being covered in the culture series which I'm gonna have you share with listeners what that is.

But that, the timing of it, I think is no accident that it was almost exactly a year ago that we sat down and did this the first time and leading into the anniversary of Harvey's passing. And here we are again. And you're in sort of this next layer of healing around it and being able to articulate, I think, I don't wanna speak for you, I'll let you speak for yourself, but just witnessing you, it's like your ability to articulate not just the grief that you've experienced, but like what sort of got in the way of your healing.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And I'm just, when you reached out and shared just from the depths of you these realizations that you were having, it just felt so important to bring you back to share with others because so much of what you said was so resonant for me.

And I feel like you of all people have taught me that grief is this ongoing journey. That there is no end. And these realizations, being able to be transparent around them and share them openly and have aha's together is part of how we carry ourselves through it. And you're just such a beautiful example of that. And so I'm just really honored and happy to have you back here with us. Even as it's in such a bittersweet time.

**Monica Welty:** Thank you.

And also, I mean, we rescheduled, I don't know, three or four times, right? I had Covid and right? So it's just real, you know, kismet that this is happening at this time of year. And I think that it is the accumulation of like a lot of what we'll talk about today and I'll share about my new understandings. It's things that I already knew because I experienced them, but it's in listening to your podcast and I think also A Little Bit Culty has helped too, but especially in yours because it's helped me to understand a little bit more of my like psychological mechanism.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** Of why I experienced the things that I experienced around my son's death. And why, like being engulfed in, you know, new age wellness culture for the last 20 plus years just really had a lot of bad, effects on me in that, in that process.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

Well, we're obviously encouraging folks to listen to episode 29 where you and I first spoke and you tell the actual story of this sort of 13 months of loss that you experienced. Um, so I won't invite you to rehash that, but maybe enough, so to just lay the foundation for listeners who are just meeting you for the first time of like, what were the circumstances that you experienced and specifically as it relates to these new realizations that you've had, and maybe

sharing just a little abbreviated version of the story in the context of this culture that you're talking about that was sort of shaping your perceptions around what you were experiencing, where you were when you experienced all of this loss.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah. Well, I was always interested in sort of alternative healing and nutrition and like the alternative world. And then I got involved in the Org, and I was a teacher for a decade. and so we're all well aware of you know, the culture there.

And then I went to a massage school in San Francisco and it, massage and coaching and that had a really, some very culty vibes as well. And so the version of my new age wellness culture was, body awareness was a huge, huge thing at the Org and teaching it and practicing it. And it was all about sensing and learning about your body and being so deeply in touch with your body. And one of the trainers had said one time to me in a training, that his body awareness was so deep that he could sense his internal organs.

**Candice Schutter:** This was Raul, yeah?

**Monica Welty:** Raul. Yeah. And so I was like 20 years old or whatever, you know, 22 or 23, and just thought that's incredible. And I had had depression and anxiety and all this stuff. And the, and the Org practice really did truly get me into my body and helped me heal and move that clinical depression. So that, so there's, you know, again, with the, there's, there is good that happens.

**Candice Schutter:** Both and.

**Monica Welty:** Both and.

But, you know, he had said that, and it had sort of set this bar for me where I felt like, oh, I want that. I wanna be able to like, be so inside my body. And then the culture at the Org of the like, we are the best thing that there is out there. And this is the only way to do it. And another time he told me like, why are you doing Pilates? Like you should be getting everything you need from this practice. And right?

So the, so that culture of like, this is the best thing really infiltrated into me that I felt like righteous about it. And this was the most important thing, was really this exploration of sensation in our bodies. And I was so good at it. And I had said, like becomes part of your identity, right?

**Candice Schutter:** A hundred percent. And being body aware becomes the part of your identity. Like I I felt similarly in terms of the righteousness and the sort of sense of entitlement in a way to like, I have this understanding that other people don't have. I have this connection to self, which is painfully ironic looking back. But I have this connection and now I will say and qualify, I have this connection to my physical sensation self that is unparalleled. There's no other path that helps you connect at this level to felt sensation. That does become a sense of identity. Because there's so many principles wrapped around what do you do with that? Like how you walk through the world and how it supposedly impacts every

relationship, right? Next level, second level of training, every relationship that you have, and third level of training every way that you engage with every energy that exists in the world.

Right?

**Monica Welty:** Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. All stemming from this awareness of body sensation. So I just wanted to jump in and just underscore for listeners who aren't familiar with the practice like this this goes deep. It's it, it's beyond, Hey, let's get in touch with our bodies. It is a worldview. And a way of walking through the world.

**Monica Welty:** Yes. And it's a way that scaffolded me. When I say that I like healed the clinical depression. It was a replacement for a mental schema, like a way of looking like a worldview, a way of looking at the world that worked better for me than the depression, right? And it focused also on joy.

And again, there was very real moments of that, right? But it did become, like you're saying, this entitlement and this better than that was part of that culture. No one ever said it, right. But it was like clear. And we were bringing it out into the world and giving this gift to everyone else.

So then my massage and my coaching school, which also had incredible benefits. I mean, I still practice massage. And every day I think about my teachers and what I learned and how I'm still working with what they taught me.

But it also had a lot of, like, for example, law of attraction and The Secret. And we read Think And Grow Rich. We read The Body Believes Every Word That You Say. Um, thoughts become things was like a little tagline, right? And I took this on as part of my identity too, right? This was really a way. Wow, if I have so much control that I can change what happens in my life. I mean, my depression had a lot to do with like, I can't control what happens. And this was a way to say, oh, you're actually in almost complete control. If you think positively. And it was very, very focused on gratitude. And we would do all these gratitude practices. And again, I was so good at that because what we would do is we would go into our body sensations to feel the gratitude. It wasn't just like saying thank you. It was a whole thing where we like went in and we looked into each other's eyes and appreciated and blah, blah, blah.

And again, it did help, it did create lasting connections. It did help me, again, with my depression and with my worldview, right? That looking out into the world and appreciating and seeing small things that bring you joy, it's huge. It's huge for someone who has depression or anxiety or other, you know, challenges like that.

And then I would test it, right? So I was like, okay, I wanna start my massage practice. I don't have any money. So my first test is gonna be that I am gonna start my massage practice without paying any rent in San Francisco. And that felt like that's never gonna happen. Right? And I did all of, I don't know, we wrote things down and we did the gratitude practice and



there's all these exercises. Focusing on it and you know, all this exercise around it. And I met this woman and she was like, Hey, why don't you come do massage at my Pilate studio and we'll just trade for rent. And I was like, oh my God, that's the free rent. I don't have to put any money down to start my practice. There it is.

It's working. I manifested it. Here it is. My thoughts became things, right.

And so, that happens and confirmation bias happened. And right? Everything that worked out the way I wanted it to work out was because of my own internal power of thoughts and gratitude.

**Monica Welty:** and that didn't, I would have an explanation for. Right. Oh, this must not be in my best interest.

**Candice Schutter:** Exactly. Yeah. It's not meant to be.

**Monica Welty:** It's not meant to be. Right.

And I, I feel like one of the most ironic things about it is that really, this was about a decade. And it was really, I was really happy. It was one of the happiest times of my life. I was in my early twenties and I was living in San Francisco. And I was with my then husband, and I was building this business and, you know, everything was just going great thanks to how in my body I was and how much I was able to create my reality.

So we had a kid, and then we moved back up to Portland. And then I got pregnant with my second child. And I had also gone to nutrition school, coaching school, massage. And so I realized like, okay, I need to expand. I can't just do massage. So I was like, okay, while I'm pregnant, I'm gonna like set up these online classes and it was again the same thing like, I have so much important knowledge to share with the world. And my message needs to get out there, right? Because I have all this knowledge that other people don't have and it's against the mainstream, and right. People need to know.

And so I would go to work and the more and more pregnant I got, the more and more and and this is a thing I think that a lot of women have that we don't talk about is like the more and more pregnant I got, the more and more I remembered what the experience of having a newborn was and having a toddler was.

And I was so excited about my work and how this was going to affect the time I had at work. My ability to do my work. Like how it was gonna set me back. And I would think to myself, why did I do this? Why am I having another baby? I really have all this important stuff to put into the world. Like, I wish I had thought this through more. Right?

And it was for the most part, just when I thought about doing my work. But it's a real thing. Like having a baby changes your life in just these most incredible ways. And especially as



the parent who's going to birth the child and nurse the child and be the primary caretaker, it takes so much time and energy.

And so I think that these feelings and thoughts that I were having were totally natural.

**Candice Schutter:** Yes. Especially for a second time mother who's been down the road before and actually understands the sacrifices inherent. Yeah.

**Monica Welty:** Mm-hmm.

And is also afraid, that was another part of it was like, and then what does it mean to have two?

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Monica Welty:** Like, if that one took all that energy, this is gonna be even worse, right.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** So then I had my baby on Saturday, and then he died on Sunday. And we learned the following week that it was from a undetected uterine rupture. So what happened inside my body, in my viscera, in my internal organs, was that it ripped apart. So there was, in my mind at that point, and I used to say, if I had a cut on my arm and it tore apart, I would've known.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** And I had been indoctrinated in this level of sensation and body awareness that how could I not have known that something was going wrong during my labor? How could there be no signs? I must have missed the signs.

And every person I think who loses a child, blames themselves. Especially I think in, in larger culture where you can't eat blue cheese. And you can't eat sushi. And you can't go in a hot tub and you can't da, da da. There's all of these rules and, and there's all of this responsibility placed on the birthing parent to like really care for this baby.

And deep inside our brains, keeping the baby alive is the number one priority. That's basis of what you have to do. That's the you know, very most basic level of care is keeping it alive. And I didn't do that.

So I had that already. Just the loss brings up those thoughts for people.

And then I had this, I am this incredibly body aware person who should have known, whose teacher can feel their visceral. Why couldn't I? I never, I didn't practice hard enough. Why didn't I? I, I've fancy myself this person who's so body aware and I could not feel into my body to know that something was wrong.

And then I went to work every day and had thought about why had I done this? And my thoughts became things. It was real. I thought to myself, he heard me. He knew. If I manifest my reality, and I go to work three or four days a week thinking about how I wish I didn't do this so that I could focus on my work, I created this.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Monica Welty:** Right? I killed my baby with my thoughts and with my lack of awareness to sensation.

**Candice Schutter:** And I would add in terms of the indoctrination, cause you and I were in similar circles, so I feel like I can speak to this a little bit. And then again, this is for listeners who maybe haven't been in, in these cultures. Like it's not even just the ability to sense and feel. Cuz it might sound from like an outsider, they might be like, ugh, sensing your viscera, really?

It's, it's like that's one way of explaining it. Another way of expressing it is how it's expressed to us is like we do all this work on our chakra system. So we have these energy centers that we keep in harmony and in balance. And if something is, if we have a symptom in our body, if something is out of sync, then there's a real, like, this is like a second chakra crisis, this uterine rupture, right?

So it would really be easy for me if I was in your shoes back in the day, I would've thought, well what was going on with me energetically that threw my second chakra so outta whack? Like, so again, it's, it's this sense of I have total and utter responsibility over what happens to my body.

**Monica Welty:** Yep.

**Candice Schutter:** Based on how I'm responding to the world around me, or to my own thoughts. It's like there's this, ugh, it's just such an oppressive headspace to be continually policing and monitoring one's thoughts, and then the impact it has on the chakras and la la la, la, right? So I just wanted to add that. I think it's really important when we talk about this body sensation piece. It's not only that, maybe the voice is saying you weren't in tune enough to the sensation, but you somehow missed something. You missed some critical energetic signal that you should have responded to and put made things right in order to keep Harvey safe.

Like that's what the voice does. Because that's what we were taught to think and believe.

Does that resonate with you? Does seem fair?

**Monica Welty:** 100%.

And it also speaks to the there are no victims mentality in this new age wellness culture. That you are responsible 100% for what happens to you, right? And that it's your fault if your chakras aren't aligned and things and things go awry in your life, right?

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**[00:31:15] transition**

**Monica Welty:** So I went to this, um, pregnancy and infant loss support group twice a month for the first year after my son died until my marriage ended, and I didn't have childcare. And it would be all of these couples, or usually moms, and we would talk about our experience. And we would all tell our story.

And like 95% of stories started with everything was going perfectly fine. And I did everything right. I was eating the right foods. I was exercising right. And I was like, me too. And even then I would think, but not as good as I was.

It makes us such assholes.

**Candice Schutter:** I, it really does.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah. I bet you weren't drinking whole non-pasteurized milk. Um, God. Um,

**Candice Schutter:** We have to laugh so we don't hate ourselves, right?

**Monica Welty:** No, it's, it's, yeah. Very humbling. Nothing but humbling.

Um, and so, I would hear these women's stories and I started to realize that we all had accidents happen to us. Whether it was something in the placenta. Whether it was something that the medical team missed. Whether it was something that we, I mean, in the most horrible situations when people really did do something to their baby that ended up in their death, right? Like dropping them or, you know, terrible, terrible things.

It was all accidents. It was all the, being an animal,

**Candice Schutter:** Yes.

**Monica Welty:** Being a human animal. That we are mortal and fallible and subject to the laws of nature.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** That babies die.

And what I had learned and what I had been indoctrinated into for 10 years and cultivated daily, was that I was actually outside the laws of nature.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Monica Welty:** We can't, maybe there's a handful of people who can sense into whether their uterus is rupturing or not, but the literal nerves are different on the inside of our bodies. Like it's a different thing happening inside there. That's not real.

And it's not real that our thoughts become things. There's privilege. There is, right? There are systems. There is coincidence. There is mindset, that is different than manifestation, right?

There's the way that we look at our lives and approach our lives and things like that, that can have an effect, but we don't manifest our reality. And the reason that I feel like I can say that so clearly is that like that scaffolding that I built around myself, had to fall. Because if I manifest my own reality, there is no other explanation except that I killed my child. And I can't live with that. I cannot continue on in my life with a truth that the thoughts I was thinking is the reason that my kid died.

And so that whole matrix like had that whole scaffolding had to fall. And it had to fall, because I entered into a culture that was not culty, right? This support group was not culty. It was all of us sitting around sharing so authentically the most tragic and intense and challenging experience of our lives. And all of us coming together.

And the thing that was so important in that group was the head nodding. Everyone had a different experience. We all had different details. But we all could, not to speak for everyone, but every person that I heard over that year, which is a lot of people talk about their story, I understood parts of it. I could relate to the, the feeling that they had or the experience that they had in a really authentic way that was different than when I was sharing my appreciation in my massage school. Or when I was interacting with people at Org trainings where we were all on guard about monitoring our speech, and how we were moving and who was paying attention to it, right? Like all of the middle school dynamics that happened there. None of that was there. And that was a place that I really, truly found a sense of healing and a place to move from in terms of integrating this loss into myself and into my identity.

Another thing that happened was that my best friend one day was really first few weeks and she looked over at me and she was like, Monica, the worst thing that could happen has happened. And I had been saying that to myself but wouldn't let myself believe it. No, no, no. Your daughter's alive. You still have this. You have work that you love you'll get back to. You have this marriage. Look at your family is here helping you. You have all this community. Like this is not the worst thing that thing.

**Candice Schutter:** Be grateful.

**Candice Schutter:** You need to be grateful because otherwise even worse things will happen.

**Monica Welty:** Exactly. And then someone from the outside

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** told me what I suspected.

**Candice Schutter:** And that you don't have to be fucking grateful. You can be angry, sad, in despair. You can feel all the feelings. Like there's a permission there. Like there's a granting of permission. You get to fucking be human.

**Monica Welty:** Yes. And all she was doing was just sitting with me and saying what was true, what she was seeing, what she knew to be true, what her authentic experience was, that let me do the same thing.

**Candice Schutter:** Yep. right?

**Monica Welty:** And then also having to rebuild a scaffolding. Because now I had no baby and my worldview had crumbled.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Monica Welty:** Right.

**Candice Schutter:** And your marriage. We might add. for folks who didn't listen to

**Monica Welty:** Yes. Oh yeah. I

**Candice Schutter:** the prior episode.

**Monica Welty:** So, yeah, so that was the other thing, was that, so Harvey died in April. And then I had to have the uterus repaired. And then in that surgery it turned out, I almost died in that surgery, and it turned out that they couldn't save the uterus. So we also lost our ability to have another baby. So that was six months later.

And then like six or seven months after that, I had learned earlier, but my husband had been cheating on me for most of our marriage. And then was in a relationship with a, like had a girlfriend for the last six months of our marriage or whatever it was.

And so all of that happened. Which again, is enough. Like it's, too much, right? It was far too much for all of that. It was like I was walking down a path and then suddenly I was at the edge of a cliff. There's like nothing here.

And so I guess the important part here, you know, is that being a part of new age wellness culture with all of its fallacy made all of that so much harder.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Monica Welty:** Because I had constructed the way I saw the world based on things that aren't real.

**Candice Schutter:** Right. And in, in many cases are contingent upon certain privileges.

**Monica Welty:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Privilege in the sense of white privilege, socioeconomic privilege, things like that. And how the privilege to think and believe a certain way is inextricably connected to that.

**Monica Welty:** Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** And so when something happens that is outside the scope of how things should be in the insular environments that we can create, when we have the privilege to create them.

**Monica Welty:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Then it becomes inherently a crisis of faith, because we realize the scaffolding is bullshit when it comes to the real world, the larger world, the world outside of that limited vantage point.

And I will also say, and I have a feeling you'll agree with me, that lifeline though, that showed up for both of us, it seems like in our twenties, early thirties, like in that period of life can keep us from drowning temporarily, right?

I feel like similar to you, finding the Org and the practice really connected me to my body for the first time. And I almost had to like, I think of it almost as like spiritual kindergarten. It was like I had to go through it. I had to pass through it. I had to believe in a simplistic way in order to get to, to have the emotional, psychological, spiritual resilience to even get to these larger truths around like, hey, mystery is actually in charge. Hey, magical thinking. It can't save you.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** I needed to believe that it could in order to stay above water for a certain period of my life. Right? And then we, we build a vessel and then we're like, this perfect ship is gonna sail me exactly where I want it to go. And you know, and then a storm comes.

**Monica Welty:** Yep.

**Candice Schutter:** And we're capsized in the water and we're like, holy fuck.

And that's sort of the point you're talking about. You said when you shared this story, you said there's no way the indoctrination can hold up to the real shit that happens in life. Like that we reach that point where it can't. And that sounds clean and spiffy, like, you know, dust your hands off and move on. But in, in fact, it's incredibly devastating because then what?

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And it sounds like that's the place you were in, where it was just like, I don't have a baby. I don't have fertility. I don't have a husband. And I don't have a solid ground to stand on.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** That's a terrifying space to exist in when you're used to that, those guarantees. Being able to lean into those guarantee.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** It's scary.

**Monica Welty:** And I mean I think that is so important, what you just said. And in a way it's like offers me forgiveness to myself. Because I also think about how there's no way, I didn't know that throughout my marriage that this person was stepping out on me. But the positive thinking and the toxic positivity.

Was a way that I could brush over the stuff that like, well, It could be this, it could be that it, right? He always had good explanations for it, blah, blah, blah. Within that I was doing the best that I could. I wasn't drowning anymore. I wasn't depressed anymore. I wasn't suicidal anymore. I wasn't right. All of that had really helped.

And it, and, and this goes back to like the culture of my family growing up required me to look outside of myself.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** For guidance, right?

That what I was experiencing inside myself didn't line up with what the world outside of me, my parents, and my family was saying was happening. So I'd be like, this is happening inside me. I'm having these feelings. I'm having this experience. And then the outside world was like, no, no, no, what you're feeling is an overreaction to.

**Candice Schutter:** Gaslight, gaslight, gaslight.

**Monica Welty:** Gaslight. Yes.

An overreaction to what's happening. And your feelings are too big and what's happening isn't happening. And so I think that's also a thing to say that like, again to like listeners who are like, this may sound so, kind of dumb, I guess in a way. Like, or, well, how could you think these things that you got to? Right.



But my whole life has been looking to the outside authority to let me know that I'm okay.

**Candice Schutter:** Yes.

**Monica Welty:** And that was even the same within my marriage. I find a text message, and I'm like, whoa, that seems like a little more romantic than it should be, right? And then I go to him and he without a flinch, has an explanation. And has a, of course not. And has a, everything's okay. It's not what you think it is. What you're seeing is not what's happening.

And because I had been trained my whole life, right? And, and I clearly chose him on purpose. Because he fit right into that way that, scaffolding, right? The scaffolding of the external authority. You know, that, also set me up to be so indoctrinated into this new age wellness culture. Because there was always somebody outside of me telling me how to be. And telling me that things are different than I think they are.

**Candice Schutter:** Yes.

**Monica Welty:** Right.

**Candice Schutter:** Exactly.

**Monica Welty:** They're not as bad and I can create with my thoughts. Right. And yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And that two simultaneous messages running, which is the authority lies outside of you, and you can't trust your own instincts. I think this is a really super important point to underscore, whether we're in a cult of one dynamic in a relationship, or we're in a group culture. One of the things that makes something culty the way that we define it in this series, it reinforces this internalized message that we ourselves cannot be trusted. That what our instincts are telling us, what our body's telling us, ironically. Right.

So it's like I think about you being in this place where you've been taught to, and and I can so relate and, and just for the listeners out there, the reason Monica and I rescheduled this conversation many times is we were actually gonna do an episode on Cult of One Dynamics, and then all life started happening, and then this just became the thing that needed to be talked about right away.

And I think we can touch upon kind of what we wanted to talk about a little bit here though, because we have in common, being in similar kinds of relationships, intimate partnerships in the past. And I also had partners that couldn't be trusted and I would see things and yeah, there would be the external gaslighting, the story, the explanation. And then there would be me sort of reckoning with the fact that my physical sensation was something I was taught to trust.

I was taught to trust my body above everything else. And my body's like, my gut and my heart, my solar plexus is like in a knot right now. Something doesn't feel right. My stomach's churning. I know for sure something isn't right in my body.

But I've also been taught that the way that I think about things can create sensations in my body. And that my insecurities can create sensations in my body. And so this is just me and my stuff. This is just my anxious attachment style. This is just my insecurities. This is just, oh, jealousy. In the new age wellness circles where we existed, jealousy is something that you can just graduate from if you become enlightened enough. Like you, you don't experience jealousy, right?

It's like the demonization of these honest, natural human indicators that exist for a purpose to tell us when something isn't right. Or when there's, you know, maybe danger is a strong word, like people might argue about like, is it really dangerous if your partner is seeking connection somewhere else. Well, maybe not inherently necessarily, but depending on your own moral compass, it might be a signal to step back, to turn away.

But when I was taught to ignore those signals or to make myself the reason that those signals were there, just like when I was a child and I would feel pain after being, you know, verbally assaulted, it was my job to become Teflon like my mom.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Like it wasn't the job of my stepdad to get his shit together, go to therapy, and stop abusing us. It was my job, right? And, and so I'm like throwing all these things out at once. But I think the real, the core message, I think is something that this piece around being taught not to trust ourselves or reinforcing this message that we can't trust ourselves. That's part of what makes an environment sort of spiritually toxic in my mind.

Because inherently we only have ourselves.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And if we don't trust ourselves, then we're sort of screwed in a sense. Because somebody and something outside is always gonna let us down. It's always gonna fall, like you said so beautifully, like we are subject to the laws of nature. No matter what. No matter how far out that finish line is, it's gonna happen.

Loss is gonna happen. Pain is gonna happen. So if we don't have ourselves to rely on, I just feel like that's the ultimate crisis so many of us face in our mental health and, and that these cultures and these relational dynamics, which are passed down through generations, just amplify that.

And yeah, I feel like I'm totally going off on a tangent here, but just it's like we can't hold ourselves unless we trust ourselves.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

So I have a question. How did you reckon in your healing through this, how did you reckon with the, it's like is there a body dissonance? Like is cognitive dissonance and like physical,

right? Because it's two things. It's like you can trust your body, you have to know the sensations. It gives you all this information and then you can respond from there.

And then you're having this solar plexus tighten and you're having, like, how did you reconcile that? Maybe like both in the moment and then also in.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** in the healing?

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. I mean, I'm like you. I'm in it, you know, I'm still doing that. It's part of why I'm doing this series is like, how do I pull all of that apart? And I think what I've noticed for me is that it's, trusting myself is way simpler than I've been taught. Like infinitely simpler. And that I bought every fucking book, and took all the workshops and did all the things to learn how to trust myself. It's such a paradoxical, ironic, bittersweet pill to swallow, even just saying that sentence, the absurdity of it.

So for me now, it's easier for me now to, I don't need to grapple with what I'm feeling and try to make meaning out of it. I just trust it and respond to it. And, not always, there are times when I still struggle with that. But it's like, if I have a twisting in my gut. Push pause. Feel into like what do I want, really? Trust it. Express that.

I just did it yesterday with my partner. Like I had this, this tension that I was caring for a couple days. We had had this really great conversation and there was this lingering piece for me. And like I just had like a feeling in my body and like it was showing up as anxiety. Now in the past, that anxiety, I would've been like, oh, I need to go for a walk. I need to do this. I need to do that. I need to do all the things that I do to manage my anxiety.

Instead, I just went and I said, I just wanna talk. I wanna say something out loud that's going on inside. And I expressed what was happening for me and I just let it come out however it came out. And the anxiety lifted.

And I didn't, it's like there's something about, that's why I'm saying trusting ourselves and our expression. It's like, I don't need to evaluate whether or not I should express this. Like I'm just gonna express it and trust that the relationships around me can handle it. And if they can't, then that's the scaffolding that's gonna fall away. And I'm still okay.

And that sounds really, I just really wanna say here, that sounds really pretty. I'm like, wow, look how far she's come, like, I, you know, struggle every other day with something else where I don't respond with that sort of clarity. So, that's just an example kind of just wanted to paint a picture of an example of what you're talking about.

But I feel like ultimately learning to trust myself, creating this podcast is like, an ongoing project. And there are days when I, it knocks me to my knees. And I'm like, this is stupid. What am I even doing? Who the hell do I think I am? Like, so that happens too.

So I'm in, I'm in process I guess with all of that.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah. As you always will be. Like.

**Candice Schutter:** That's the point, right?

**Monica Welty:** My grandma just passed away in October and I was with her during that process. Not when she died, but I just watching that and being with her and I just thought like, it, it really never ends. She's never died before.

**Candice Schutter:** Well, some would argue that she has many times.

**Monica Welty:** That's true. Many times. In this lifetime, in this body. She has never died before. But, right. That's so funny. But, you know, and I just thought like, it never ends. This is what.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** In the dying, she's dealing with her anxiety and fear the way she has always dealt with her anxiety and fear.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Monica Welty:** And so, and I think about like, I don't wanna be on my God willing, I, she had a beautiful death from my perspective. I don't know how it was for her. But but I, I thought, like, I don't wanna be in my death bed second guessing myself about how I'm feeling about is this coming from me or this is my mental illness, not my real authenticity. And right like, I don't wanna be there. I want my patterns to be different.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm.

**[00:53:57] transition**

**Monica Welty:** Candice, when you said that trusting ourselves, trusting yourself is easier than you've been led to believe or than you've been taught.

I mean, if that is not key. That we don't need systems all around us and practices and external guides to trust ourselves. And then the fact that I, I think about people who, do trust themselves, like is there no question? Oh yeah, that doesn't work for me. You know, you hear people who interacted with Keith Raniere of NXIVM and who right away were like, uhuh, this is not, this is weird. And they checked out, you know.

And I don't wanna make any kind of generalizations about who joins cults and who doesn't because we've already established that it's anybody. Right.

**Candice Schutter:** Yep, for sure.

**Monica Welty:** Cuz it's part of the laws of nature and of being a human, right, is this need for belonging and connection. And we all find it in different ways.

But I think that that is such that, when you just said that, I, it's like the analysis that I have been taught to do. And, and part of the analysis I've taught to do is that I've been in spaces that are telling me that what I'm doing is cultivating a sense of authenticity, listening to my inner self, listening to my inner guide, listening to my sensations.

And then, and this is both in the Org and in my massage school. And then I'm not doing it right. The feedback that I get is that I'm not doing it right.

**Candice Schutter:** Uhhuh.

**Monica Welty:** And then for somebody who's always looking to the external to know how to be in the world, it creates a sense of chaos inside my brain. Cuz I'm like, no, no, no. You told me to do this. I'm doing this. But now I'm doing it wrong, but it feels like I'm doing right. Okay, so how do I do it right then? And that becomes the way of life.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah, it's a closed system. Yep.

You're, it's, it's sort of like a snake eating its own tail, you know? That's what's so, sort of, such a mind fuck about this and why I keep circling back to like the need to really look at these larger cultic systems, like white supremacy and the patriarchy and capitalism and all that. Because the hierarchies that have been established, it's like a no win game when it comes to self-trust. Because you can't simultaneously be taught to trust yourself and also to surrender your authority to an outside force. It doesn't work, like.

**Monica Welty:** Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** And this is why, you know, when it comes to new age wellness, I know people who are like, oh, you don't really believe in gurus and all that stuff. I'm like, I don't. Because there's an inherent fallacy in pedestalizing someone and being taught to trust yourself at the same time. There's an inherent fallacy in terms of how things, you described it so beautifully, like the conflict. There's an inherent dissonance that emerges if we believe in the hierarchy and we believe in enlightenment, we believe that people can get to a point where anxiety doesn't touch them. And we're a human animal who is going to have anxiety until the day she dies.

**Monica Welty:** Yep.

**Candice Schutter:** She, he, they. Till the day that we pass. And I don't know what happens after that. Maybe we still have it. I have no idea. Maybe nothing happens. I don't know. That's part of the point though. I don't pretend to know. I don't fucking know.

And neither does this person who purports to know. And if I believe that they know something that is outside of my grasp that I have to clamor up a ladder in order to get to, that is counterintuitive to being able to trust myself. It seems so clear to me now.

I never really bought into the guru thing at face value, but, and I wanna say this because I think there's people out here that like, I don't believe in gurus, but then I also did surrender my power to many mentors and teachers that I would've never called a guru at the time. Like when I was in the Org I'm like guru? Like, we don't have gurus. That's not how it works here. It's collaborative like la, la, la.

But ultimately, I was surrendering my authority to theirs. And like you say, here's how you get in touch with yourself. Let me show you the way. I mean, that's a little suspect, isn't it?

It's not to say that people can't assist us and help us, but they assist us by sharing what's worked for them and by not prescribing it to anyone else.

**Monica Welty:** Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** And I feel like that's what a good mentor, teacher does. And anytime we get in a leadership position, myself included, because we've been raised in these social structures built around hierarchies, it's really easy to get caught in that head space of I know better. Like you said, like we were in. Like, we know. We know best. We've got the answers here.

It's so seductive. It's so seductive. And I'm still, to this day, you know, I'm constantly tracking whether or not, am I doing that in this series?

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Am I pretending to have answers to questions that are unanswerable?

Like I feel like that's like ironically, what leads to the most anxiety in life is chasing the answers. And this is something we talked about the very first conversation we had is like being able to rest in the mystery.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** is, there's anxiety there, but there's also a tremendous amount of relief to no longer be clamoring and pretending that we're gonna be free of it if we just do X, Y, and Z.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah, yeah. That we're, yes, that we're still subject to it.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** In the week before we knew what happened during Harvey's birth and why he died, I had many, many doctor's appointments. And every single doctor, midwife, nurse practitioner said to me, we don't know what happened, and this happens all the time that we don't know what happened.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Monica Welty:** And I was like, that's bullshit. Like they're not telling me the truth.

And then I had a important relationship with a woman that I worked for in San Francisco, who is a doctor. And she called me and she's a pediatrician. And she said, Monica, this happens all the time. Babies die and we don't know why.

And that, I believed her then. And that again was another place of somebody from not this world telling me a really disconcerting truth, a real uncertainty and mystery that with all of our medicine and all of our technology and all of our knowledge, babies just die of unknown cause. Just felt, like you say I mean, it is hard to say it, but there was, there was a relief in that because I, for a moment, could let myself off the hook.

**Candice Schutter:** Exactly.

**Monica Welty:** Right. And I didn't believe those people before. I didn't know them. And and I had this whole schema going on in my brain. And then this person that I know and trust said the same thing to me. And then I sat in this group and saw all these people whose babies die for unknown cause. So it became really clear.

And then I just wanna speak to something that you were saying earlier and that why your podcast and Sarah Nippy and a lot of the Amanda Montell, a lot of the people, um, Janja Lalich, oh and the other person who wrote Everyday Cult, right.

**Candice Schutter:** Gerette Buglion.

**Monica Welty:** I have been watching documentaries, reading books about cults for 15 or 20 years,

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Monica Welty:** trying to figure out why these people go into these cults. Because what I was given was only Jonestown, was only Waco was only right, these like extreme high control groups.

Meanwhile, I am, and that that's what your work and these other people's work has brought to me is that like, oh, I can't believe I didn't see this before, that that's exactly what this is. And that's what has happened to me and what I've been involved in and, and how I've cultivated myself now as an adult, as someone who's like 45, and that that's a lot of like undoing to do. And that it's legitimate, right? It's a legitimate undoing. And that my experience of loss, loss after loss after loss, had like extra layers on top of it that were unnecessary.

And that you and so many other people talk about these red flags that are so important to look for that rob us of that, right? That like make us not be able to know that the thought wrenching in your solar plexus, even if it is out of proportion to what's happening or it's your



anxiety or it's, it's still important to feel it. And to have someone to talk to about what you're feeling, right?

Who will hear what you have to say and not tell you that what you're feeling is wrong or that what you're feeling is out of proportion or too much or whatever, right. Whether that's a partner or a parent or these gurus or this person who's not a guru but has too much power in the hierarchy, right.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Monica Welty:** At some point in the early years of grief, I realized like, oh, I'm not making meaning out of anything anymore, and I need to come back to that. I need to figure out how to now live in a world where babies just die, and we don't know why sometimes. Like how do I live in that world? Without all of the magical thinking, because that can't stand up to that.

**Candice Schutter:** You said something I think that's really important. How do I make meaning again? And I've been thinking a lot about that and like, how do I make meaning without making dogma?

**Monica Welty:** Mm.

**Candice Schutter:** How do I make meaning without making up a carefully crafted ending? How do I make meaning without making it culty?

And if you're open to it, I'd love for you to stick around and talk with me about that kind of as a follow up. We can share that conversation over on Patreon cause I think it really fits into the series that we've been doing over there, deconstructing dogma, which you've been such a great part of as a witness and, and your commentary has really added to the discussion. And you're gonna join us for another episode with Tracy and I over there as well. But I feel like we're not finished here.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And I want us to talk about that. So, will you stick around to talk with me about that?

**Monica Welty:** Yes, absolutely.

**Candice Schutter:** A and we'll share it with people. And, you know, as far as as this conversation goes, you know, I feel like our conversations always have sort of an ellipses at the end. Like one of the things that I love about our friendship and our connection is that we really share a love of that ellipses and that sense of we don't fucking know. Like we don't, we don't know, like and being in that mystery soup together and exploring all the things that we did to keep ourselves from just admitting the inevitable truth.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** And I just am so grateful that you have been willing to once again revisit the experiences that you had to see them from another angle and to help us to see our own journeys, our own grief, our own humanity, just with so much more honesty, transparency, truth.

And also to honor Harvey.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Because this episode's gonna release right around his birthday.

**Candice Schutter:** Again. And we love to celebrate him, his life, and the mark that he's left on all of our lives every year. So I just wanna thank you for sharing him with us.

**Monica Welty:** Yeah. And I appreciate the space so much. This is the 10 year mark. And just in this last year, I mean, I can really see how his life and his death, I mean, it, it woke me up so much to all of this stuff. And, and even though I haven't been able to articulate it until now, it's, it's saved me from a lot of that world that I was in. And has forced me to live in the mystery and to become more authentic. You know, it's really. I mean, I would, I would trade it to have my boy. But it's, wow, what a catalyst, you know?

And, and I know that you and, had talked about that too, which is what sparked this whole thing to begin with was you're just beautiful episode with the #igotout women about how your loss has really sparked your way out, too.

So I just, again, I just am so appreciative of you as well and all of your work. And every time you have a doubt about if what you're doing is important, then you just think of me and you think of Harvey.

**Candice Schutter:** Hmm.

**Monica Welty:** You're really making a big difference.

**Candice Schutter:** Thank you. Thank so much. You know I love you to pieces.

**Monica Welty:** I love you too.

**Candice Schutter:** If you'd like to listen to the second half of this conversation, you can access the bonus content over on [patreon.com/thedeeperpulse](https://patreon.com/thedeeperpulse). Gain immediate access to eBooks and over a dozen bonus episodes, including the follow up to this one.

So huge thanks to Monica for joining me today and thank you so much for listening.

I'll see you back here after a short break and we'll pick right up where we left off in the culture series.

Until then.

Caio.