

Candice Schutter: Welcome back to The Deeper Pulse as we continue the 'cult'ure series. I wanna offer my wholehearted, thanks to all of you out there who continue to listen and share episodes of this podcast. This is me healing out loud and I feel way less alone knowing that the content is resonating with so many of you.

A lot of time and energy goes into every single episode. So if you haven't done so yet, please consider taking a moment to subscribe, rate and review on your favorite streaming app. And if you wanna help to keep these episodes ad free, consider becoming a patron of the pod. You can learn more at patreon.com/thedeeperpulse.

Okay, On to today's episode.

"One doesn't have to operate with great malice to do great harm. The absence of empathy and understanding are sufficient. In fact, a man convinced of his virtue, even in the midst of his vice is the worst kind of man." Charles Blow.

Now if the 'cult'ure series is serving up anything, it's this piping hot piece of humble pie.

As I've said before, the real work of cult recovery is not just about identifying this cult in that. It's about grappling with difficult truths, mixed-bag relationship dynamics, and all the many ways. We are under the influence. Swayed and silenced by cultural norms.

Invisible codes of conduct live in our DNA and they've been passed down through generations. And until we face our history, both personally and collectively, we're gonna keep paying forward all the wrong things.

When done well, cult recovery, as I speak of it, is messy, complicated work that demands we face some difficult realities about ourselves and the spaces we occupy.

And if we're coming out of insular new age wellness circles, all of this is complicated by the fact that we've likely been conditioned to avoid conversations around emotionally charged topics. As they say, you get good at what you practice. And when part of said practice is toxic positivity and high-vibe compliance, we can develop a diminished tolerance for psychological tension and unfiltered honesty. Cries for accountability are considered low vibe. Violent even.

Tone policing is a term popularized by feminists and anti-racism activists. And it describes what happens when we're criticized for the way we're presenting an argument, for the emotion we're conveying, our attitude, or tone of voice, while the meaning we hope to convey is dismissed entirely.

It's a bullshit diversion tactic that many women know all too well. You know that thing when you're passionately expressing your point of view, only to be chastised for sounding too bitchy or impatient. It's a form of gaslighting, and it can be a bit maddening. I'm gonna speak more to all that in a future episode.

But for now, I just wanna bring attention to the fact that tone policing is a huge part of social control in wellness spaces. When how we speak is often made more important than what we have to say.

And I'm gonna be bold and take it even further. In high demand spaces, such as training and retreat environments, it becomes sort of a social entrainment, a collective trauma bonding response wherein everyone is fawning, smiling, and cooing reflexively. Pleasing and appeasing one another, and especially group leaders, through a high vibe persona.

I know it. I've done it. And it's fucking exhausting.

And make no mistake, coercive control and manipulation can happen even when it's delivered through sugar coated requests. See episode 39 on undue influence for more on that.

The point is we lose depth, nuance, complexity, our integrity, through blind allegiance to problematic rhetoric that in many cases is without ill intent.

I mean, I wish it were as easy as hey, let's just cancel those culty asshats over there and all will be well. If only it were as simple as right and wrong, good and bad, those crazy cult people versus us sane folks over here. But alas, and please hear me when I say this, these simple formulas are precisely what drive cult dynamics. All of our attempts to sort the human experience into tidy little us versus them categories. This is what makes for all the messiness in the first place.

So, yeah, just to say I don't have one iota of this all figured out. I'm here learning and unlearning right alongside you. But I am feeling more and more confident that speaking openly, and with curiosity, about these dynamics will help to point us in a better direction.

In the coming weeks, we're gonna take a closer look at the capital C cult dynamics that silently shape our interpersonal relationships, our hyperpolarized political landscapes, and the high-vibe, dissociative world of spirituality and new age wellness.

Today I just wanna briefly touch upon one small piece of this much bigger picture, because it directly relates to the conversation I'm about to share with you.

In his book, *Practice And All Is Coming: Abuse, Cult Dynamics, and Healing In Yoga And Beyond*, Matthew Remski examines the well-documented history of abuse in the Ashtanga yoga community. It is a comprehensive look at how intergenerational trauma was, and is, passed down through yogic lineages. And it features survivor stories that demonstrate how abuse is often cleverly disguised as an essential and necessary part of the practice.

In the opening chapter, Remski writes: "There was a time when I, like many others, wanted to believe that yoga spaces by definition were *safe* spaces and that a good student should interpret the offenses of yoga masters as beneficial spiritual challenges."

He then goes on to describe how, as a white male with privilege, it's taken him some time to learn how to not defend the yoga world, and its "unwillingness to face its shadows."

I hear that, and as I've said before, it can be such a mind fuck when the helpful and the harmful are walking in step with one another. And it's a confusion that's much harder to penetrate when you are not the one who's directly experiencing the harm.

That's the thing about privilege. It's never enough to just simply admit that we have it. We must be willing to sacrifice our place in the social hierarchy if we wanna contribute to breaking with the status quo.

Candice Schutter: Which circles us back to these conversations and the fact that, I don't think it's much of a stretch to say that wellness culture is itself unwell.

Take the commercialization of mainstream yoga wherein helpful tools and teachings have been appropriated and placed in service to inflated spiritual egos and capitalist social hierarchies. I don't mean to be a downer here, but when you really take a closer look, it's not hard to see that the spirit of colonization is alive and well, as entitled white folks (that's me) presume ownership over what we think might benefit us, then proceed to cherry pick the parts that best fit a culturally appropriated picture perfect persona that we're creating.

And if all of this sounds a bit harsh, well, circle back to my early point. The more you separate from these cultures, and the more you dig, the more you come to realize that reality isn't anything like the new age sales promises we've been fed.

And it's such a bittersweet reckoning coming to terms with all this. Because we gravitated toward wellness tools because they do offer us some relief. The benefits of yoga are well documented, and I do not dispute them. I've experienced them firsthand.

But I also gotta tell you that rolling out a mat is a pretty loaded thing for me these days, because now I know that modern day yoga culture projects a false sense of purity.

And I'm not just talking about stories of abuse like those featured in Remski's book, or in the Bikram Yoga Cult documentary over on Netflix. I'm once again speaking about how disorienting it is when something heals and hurts in the very same breath.

I am deeply grateful for all that yoga has taught me over the years. For the self-regulating breath work and meditation practices. For the capacity to ground, stretch, and find relief in my body.

And yet, at the same time, my experiences in Western yoga culture directly contributed to my orthorexic preoccupation with clean eating, to my tendency to gaslight myself and others through spiritual bypassing and love and light platitudes, to a deep seated belief that it's never okay to identify with my pain because it somehow means that I've turned my back on spiritual advancement.

Case in point, when I walked away from wellness culture to do this work, I was criticized for choosing to align myself with those who are "wounded."

I know for sure that there are many out there who kind of sort of feel sorry for me and the fact that I'm wasting my talents centering what they consider to be low vibe, victimhood.

Seriously, y'all this is a thing.

And I get it. I used to think this way. Because in the insular world that I occupied where everyone looked and thought like me, I believed what we'd all been taught. That it's all meant to be, and that each of us get what we deserve.

In a book that I've referenced before, *American Detox: The Myth of Wellness*, Kerri Kelly writes about the unequal systemic conditions that actually determine who gets to be well and who doesn't. She argues that "a wellbeing gap" that leaves some people behind, that it hurts us all. And she makes a very compelling case for the fact that wellness culture directly contributes to structural racism in that it reinforces a supremacist hierarchy, a ladder that so many of us are clamoring to climb.

I couldn't agree more, and I speak a little bit more about it in episode 40, if you want more on that.

The point is striving to fit the white woman wellness mold isn't really making any of us healthier long term. And it's coming at a cost.

Susanna Barkataki is an Indian yoga practitioner and teacher who educates people on how to honor and not appropriate yoga. I strongly urge you to check out her Instagram feed. I'll provide a link to it in the show notes. Especially if, like me, you could use an ongoing crash course in what decolonization of yoga even means.

Her feed features playful, informative videos that invite white women of privilege to take a critical look at how we've long been under the influence of a colonizing mindset. And how this has made us complicit to a history of harm that marginalizes people who don't fit into thin, white, ableist, heteronormative standards.

In her book, *Embrace Yoga's Roots*, Barkataki reminds us "Colonizing yoga is not just a metaphor. It's a practice that continues in an unequal relationship of exploitation." And then she goes on to lay out what this means on a practical level and how we can all do better.

To summarize, and please keep in mind, I am no expert, the colonization of yoga is evidenced in a commercialized industry where white, slim figured women are centered. And the cultures from which these practices originated are essentially erased or are not accurately represented.

And when it comes to issues of cultural appropriation, just like with as-seen-on-TV cult dynamics, we must continually be asking ourselves, who here benefits?

And p.s., white saviorism doesn't count. Loads of spiritual influencers engage in this, mainly for the sake of social media street cred. And let's be clear, poverty porn is exploitation, it's not activism.

And all of this is culty as fuck because a whitewashed image of yoga isn't an honest one, and virtue signaling doesn't, in fact, lead to systemic inclusion.

This is a much larger conversation and I'm gonna leave it at that for today. The point that I'm really wanting to make going into this conversation is something that I've just been waking up to in recent years. And it's a message I wanna send out to my mostly white women in wellness audience.

The painful truth is that righting these wrongs will require personal sacrifice on our part. And it will serve all of us in the long run.

Now if you catch yourself zoning out around this topic, if you're not able to track what I'm saying and why it matters, or if you feel unsettled, defensive, or impatient at the fact that I'm even bringing this up. All of this is to be expected.

We've been conditioned to respond in these ways. When privilege is challenged, cult conditioning kicks in and cognitive dissonance shows up. And this can look and feel a little bit like a low-grade trauma response. You know that dissociative feeling where you're hearing but not hearing what's being said? It's kind of a floaty sensation that keeps the psyche at a safe distance from it all.

Or you might notice a sense of irritation and the impulse to fast forward to the part where I finally stopped being so "political" and change the subject to a topic that's way less negative.

If you're feeling this way, please know that I say all of this not to mock you. I am you. And this is our capital C cult conditioning, protecting us from the deconstruction of our blind spots.

You might be surprised to learn that all of this talk about social activism in wellness is, in fact, leading us right back into our bodies. The body is where we carry the stories and the traumas that we have inherited. The body is where cult dynamics show up in real time.

We don't 'decide' to go along with the questionable request of a narcissistic or short-sighted leader. Our bodies respond reflexively based on psychosocial conditioning that goes back many, many generations. We don't plan ahead of time to mimic patterns of social domination. We mirror what we know, and then pass on the same wounds that we ourselves have suffered.

And my guest this week has an intimate understanding of this.

Sybil Nance has spent three decades working in the world of yoga. And she recently joined me over on Patreon for a two-part conversation about her experiences as a teacher, studio owner, teacher trainer, and yoga therapist.

In part one of our conversation, we deconstructed some of the red flags in yoga retreat culture. And then in part two, we talked trauma and cult recovery. I've decided to share an

edited down version of our two-part dialogue on the main feed because it feels so damn important to the larger 'cult'ure series convo.

Sybil and I met and shared space as students and support staff in an online yoga community. We don't speak directly about our experiences there, but we do unpack what has never felt quite right for either of us in the many culty cultures that we once occupied.

And as a longtime facilitator, Sybil keeps it real, y'all, bravely sharing personal stories that illustrate how we often pay forward the traumas that we've experienced, and that it's never too late to make repairs.

Here's my conversation with Sybil Nance.

Candice Schutter: So thank you, Sybil, so much for being here.

Sybil Nance: You're welcome.

It's interesting cause I talked to my son Eric a little bit this morning and, I said, no, it's really good for me because this is the place where my growth is, is to actually put into words and to speak into things that I have felt. So it's a, a natural process for me to do this in a place that's safe and supported and things like that.

So, it's very much my growth.

Candice Schutter: Well, thanks for, for being willing to do it in front of, I mean, that's the thing. So many of the folks who are in the Patreon community do sort of consider themselves in some way, I don't wanna speak for, for everyone, but there's a lot of talk around cult recovery. Like it is sort of a recovery space.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And part of being in recovery is being transparent in the process of recovering those parts ourselves. And so it has been deeply and profoundly healing for me to have these conversations about this stuff like.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: It's helped more than anything. And that, that folks like you are willing to show up and do it with me is like, doing it alone. And I don't love doing the solo episodes. It's lonely.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And it feels a little talking head ish. So to have conversations, I get so many new insights from these convos.

So I'm excited for, uh, for this.

Sybil Nance: Good.

Candice Schutter: And us. And introduce yourself if you don't mind to, to folks who don't know you.

Sybil Nance: Okay. My name is Sybil Nance. I'm a, it'll slide out possibly. I'm Canadian and you'll hear my accent a little bit. People can't quite place me. Um, and I transported our family when we had had our last child, so he was a baby. So I left all family, all support, and moved to the United States. And very quickly got involved in fitness and a fitness club and trying to get, finding ways for me to get connected to a community, all those things. Ended up that I was running a fitness program without any good training. Went off and got a little bit of training. Did some step classes. And then the, the director wanted yoga, so I'm like, oh, I'll do that. I'll go get some yoga training.

So off I went and got some yoga training and came back and started, like, arrived one morning, said we're not gonna do step anymore, we're actually gonna do yoga.

Candice Schutter: Oh wow.

Sybil Nance: I think I can teach yoga now.

Candice Schutter: When was this?

Sybil Nance: So that was in uh, 1994. 1994. 95.

Yeah.

So I've been teaching yoga since the nineties.

Candice Schutter: Wow.

Sybil Nance: And so, um, there weren't a lot of yoga teachers around back then, uh, for sure. You had to really try and find them. And so cuz the whole wave had not really taken force up in the Oregon area. It had in California, but not so much in Oregon.

Um, so I got very involved in yoga. I became a teacher trainer fairly quickly, far too quickly without enough training. To become a trainer, uh, to then teach others how to teach yoga. So I did that for many, many years. And then opened a yoga studio. So I also owned a yoga studio, small yoga, boutique yoga studio. That's still alive. Thank goodness. My co-founder still runs it. I, I left the partnership to go on and do training as a yoga therapist. Went back to Canada for my training as a yoga therapist, and then came back and developed more of a, a

practice where I was working more one-on-one with folks. Because I saw some of the pitfalls of what the western yoga model was doing. And dropping one knee and taking a bit of a rest wasn't helping people change the function of their body. It was just helping them feel a little more comfortable in class, but it wasn't actually helping the physical body learn how to adapt.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: And I was super interested in that, that if this physical body of ours is this place where we hold so much of our story of trauma and we hold our story of push and survival. Um, then actually having this body work really in sync with ourselves.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Rather than the, if, if, if I use an example, like a, a yoga journal model. People were trying to shove themselves into a form, versus looking at how does my body function? And so I shift my lens from seeing how the form looks to what does this body function need so that they can be more relaxed in their body. So they can breathe better. So they can sit for six hours in the desk. So they can, you know, live through this cancer treatment. Whatever it was that the clients were bringing to me.

So then I dropped deeper and deeper, deeper into the nuance of how yoga could be used, um, in wellness. But I nearly always kept moving away from anything that was popular and anything that became too, yeah, just popular and trendy and those things. I knew enough that I then needed to step away.

So I think I've been doing a large step away from yoga, my whole yoga career. If that helps sort of describe me.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah.

So since you've been involved in this yoga world for so many decades, I guess I feel like I have to ask.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Would you say that you had any experiences where you felt, cuz there's a lot of, pedestalized teachers and guru type worship stuff in that world. What was your experience with that dynamic?

Sybil Nance: Okay. Yeah.

I had a toe in it when I was a teacher trainer. It was a compressed short three day training, where inevitably the way that the training was taught to us to deliver it, we would look like superstars at the end. And we would get reviews. They all had to do a review at the end, and they'd all fallen in love with me.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Sybil Nance: You're taking brand new people that don't know very much, and they think it's sort of coming from you. Like it's attached to me because I'm the only one who's with them.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: And because I'm a pretty big personality, my personality probably came out quite a bit. And so by the end, I remember coming home and reading. Like first thing you did, cuz I was all over the country doing these trainings. You get on the plane and you read through them and you just like, oh, oh, I'm so good. Like it just kept feeding and feeding how good I was at this.

And thank goodness, again, for people in your life that, that call you out on your shit and say, that's fucked. Like that doesn't seem right. Like my husband would say, that's weird. Like, really?

And I would go, yeah, yeah, la la, la. I didn't even quite hear him. Like, he doesn't get it. He wasn't there. He didn't experience. I can see how they feel this. Right.

And then as I went along, I was able to do the next thing, which is, oh, it's just the yoga. Oh, it's just the yoga. Yoga does this.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: So now they're falling in love with yoga because it's not just me. So I had to separate me because it was feeling a little glommy to me.

Candice Schutter: Sure.

Sybil Nance: But then I could say, oh, it's just the yoga. The yoga does this. It's just the yoga.

Instead of saying, and, and it's the same with the retreats. And I thought about this this morning. A better language would, would be, gosh, you just got away from your family for three days. That's fantastic. Your kids are taken care of. That must feel really good. You're staying in a hotel. Oh, isn't that nice? Oh, we did some breath work. Doesn't that help your body relax? Yeah, that feels good, doesn't it? And walk them through that they actually just had a lovely weekend. Of course you're gonna feel great.

And yeah, I taught you a few things. And it's all part of, it's no different than you just went and saw your girlfriend from high school and you guys were in a hotel and you giggled. Like, why am I being set up? Why is yoga being set up? And we don't talk about all the parts and pieces of what just went on. We're gonna leave these people falling in love with yoga and thinking it's what's gonna save their life.

Candice Schutter: Right. Exactly.

Sybil Nance: And then leave them. Off they go.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: Or they become addicted to the training model. That's, and then they keep coming back into all, all the trainings.

Candice Schutter: Right. Which is retreat after retreat, after retreat.

Sybil Nance: Retreat, after retreat, after retreat.

Candice Schutter: Right.

Sybil Nance: And those were, they weren't set up as a retreat, but for sure they are. These people were traveling. If, if it was in Chicago and they lived outside of Chicago. They had to come stay in a hotel. They came to a certain location. They had to go away. They were, it wasn't in their hometown, in very many of them. Some of them.

Candice Schutter: Removed from their, their their normal space.

Sybil Nance: Environment. Yes.

Candice Schutter: A normal environment. Exactly. Yeah.

So what about the flip side? Did you have any experiences of being the follower who found herself falling under the spell of a charismatic teacher or leader? What about you? Have you, have you danced with that energy at all?

Sybil Nance: I have, but I would say that I am a fairly satiated, strong person in myself. And I, I say that in that I was like that as a kid. I didn't quite follow along on the playground. I was quite happy just to go chuck the ball with the guys and not do what the girls were doing. Like, I don't know, there's a part of my personality that was just kind of okay with going, huh, that's a bit funny, but not really participating. If that makes sense.

I would say what I did do is I would say, oh, they're getting good results. So if I went to retreat, and I didn't go to a whole bunch. I really didn't. I went to a few yoga retreats. So I have observed a handful of teachers. And I would say, huh, they're getting really good results. Maybe I should try that. That's interesting. Okay. I can see how everyone's paying really close attention. They're very, uh, like I could see what was happening. And then I would say that I would try that, and it would feel not right. And that's where I said, then I'd pull myself away again from, oh, that's not right. That doesn't feel right.

Candice Schutter: So, so is it fair to say more of the seduction around that was around like, I'm gonna emulate that and see how it feels.

Sybil Nance: Correct, correct.

Candice Schutter: I'm gonna copy it because of the results they're getting. And then you have your own, yeah. Your own cognitive dissonance around that.

Sybil Nance: Correct. I think that's sort of how it went for me.

I didn't feel the lull of it while I was in it. No. I felt, actually something's up here. This is weird. Most of the time. I never really felt super comfortable in yoga retreats.

Candice Schutter: When you were attending yoga retreats, what were the kind of things that were problematic to you?

Sybil Nance: Some of the early ones had entourage. So they dressed in a certain way that, typically flowy clothes. They'd walk in and their entourage were behind them. So it it, like it, it felt a little like a wedding ceremony or a princess, like.

I, and again, I am sure it's not intended. I'm sure it wasn't like, but it, it was odd. And I remember going, oh, they think they're better than us. Like right away it's like, oh, they're setting themselves up with this, this entrance. We're all sitting around. They wait till everyone's there and quiet. And then there was an entourage of, of entrance.

Um, teachers sitting up high. So higher level. Like if it was done often it was done maybe in a, in an area like a hall where there was a stage or some stairs going up to the stage. And they'd sit slightly higher. Or for sure prop themselves up on, on cushions and things, which with yoga we'd do anyways, but there was definitely a propping up.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Um, and then the folks that were helping out to either do the registration or to help do adjustments and things like that, were definitely sitting around the, fairly close to the feet. So there was that sort of throne and feet feeling to some of them.

And that was, that was, again, those were teachers that were coming up from California into Oregon for sure. It was, these were the primadonnas that had done really well. Had made a lot of money in California, and now we're coming to, to spread. They were starting to spread around the US and to start to share their teachings with others.

And so most of the people, I would say at the, in the environment were probably young yoga teachers or people that had practiced a fair amount. It wasn't to general public. It was probably a little bit, as you said, exclusionary in, in that there was some privilege there and people that were already sort of in the inner know.

Candice Schutter: Right.

And I think it's worth noting that a lot of times, and of course I can't comment on all of your experiences, but just based on research and personal experience, a lot of times the folks who

are in those inner circles, who are the entourage, as you put it, which I love that language, it's perfect, are often volunteering.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: They're working for free.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And it's an honor. It's an honor to, to get up early and ring the bell to wake everyone up. It's an honor to bring tea to the, the main teacher.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: All the things. And it's, it's sort of positioned like this mentorship type thing, but you're in service to the practice, not the person. That's what you're being told. Right.

This, this distinction that you made, that we talked about when we first spoke, that I think is gonna be really important thread running through this is, part of the way that people become glamored by all of this is that they can say, I'm not a guru. I'm no better than you. I don't want any preferential treatment. Yet that vein is still running. Like there's still that.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Pedestalizing energy. And it's all attributed to like, well, this person's the vehicle for the work. And so really it's about the work. We're really worshiping the work and not the person.

So I think that it's just worth noting that the, the people who are helping out are often, it's exploitive labor, because these, these retreats are charging a lot of money. They're working for free. And then they are submitting themselves to the work, which, if you look at it functionally, once you have enough distance from it, you're like, wait a second. That's the hierarchy at work. So

Sybil Nance: Yes. Yes. And when I went through my yoga therapy teacher training, my mum called me on it. I said, I wanted to get closer to her to watch how she was with private clients and how she was working with people. So I volunteered to fly all the freaking way from the United States up to Calgary to be with her to do these things. And she would bugger off and go play golf or go to the spa, leave me with the people. And I was meaning to be there as a witness to watch, to learn. I was, I was literally wanting to observe. Cuz I am an observer. I wanted to watch. Because I was becoming a trainer for her and I wanted to learn from her.

My mum called me on it, Sybil, you are being taken advantage of. Do you not understand? Like, can you not see what's happening?

I'm like, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: I couldn't, I couldn't. I was too close in it. Because I was trying to be my better self and to learn as much as I could. But I was a bit pissed that she would take off and leave me with a group. That's not why I was there. I didn't volunteer all my time and money to get here to then have you take a break.

Candice Schutter: Right. Exactly.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: Well, good on your mom, huh? That's great.

Sybil Nance: Oh, yes. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Good for her. That's great.

I mean, and that, it becomes this sort of cost benefit analysis though inside, cuz you're like, well I'm still. Cuz when she is here, then I still do get to learn from her. Like I've been in that place where it's like, you know that something's not right about it.

Sybil Nance: Yep.

Candice Schutter: But you're sort of doing math.

Sybil Nance: You justify it.

Candice Schutter: And you're justifying it.

Sybil Nance: You can always justify it.

Candice Schutter: You can always justify it. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly.

All right. And I love that you also mentioned the literal pedestalizing of the leader. Like the fact that the leader is literally on a platform often or.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: And and also the, I would add, the demeanor of that entry in and of itself.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And like what it's projecting. And then the way that the, the leader sits. And like in the Org, I think we spoke about this in just an episode that's gonna drop on Patreon shortly before this one, about how we would do something called Creating the Space and we would all sit, all of the trainees would sit in a circle on the floor and the leader wouldn't even be in the room when we would be creating the space. And then the leader would come in and be hovering above us.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Delivering the teachings. Like those little things make a massive.

Sybil Nance: Massive.

Candice Schutter: Difference.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Think of all of those nervous systems just going into submission.

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

Sybil Nance: And the teacher's nervous system going into puff and pride and all that. Like Yeah. You can feel it. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Even if the teacher, and this is why I wanna say, and I wanna own, and I'm gonna speak to,

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Different ways that, when I was facilitating in a retreat setting, I felt that. Like we did it really similarly.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And I felt that like, it takes a tremendous amount of personal awareness to stay out of that energy when you have people gazing up at you.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And you can feel when somebody's hanging on your every word.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And to not be intoxicated by that. Whew, it's, it's a practice, I tell ya.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

And when you said that, I got a double hit. Hang on it and or realize they're doing it now, berate them and get them down.

I've watched teachers just like see them, and then cut that person down. There's a bit of like a reprimand, or they'll find something that they're doing that's not quite right. And then in public, let this person know, actually, I don't want you hanging on me and I'm gonna let everyone know.

Candice Schutter: That's true. Yeah, you're right.

Sybil Nance: Right. You felt that too?

Candice Schutter: For sure.

Sybil Nance: Right. So it's chosen. It's chosen and it's reciprocal. And I'm wondering how much in that, that euphoric place is that then there's, okay, if I'm gonna take this higher space, I'm wondering if I need exactly these sort of people around me. And this one might not work. So I need to actually do this. Again, subconsciously creating an environment where it's safe for you to stay here, and also they're not gonna challenge you too much or you're not gonna have to behave too badly.

Um, because if this person, especially this one that wants to be there but has maybe a lot of trauma and needs a lot of time and attention, and there's something coming up for them. That person is often sort of put over here and then taken care of in the group. Versus the leader actually taking the proper time to say, I can notice you're feeling dysregulated. I'm noticing you're, you're getting anxiety around, and you're wanting me to do this with you.

Like cuz there's a lot of co-regulation that's going on.

Candice Schutter: True.

Sybil Nance: Right. That we're not aware of. But if we become aware that that's what's actually happening. They're trying to co-regulate with us. Then if we're in that environment, that's our job to co-regulate with them.

Right. To use your own good nervous system. To settle yourself, to take a breath, to go for a walk. Come back and say, can we have tea together? Can we chat? Is there, are you okay? Like those sort of things.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

I do wanna take a minute cause I think it is important what you spoke about.

Let's share with folks a little more about when somebody's sort of made an example of.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Or called out in some way.

So there's the dynamic where maybe somebody is bringing some trauma into the environment. Maybe there's a little bit of, of transference going on.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: There's this, this thing going on. And, and they have maybe greater needs in that moment than everyone else in the group when it comes to their nervous system. And you say you've seen teachers make it like, what? Can you give us an example of like what might happen to that person?

Sybil Nance: Asking for them to stay with it and have everyone else be silent and observing it? So now this person is sitting in silence. Sitting with it. They're flooded. And everybody's watching them. And so there's no place for them to go. And so they don't know really what to do.

And what I have seen is they either break down a little bit or they clam up. And I have seen teachers then when they clam up, come back again and again and again to the same thing, wanting them to get to the other side of it because it's happened in public.

Right.

Candice Schutter: Which brings in this, this term that I found a few months ago, performative trauma therapy.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: Being called out in these environments where the teacher's position and, and sense of worth and authority is sort of contingent upon this person having a breakthrough.

Sybil Nance: Correct.

Candice Schutter: So they're pushing,

Sybil Nance: They're pushing. They're pushing to have it go somewhere that then either through a yoga practice or in a shavana, this person will cry a lot and then feel better. And then again, it's attributed to the teacher and the, the yoga environment.

Which is again, that, that's the part where I feel sad because I have had experiences where people have had, you know, emotional experiences. Have I given some of that over to? Yes, it's just, isn't yoga amazing? It's so beautiful how we get to work through these things? Yeah. I've played homage to that as well. Um, for sure.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Well, and part of it is, I mean, to speak to my own experience, it's been my own learning curve around realizing what I thought was happening when I learned more.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: I realize it was actually something else entirely.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Right. I'm like, oh, this was principle number such and such, or this was such and such. And then the more that I learn and, and grow and develop, then I realize, oh, like that's confirmation bias. That's all that is.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: I have this desire to attribute it to this, and so I see it as evidence of it.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And I think that I'm, I'm sure I'm still guilty of this from time to time.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: It's just the human condition.

Sybil Nance: Yes. That confirms what, yes, yes.

Candice Schutter: That confirms what I, what I had hoped for it to confirm.

Sybil Nance: Right. So I hope I see it.

And also, can I, and that's my question, have I manipulated people in the direction of my own bias, of being able to get to where I wanted to, to reaffirm what it was that I thought to be true?

Yeah.

Candice Schutter: What you just said is so important.

Sybil Nance: Don't ask me to say it again.

Candice Schutter: Ok.

Sybil Nance: I don't remember.

Candice Schutter: Ok. I'm gonna paraphrase.

Sybil Nance: So, ok. Good.

Candice Schutter: Have I manipulated,

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Have I manipulated in order to get the result that I'm seeking, basically?

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And, and, and how... can we be that honest with ourselves?

Sybil Nance: Yes. Yes. And I can say yes, I have done it because that's part of my yoga, my yoga training was that. My yoga therapy training was to exactly validate and affirm these principles that we've learned. Do it through their body. Make them see it.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: That's part of the human condition. Totally a natural thing to do. It's also a function of capitalist culture. It's like, if you're commodifying something, you have to deliver a result.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: People are paying for this retreat, this experience. And on the other side of it, they need to be changed. Cuz that's the promise, whether you said it or not. That's how the culture set it up.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And it's that's why we just need to name these things so we have the awareness around it and then we can talk about how to address them.

So some other red flags that we identify. Let's just bounce through them.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Um, so we talked about addiction to the retreat experience, this privileged escape from life. We spoke about how there's a tendency in a lot of different spaces,

especially when it comes to spiritual teachings, of like, we're being expected as participants to sort of yield to the mystery. And sort of anything goes in that sense. And then there's the, the pressure of the group. And then the co-regulation that you talked about.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Like, oh, I'm feeling like something's off about this. I don't feel comfortable about what we're being asked to do. But I'm co-regulating. So I just kind of ignore that. And like fall into that trance. And that things can happen that feel uncomfortable to us that we look back on later and we're like, I maybe wouldn't have said yes to that.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Or, and this happened a lot for me. I would witness the way that somebody would be treated. And I would be like, what? That doesn't feel right the way that the, the teacher's talking to that person. But they must have some higher authority that, that this is working through the lens of the teachings.

And I know based on the way the culture that's being created and the forced ambience is another piece that just occurred to me. The forced ambience is that you don't dissent.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Like it's love and light. It's peace. You can't be like, you know what, this doesn't feel good.

Record scratch.

Sybil Nance: Right. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: There's this, this sense of emotional ambience that's being forced, too.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Does that resonate with you?

Sybil Nance: It does resonate. It does.

And I'm like you. I've felt it on others and not said anything because I didn't feel my place. I'm going to disrupt this.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: And I'm gonna disrupt this. And it must be, the teacher must know what they're doing.

I wrote that down. I have a fairly high dose of they must be acting on our better behalf. I give a lot of grace over to folks. It's my personality. It's my nature. It's no shit why I ended up in the industry I was in, because I do do that.

And it's only in hindsight that I see I could have actually stepped up and had voice.

And, and again, I, I shared earlier, not a lot of these things happened to me. I witnessed most of it. And then I, I made sure I never repeated it. Didn't feel right. I knew it was wrong. And I didn't attend to that person, nor did I ask the person who was applying it to not do it, or question it in some way. Even, uh, it wouldn't be my style to do it in public, but even privately I didn't do it.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: You know, I didn't know that there, cuz it did, I put it off to, it's coming down from above for sure. Like there's this spiritual.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: It's coming down from their teacher and the, the experience. And the biggest one of all is it's all for good, for a good reason. Right.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Sybil Nance: Everything that happens for us, happens for us. And it's not ours to, to say something about that. Like they needed to hear that. They needed to feel that.

Candice Schutter: That's the default. Uhhuh.

Sybil Nance: The default is that we needed it. It was what was happening.

And I've gone through some abusive things with the teacher trainings. And ultimately I can say that now, that how I was treated has benefit in me now. And could it have had benefit earlier if someone stood up for me and said, Hey, hey, stop treating her that way.

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

Sybil Nance: Could that have been a beautiful teaching as well?

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Right. So yes, but what damage? At what cost are we allowing these things to go on?

Candice Schutter: Right.

And I love that you spoke to the twofold thing of there's speaking up to the leader in whatever capacity feels authentic to us, whether we are the kind of person who's gonna do it in front of the group or somebody who's gonna do it privately later. So there's that, like holding that accountability mirror up.

Then there's also going to the person who experienced the harm and saying, are you okay? I want you to know that didn't feel good to me.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Like that's the thing I think, when I think the most about regret.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: It's like, yeah, I wanna hold leaders accountable. But what again, what I'm more interested in is the people who are being harmed.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And so just to think about the times, I could have just gone over and just been like, yeah, hey, do you need a hug? Like that just felt really weird to me. I don't know how it felt to you. I just want to give you some love right now or whatever.

Sybil Nance: Yeah. Just to, and I'll share with you something, something that's been really big in my life, and this is a group of us did do it. The, the three or four of us that were the teacher trainings in my yoga therapy training, we were taught to be very aggressively abusive to the ones below us.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Sybil Nance: We have banded together. We all actually left as trainers. I left first and then the others left. A lot of threat. This, and I don't know if this is appropriate here, but there's a lot of threat of, of legal action from heads to teacher trainers. We're gonna sue you. This is intellectual property. You can't leave. You can't say a thing. So there's a lot of threat that you are now in danger if you leave.

I left several others left. We got together about a year and a half after that and, and got together and had conversations.

We went down and did repair work with all the people we worked with.

Candice Schutter: Oh, wonderful.

Sybil Nance: So we, we did do that work.

Candice Schutter: Wonderful.

Sybil Nance: And many of them ha, were quite damaged. And so we had to apologize. We had to own our part. See my voice going. We had to do the work.

I had to do that and apologize and tell them how horrid it was. And I was getting it from above, which doesn't excuse it. But they had to know that I was getting it from above, and we pass it on. And I am so sorry.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm. Wow. Thank you for sharing that.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: That's gonna touch a lot of, I think, Org trainers who have, I've spoken with a lot in this space and then privately around just this, the healthy shame that rises up. The healthy shame. That's like, ooh.

Sybil Nance: Yes. Yes. Ooh.

Candice Schutter: Ooh.

And then what do we do with that?

And I love that you just gave us an example of well, you know, come together and make, it's never too late to repair. And then to actually use it as an opportunity. What I love about it's not only did you come forward. You were accountable. You did what you could to repair. You also demonstrated sort of that educational piece around, like, these things are pretty much always trickling down from the top.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And even in the most vile examples, if you look far enough and deep enough.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: There's a source just beyond, just beyond, just beyond. Which is why I talk about Capital-C cults all the time. It's like the patriarchy, you know, makes the man beat his wife. Like, you know, there's, there's so many.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: There's so many ways of looking at it and creating repair. And I guess my point is, is you can be accountable and also point to those forces.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: They can, those two things can both be true.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: I'm accountable for the choices I made. The impact it had on you.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And also, just so you understand, here's where it came from.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: My heart is, was in the right place, but I was very misled.

Sybil Nance: Yep, yep.

Candice Schutter: Key. That's beautiful.

Sybil Nance: And the key is I was being traumatized. So you had a traumatized trainer. And I did not behave well. And that's what they get to understand is I get to forgive myself that because I was traumatized. And it was my trauma self that was acting on their behalf.

I was supposed to be taking care of them and helping them, and I wasn't. And I can say that really cleanly cuz it's not Sybil Nance that didn't do that. It was my dysregulated nervous system that was on hyper alert, because I was gonna get it in the next, the next minute if I didn't do it the way that I was told to do it.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Sybil Nance: Right?

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Sybil Nance: So when we can separate ourselves. And this is why I'm speaking, I'll speak to these beautiful trainers. When we can separate ourselves and feel, oh my God, look at the response that happens in me when I'm in these scenarios. May we all speak about this a bit more, because we know it's happening all the time. And that's why we have to bring this out, because I was not my best. I, I I behaved in a way, but I can separate that out.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: And love myself through it.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: And say that this needs to be spoken to.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

And that's what trauma does.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Is it spreads and in some ways, whenever we cause harm, we can really ask that question, right?

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: What aspect of my trauma is at work here?

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And not to shirk off accountability, but just to give ourselves compassion and understanding.

Sybil Nance: Compassion.

Candice Schutter: Cause we're not. There's healthy shame and then there's the shame spiral that we can get caught in. So it's like that healthy shame to self-reflect and then say like, what is really the source of this? And how can I differentiate my deepest self from this way that I behaved so that I can be accountable for it. I mean, that's really the key.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: I mean, if you look at narcissism.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: They're unable to do that, which is why they offload their shame and pain onto everyone around them. And it's that inability to self-reflect and say, oof.

Sybil Nance: Oof.

Candice Schutter: I can own this if I actually understand that I am not that which I do.

Yeah.

Sybil Nance: Yeah. Yes, yes, yes.

And then you get the beautiful me. Then you get beautiful me coming and saying I'm sorry, and. And holding you and crying in a way that I'm regulated and can just feel the sadness and sorrow with you.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: That's shared experience.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

So grateful we went on that tangent. That's really juicy and important and, um, yeah, super key.

Sybil Nance: I just saw you know, those Christmas wreaths that you make with paper?

Candice Schutter: Uhhuh. Oh, yeah.

Sybil Nance: Right. I just saw, what link am I? What link was I?

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: That's all. What link was I? And can I acknowledge that link? And can I, obviously there's gonna be a repair maybe up and down. I was a link.

Candice Schutter: Right. 100%. Yes.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: It's that legacy, that legacy of trauma.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And that's how we heal it.

Sybil Nance: Yep.

Candice Schutter: Right. Is by acknowledging it and understanding we're not the truest source of it.

And you know, it's really about when we're, there's a lot of talk about white fragility and I think it's close cousin, which is very much related, probably more than cousinhood, twin maybe? Is, um, I don't wanna say spiritual fragility. I'm trying to find the right language, but folks who are in really whitewashed spiritual worlds, there's a fragility around like, oh, like, oh, like I feel like this sort of speaks to it a little bit, like that inability to separate ourselves from that which we do. To be like, I'm an asshole sometimes. And that's okay. That takes a

certain amount of ironically spiritual fortitude. But when we're clinging to the spiritual identity.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Then suddenly we can't have those conversations.

Sybil Nance: Yeah. And those conversations need to be had with ourself and our families and our friends, not with our students. And not in an open environment for everyone to see.

Candice Schutter: Ding freakin' ding.

Sybil Nance: Do your work. Do your work and show up better. Don't do your work in the environment.

Candice Schutter: Yes.

Which speaks to one of the red flags on our list, performative vulnerability. And so I think you just pointed us exactly to this and how this shows up in these retreat environments or in these sort of circles. Do you wanna say a little bit more about that?

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Vulnerability is not taking your own personal work and doing that in the environment where you're meant to be leading and guiding or even as a teacher trainer. My job is to come as my best self, right?

And so a very simple example of it, as a yoga teacher, you don't show up racing to the door and share with everyone how you had a bad day and feel like that makes it feel all normal and good and I'm just like you. No. You take a moment in the car. Take 10 deep breaths. Rid yourself of that to be as best you can and come in and say, I'm still a little bit hassled because I just had a bad experience in my car. We're gonna start with breathing. I'm gonna take care of myself right here. You guys are taking care of yourself. This is what I'm doing. Like you can speak to it, but it's done in a personal, private way that I'm just taking a couple breaths so I can be here for you and be the leader, teacher that I am.

I think too often, vulnerability and transparency is used as a, again, a nice wet noodle for us to get all yummy, yummy with everyone and have them think I'm normal. Let's just accept that you're normal. Like why are we thinking we're not normal? Like if, if you have to say in front of everything 'for all transparency, I'm just being transparent here.'

No, you're not. You're being performative.

Candice Schutter: Right. Right. Yeah.

Sybil Nance: If you're in all transparency, you're just being yourself. And people would accept you that you're yourself. So just be yourself. Don't share how you're not perfect yoga person. Don't share that. Just be yourself.

You're trying to share that I'm like you and you're, you see the difference?

Candice Schutter: Yeah, for sure. Yeah.

And I think it, one can be sort of a stepping stone to the other.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: When folks are really practiced at the performative self. I'll speak for myself. When I really became aware at how much hiding I was doing.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: I didn't know that I was hiding. You know, as a teacher in a way. And when I say hiding, I mean there's, I think there's also a really important distinction between showing up as our best selves and showing up as what we think a best self should show up as.

Sybil Nance: Right. There you go.

Candice Schutter: Right?

Sybil Nance: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Candice Schutter: Right?

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: So when I really discovered that I had somehow crossed a line there.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And I was like, oh, wait a second. I'm dreading going to teach. Why? When I ask myself, I realized over time because I'm not being myself.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And it's exhausting me, to not be myself. So how do I learn to be myself here? Maybe I will initially overcorrect and overshare. Maybe I will initially use phrases like, in all honesty and in transparency, I think you're, you're spot on right about that. And I think as a bridge, sometimes I can feel like I'm anxious. Like in a way.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: That can also be a phrase we use cuz we're anxious about being a little bit more revealing of ourselves.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And though you are, I agree, a hundred percent right about when it, that sort of starts to fall away. And then it's just like, I'm just gonna be who I am. Like it's not a thing.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Like I don't have to think about or plan or explain that I'm being vulnerable and I also don't need to, cuz I feel like performative vulnerability is a lot, in some instances is an unconscious attempt to create attachment bonds.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's nice.

Candice Schutter: And a false sense of intimacy and look at how connected we are. So that the student walks away and is like, well, I really know my teacher because I know what's going on in her marriage.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Right. And I also really wanna underscore, I think there's a transparency spectrum. Just like a gender spectrum. Just like a.

Sybil Nance: Yes, yes.

Candice Schutter: Every kind of spectrum.

Sybil Nance: Yeah. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And where you fall on that is unique to you. So I know I fall a little bit on the sharing more of myself. And that's authentic to me though.

Sybil Nance: Right. Right.

Candice Schutter: Whereas for somebody else, they might be like, yeah, no, Candice, I'm not gonna share about my relationship in my class.

And it's like, groovy. Is that true to you? Great. Like I feel like that's kind of what you're saying is like just be yourself and don't.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: It's not about am I being vulnerable or not.

Sybil Nance: Right. Correct. Correct.

If you don't feel like you should be vulnerable, like you're nervous about being vulnerable, then listen to that. That's what you listen to. There's no need to perform vulnerability. If you feel nervous about being vulnerable, then don't. That's, that's you.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: And that will settle over time for whatever reason, right?

Vulnerability is you being you.

Candice Schutter: Is you being you.

Sybil Nance: That's what's the most vulnerable thing.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm. That's true.

Sybil Nance: Right? The shy person in the back that always sits in the back. They're being themselves. That's vulnerable. Can you imagine showing up knowing that everyone knows that you're the one that sits in the back and you're shy. That's vulnerability. She doesn't need to speak and share and tell us about it.

She's being vulnerable by being herself. Just be yourself. Right.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

[00:56:02]

Candice Schutter: And then this emphasis on the pseudoscience and the way that this shows up as spiritual bypassing.

And I hear, you know, you talking a lot about trauma-informed perspectives and individualized attention.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And all this stuff, which I'm sure has evolved for you over the years.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And is really important to you. And whenever we're teaching a tradition that has a certain dogma attached to it and certain teachings. And I put the word teachings in quotes all the times y'all, cuz so many people that I've worked with talk about the teachings in this way. That it's like, there's an authority that's given to it. Like this is what the teachings say, so therefore there's no need for critical thinking cuz the teachings say this, so.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: Right?

So what are your thoughts on how that plays out? And being somebody who's in the yoga world where that happens a lot. Tell us.

Sybil Nance: I think the piece that, my biggest aha was this year I went to India. I've never been to India before. I went to India. And it wasn't necessarily a yoga retreat. But the, I knew the people had been involved with, uh, a certain center. So I knew there was a fair amount of yoga. And we were supposed to do yoga every morning at the various hotels. And we were seeing a lot of the sacred sites. So I was good. I was good that it wasn't really necessarily a yoga thing.

But in pops this lovely lady, halfway through the trip. She lives in Delhi. She knew the lady that was organizing it. She wanted just to see this one little area cause she hadn't traveled there. This was a nice, cheap way for her to do it. She was a ray of sunshine. She had worked with one of the gurus in the western world and helped run the teacher trainings and all these things. She had so much insight as an Indian about the craziness that goes on in the western world.

Candice Schutter: Mm. I bet.

Sybil Nance: So she shared a lot of humor about the guru worshiping and about the teachings and how it's applied and, and all and all and all.

And she, she said, it was a humorous thing. It was so funny. And it made me crack up. And then I, you know, lots of days since I've allowed that to crack me open in other ways.

We went off early in the morning to go up to someplace to do the ring the bell and to bow the head and all the stuff. And the person who took us was a leader of some sort. And he was, I think he was just attached to the hotel. But he was giving the spiel. These are Western women who know yoga. Like, give them the spiel. You know, push the button, do the yoga button thing. So off we went. We did it and everything.

And I had a water bottle that was filled with the water from the holy water that was supposed to be there and everything and bring it back.

Well, Malaka says to me, "oh, you got some holy water. That's good."

And I said, "yeah, like this is la-la-la."

And then she goes, "Well, you better not drink it."

And I said, "no, I'm not gonna drink it." Like knowing the germs and stuff.

She goes, "no, no, no." She goes, "what are you gonna do with it?"

I said, "oh, I'll just pour it all over myself, whatever, in the shower."

So she goes, "well, make sure you close your lips."

And so I said, "okay." and I'm thinking all about germs.

And then she looked at me, she goes, "because you know if you get some in your mouth, you might actually have samadhi right here, and I won't know what to do with you if you go to samadhi."

So, and I just thought, oh my God, she's poking fun at all of us. All of us. At the ridiculousness of it all. Of something that was born in a country. It was lived by them. It is lived by them.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: They all know what day of the week it is. What what diety to honor. But it's a lived experience. It's not done performative. It's not done in a yoga class. It's just lived.

And she has watched it be taken by the gurus for sure who materialized, capitalized on it, went for it. They did it as well. But she's able to laugh at it.

And she's just, and another time she said to me, "you know, the Indians, we can make a, a temple out of a tree. You know that." And she goes, "so you, when you see the tree, it's no particular tree. We've just made it a temple. But now all the Westerners come and kiss the damn tree. And it's now decorated like, it's like, it's nothing. It's nothing. It's because we kissed it on the way by because we're paying attention to nature because we all pay attention and it's our karma."

Candice Schutter: It's not because the tree has some mystical power.

Sybil Nance: No, but now look at it. Now look it. She goes, "there's one of those ones they've made a temple now."

Candice Schutter: Right.

Sybil Nance: But it was so good because it's just like, it's something that is sacred. But it's, we've taken it and made it mean so much more than it is.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: And we, we do that. We do that.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: But every time I hear her voice about, yeah, you might not wanna get it in your mouth. You might have a samadhi experience and I don't know what to do with you then. Like I just thought, oh God.

Candice Schutter: That's so great.

Sybil Nance: Brilliant.

Candice Schutter: I love it.

The tree, I love the, the example of the tree. And how like, we're just gonna kiss the tree. That we honor that it's there. That it's sacred.

And I just really got this hit. Oh, one of the things I think that we do in the western world, which I feel like is direct byproduct of the colonizing headspace.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Is, so the tree is there. And the tradition says it's sacred. And it's not that the tree is more sacred than any other tree. It's that I'm honoring the sacred in all caps.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: The sacredness that the tree is here.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And then the western mind is like, how can I make this a thing that, it's not about literal commodifying, but it's about colonizing. It's about, how do I make this a thing that gives me something?

Sybil Nance: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Candice Schutter: And so if I make the tree a deity.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Then I can, it's like prosperity gospel. Like it's all connected. I can worship this tree and it's going to deliver me a better life. Or more money or whatever. Like it's all about, It is all about what am I gonna get from this? Which is the colonizing head space. What am I gonna get from this tree? If I turn it into a deity and I kiss it, then I'm gonna get this magical luck. And I'm gonna become more blah, blah, blah.

And like, ultimately, if you strip it down to a, to bare bones, the people who actually live this life are like, no, the tree's sacred. Just like everything else is sacred.

Sybil Nance: Else is sacred.

Candice Schutter: That's all the teachings are meant to remind you of.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And yet it becomes this is kind of like, ATM machine, right?

Which is what metaphysical teachings and new age worlds like, that's really what it, it got turned into for me. I'm going to be as pleasing as I can possibly be to the metaphysical gods, so that I can get the life that I want. And I can, I won't have depression anymore. And I'll have lots of money. And just run down the list. My body's gonna be super fluid and svelt and thin. And it's gonna look great in these pants. And it was always about what am I going to get? And I think that's like.

Sybil Nance: Which is a huge bypass of actually living a life and just getting yourself through your life. And it'll happen anyways. No matter how you do it.

Candice Schutter: Right. Or it'll just be what it'll be. You're gonna be a human no matter what.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: Practices you do or don't do. No matter what you think or don't think. No matter what you believe or don't believe. Like you're gonna be a human. And that's never gonna change.

And that's been the biggest, honestly, like the biggest relief in my life. And I'm not even exaggerating. The biggest relief in my life is like, oh, I getta just be a human creature.

Sybil Nance: Yep.

Candice Schutter: Fallible and also amazing sometimes and screws up and isn't really even screwing up is just being a human and, and has ecstatic experiences and sometimes feels like shit. You know, all the things.

Sybil Nance: Yep, yep, yep.

Which goes back to a comment that I have said sparingly in the right environments. I do not believe yoga teachers ought to do this for a living. It is not a living. Do not teach yoga. Do not own a yoga studio. Do not do a teacher training for a living. It's not your living.

You have to be in a household where there's enough money that you can do this part-time, as a desire, as a hobby. Because I think the commercialism, the, the, exactly what you said. If I do more of this, if I do it better, I will make more money. I'll be successful. I'll be able to make a living.

I've had so many people say to me, oh, you're a yoga teacher. I wanna do that. I'm gonna quit my job. I've said, don't do that. I have a husband who works full-time and we've had a lot of stress and grief over the fact that I do yoga as a partial job. Maybe I should have been doing something else and not striving so much to try and make some money at this. If I'd done something else and just done a community class, would I have actually had more authentic me showing up to the practice of?

Like it's a Western way. I'm not saying it's just, I think we westernize it. And I think the, the wellness industry suffers, those of us that are in it, when we try to make it our business. I think it's, I, I, I just have to say it. I just, I can't see it ever going all that well.

Candice Schutter: I would agree.

Sybil Nance: I don't see very many successful wellness people that are balanced in their life, have made enough money that are whatever it is.

Does that make sense?

Candice Schutter: It makes perfect sense. And I think it's even more complex now than maybe even when you started in that vein because of social media. And because of the celebrity culture that exists now in the world of influencers, and.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Like I see people that I love working so hard.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: At visibility.

And, you know, I struggle with this even having a podcast. Like I really, you know, like how do we balance that? When it's algorithmic. When attention is like literally currency in this culture? And it's really complicated. And I think you're right.

I mean, I wouldn't be able to do this at all actually if I didn't have the privilege of financial security that I have right now. No way. No way in hell.

It is a privilege to be able to do this in a way that's in integrity. And empathy for people who have to hustle cuz they gotta pay their bills.

Sybil Nance: Right. Right.

And maybe if less of us that have privilege stop doing it at such a high level, then actually the bar would come down. And those that actually just wanna teach three classes in a church and make some good money might actually be able to do it.

Candice Schutter: Hmm.

Sybil Nance: Do you see what I'm saying? If we lower down, those of us with privilege, stop being so visible and stop making it so high end.

Candice Schutter: I see. Yeah.

Sybil Nance: That then actually there's more grassroots. And maybe there actually might be a chance that people with lower income can actually make a little part-time money. They can't right now because everyone's going to these ones.

Candice Schutter: That's true.

Sybil Nance: Does that make sense?

Candice Schutter: It makes perfect sense.

And I see this happening..

Yeah. It's really impor, and I see this happening in the Org. The dynamic they've created, which is more of a pyramid structure. And I was just talking to somebody recently about how when the pandemic hit. You know, it's like they've, they have all these trainers all around the world that they've, in my opinion, trained too many trainers based on demand. There's not enough demand for the number of trainers they have, but they wanna.

Sybil Nance: It's the same with teacher training in yoga. Why are we making more teachers? There's no, don't, there's no audience.

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

So we've got all these trainers, and it used to be that they at least had their regional areas.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: Like they could at least cover their regional areas. And then the pandemic hit and everything went online. And now, the people at the tippy top who are the most visible, who have the celebrity status. Everyone's going to their trainings. Because it's virtual.

And are they better trainers? No, not necessarily. They just have more visibility and more privilege.

Sybil Nance: Right.

Candice Schutter: And charisma by proxy.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: To the founder. And so all these folks who invested tens of thousands of dollars and God knows how many hours and years of their lives, aren't experiencing income, you know? And then there was a certain amount of privilege for them to even be able to go to the trainings in the first place. And there's all these people who could have never even become trainers cuz they don't have the, right?

So it's like the whole thing, it's like a cascading mess of what happens when we do hierarchical thing.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: And I'm not saying it's like a simple fix. I don't have the fix. Like you said, we're just here asking questions.

Sybil Nance: Questions. Yeah.

Like these things hit as you and I talk, because I haven't considered that before. But as soon as we bring it out into a topic, we can actually, you and I sit going, huh? Well then what if? Like, and this is how I think we need to go. Like how do we do this differently? We gotta keep asking, well, what if this is actually causing this?

Candice Schutter: Exactly.

Sybil Nance: Well then if that's doing that, then this has to happen.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Like that's where I'm gonna put my, my thoughts about now.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: You know?

Candice Schutter: And it's really ultimately about having the, ironically to circle us back, to the word mindfulness, like the actual practice. Like the actual benefits of.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: The things that you and I have spent years devoting so much of our time and energy to. The actual benefits are meant to make us more self-aware and mindful of being able to think critically.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And to look at these things.

You know, at first it feels like suspicion cuz you're in an environment where you can't. So suspicion is how it shows up. But it's really ultimately about creating environments where it's not suspicious when you look across the room at a retreat and somebody kind of has that look. It's not about oh, they're, they're challenging the whole structure's just gonna crumble if I let this person ask their question.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: But just to be like, what are you bringing forth? Because you clearly have a perspective that we haven't heard yet. I can feel it. We can feel that dissonance in the room.

Sybil Nance: Yes. Yep. Yes.

Candice Schutter: What is your perspective? I wanna hear it. And then not just relying on the teachings as the answer to every question.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm.

Candice Schutter: But understanding that these teachings are helpful and there's this large world in which the, the water that those teachings were born in.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: And are reflecting whether we want them to or not. And that, that how do we ask these questions within that context and have conversations like this so that we can use our critical thinking in conjunction with our mindfulness?

They're not at odds.

Sybil Nance: Right. Right. They're not, they're not at odds.

Candice Schutter: They're actually, they're contingent upon each other.

Sybil Nance: They're very much that way. Right. Right. Yeah.

And that's, it goes back to where I started. I've spent my whole career in the yoga industry, as a part-time work. Like I'm a full-time mom, wife, householder. Like I am full on that and I do this. And I've spent my whole time trying to get further and further away from it, because I knew there was something not right.

Right.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: I keep trying to get away from it. And yet it is the breath work. It is the gentle movement. And it's sitting in nature. These are the simple things that bring me where, to where I am.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Right.

And we do come up against and we're meant to have, yeah, I just love the way you say critical thing. We're meant to have critical thinking. We're meant to challenge each other and love each other at the same time.

Candice Schutter: Exactly. Yeah.

And challenge each other in a way that we are challenging ourselves, too. Not challenging each other in the way that, you know, getting our back pinned against a wall at a retreat by a facilitator.

"I'm challenging you. This is a breakdown to breakthrough. Hang on. It's gonna happen!" You know, that's very different than what we're talking about.

Sybil Nance: Yes. Yeah. Yep.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Yep. Yep.

Candice Schutter: Oh my gosh. Like, who knew when we met the way that we met.

Sybil Nance: I know.

Candice Schutter: We would ever be having this conversation, like.

Sybil Nance: And I know. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. So wild.

And so meaningful, actually.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: So meaningful.

Sybil Nance: It is.

Candice Schutter: For me, especially coming out of, just so many different cultures where I would catch myself getting pulled into, to certain dynamics again and again. And to come out of my most recent experience and to have met you there. And I cannot tell you how validating it was when you reached out to me. Because it was still really fresh.

Sybil Nance: Hmm.

Candice Schutter: And um, just to say to everyone out there, just the impact of saying to somebody, I see you. It just can't be overstated. Cuz it just has meant so much to connect with you in this way. And to, to have these conversations with you. Cause I admired you when we were, you know, in this shared space. And I still admire you. And to be able to talk about, because that's the thing about these shared environments is that often I think part of when my eyes open to the fact that like, oh, something was a little off, is that when I talk to the person outside of it, we speak to each other differently.

Sybil Nance: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And it's like, oh, that's information.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: And again, this isn't a commentary on that space. But just to say, I'm just really grateful to be able to have had the experience I had with you there. And to have this experience on the other side of it. It's been really healing for me.

I just wanna say that.

Sybil Nance: Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

Yeah. And I'll share back, it's because it happened to me that when I talked about us as the trainers with the trainees. I had to apologize to her. She actually became a teacher of mine. I took a course from her and was so impressed with her ability. When we shared at the end, I shared openly with the group how much her bright light has been brightened by my ability to release what happened between us. And it was one of the most beautiful, because we were witnessed and I was able to see her break into love cry. Like just, she'd been holding so much

tension of not knowing how it was, her and I really cared for each other, but yet I had treated her so poorly.

And when I was able to name that in front of other women, she was able to just break and cry and weep, because then she witnessed what it feels like to receive somebody truly being sorry for what they did. Knowing that she also, like she knew damn well I was also being traumatized. So it was, it was so powerful.

So you're right. You and I being in our presence with each other is so healing because it is, we need to be able to feel that these places are where we can go. And we're gonna go slowly and quietly and gently with lots of parameters and lots of holding ourselves well.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: Um, Not doing it out in the world, in the big world, I think it's done small and safe like this.

Candice Schutter: Mm-hmm.

Sybil Nance: And so that goes back to the honor of what you're doing. You're holding such a beautiful container for people to be able to, to have these little breaks of feeling themselves and that they weren't wrong. And that they can trust themselves.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: Like Lindsay can trust herself now more. I can trust myself more because there was distrust that got healed.

Candice Schutter: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

Well, thank you.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: So much for doing this and with your permission, I would like to, you know, just link to ways if anyone wants to connect with you.

Sybil Nance: Yes.

Candice Schutter: Um, based on this.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: Just to have a conversation or, or whatever.

Sybil Nance: Yeah.

Candice Schutter: I would love to provide them that opportunity. And just to say to everyone, Sybil's also in our Patreon community. So she'll be able to see your comments and and engage and all that through the comment threads.

Um. This has just been really rich and I just love being able to have this conversation with you and thank you.

Sybil Nance: Yeah, thank you.

Candice Schutter: You know, maybe we'll have you back again sometime soon and dig even deeper.

Sybil Nance: I would love that.

Candice Schutter: Yeah.

Sybil Nance: Even deeper.

Candice Schutter: Huge thanks to Sybil for being on the pod, and if you wanna reach out to her or learn more about her work, you can find her at lovesybil.com and you can find links to her socials in the show notes.

I wanna wrap this episode with one last quote from Susanna Barkataki. To all the wellness teachers and practitioners out there, she writes, "I don't want you to stop teaching yoga or practicing yoga. I want you to understand its context is relevant for us today. For many yogis today, we are either experiencing, moving through, perpetuating, or healing systemic trauma."

As she points out, none of this is about giving up what we love. The defensiveness we feel around that is part of our cult conditioning. What it's really about is making sure that the love and unity that we espouse, that it's actionable, equitable, and not just another polished iteration of culty norms.

Holistic wellness isn't just about the feel good promise of individualistic salvation. It's about our interconnectedness, our deep, honest, full spectrum humanity. It's about freeing ourselves in one another from traumas that keep us from true healing.

I'll be back next week with another amazing guest. And until then, consider dropping in over at Patreon. Later this week, I'll be releasing part one of Deconstructing Dogma with wellness facilitator and former Org teacher, Susan McCulley. If you're a wellness facilitator, you won't wanna miss that one either. You can find it and all the other bonus episodes over at patreon.com/thedeeperpulse.

Thanks so much for tuning in. Have a great week. And I'll see you next time.

Ciao.