

**Candice Schutter:** Welcome to The Deeper Pulse and another Deconstructing Dogma sampler. This podcast is independently produced and entirely ad free, which is really just a fancy way of saying that I do all of the podcast production myself. And that I rely solely on listener support to keep this work alive.

If you're a regular listener, one of the most sensible ways to support this podcast is to join the growing community over on Patreon, because it gives you immediate access to bonus content. You can begin with a free 7 day trial, which if you decide to continue rolls into a sliding scale monthly donation, which gives you continuous access to a growing library of exclusive bonus episodes where we deconstruct dogma in real time. It's basically an online portal [00:01:00] for all the extras. Community engagement is not required. You can join anonymously. And you can cancel at any time. No questions asked.

Today's main feed bonus release features a compilation of excerpts from a handful of episodes in the Deconstructing Dogma series.

And as always, the stories and opinions shared by me and my guests are based on personal experience and are not intended to malign any group, individual, or organization.

Alright. Welcome to today's Patreon sampler, which pulls from five recent episodes in the Deconstructing Dogma series. Please keep in mind that the episode numbers that are referenced here, correspond with deconstructing dogma bonus episode content and not the content featured here on the main feed.

We began with a few short excerpts from a solo episode that I recorded on the fly. In this [00:02:00] Patreon episode number 29, I share a bit about the patterns emerging as I am now receiving many messages from people who are still currently involved in the Org and are grappling with whether or not to continue their professional affiliation with a company that has left so much harm in its wake.

And inspired by the Conspirituality podcast, and specifically the work of Matthew Re I talk a bit about shame and self-care.

Welcome to Patreon and The Deeper Pulse and another episode of deconstructing dogma.

In light of, what's been a surge in listenership over the past few weeks due to a number of events, including some of the incredibly brave guests that have been [00:03:00] featured on the main feed and on Patreon. Um, It's been a lot. It's been a lot. There's tremendous energy, I think, happening in our kind of our recovery group, I guess, for lack of a better term. Over on Facebook our ATO After The Org community. Which is a private community where we kind of unpack and deconstruct in real time around all the things that are coming up for those of us who are either on our way out of our relationship with the Org or transitioning it in some way or have left. And really grappling with what the podcast content is bringing up for us individually.

There's a lot of energy brewing there. And from what I hear, there's a lot of energy brewing within the Org itself in regards to this content.

Given how many messages are coming at me and given the fact that I didn't set out to be a whistleblower. That was not my aim [00:04:00] at all. I just wanted to get a story from inside of my body out.

That seems to be what has happened. And I think some of you who've been on the podcast with me probably can really relate to that sense of, I just wanted to share my experience. And in some ways I am a whistleblower because there is some pushback around the things that I'm sharing. And there has been silence for so long and it just brings about a lot of feelings. And I won't go into that with you. I'll save that for my therapist. Um, I feel a responsibility. I feel as though I, in doing this and in featuring stories have created kind of a surge of energy around these topics. And, I'm not a therapist and I can't help each individual who's reaching out to me with the individual reckoning that has to happen for each one of us. But I [00:05:00] can do my best to continue doing what I've been doing, which is to provide as many resources as possible. Because for me, what has really helped me the most in this process of cult recovery and has gotten me to the point where I can actually call it that, which has been a process in and of itself, is education. And listening to stories.

Not just the stories of others who were involved in the Org and similar groups like Dahnhak and other things that I was involved in. But stories of people from totally different walks of life who went through totally different situations. And those stories and the educational materials that have helped me to label many of the experiences that I've had and that I'm witnessing in these stories, has really helped me in my healing process.

So I'm just going to continue to do that. And I feel as though my role is to continually share with you, this is what's been helping me. And to provide a platform for other people to do the same thing. So [00:06:00] that's what we're going to continue to do here in these bonus episodes.

Survivor's shame is just what it sounds like. The feeling of having been victimized or as though we have been impacted by the actions of these culty dynamics. And one of the biggest things that I think makes this so complex that I see the most when I hear from people in message, after message, after message, after message. Is the shame that comes up when we're trying to reconcile the good with the not so good. That helpfulness with the harm.

And so there's this struggle inside because it's like, but, but, but, but, but this changed my life. This helped me. And I've witnessed it help so many other people. And it's still helping so many other people. So how could I possibly have these bitter feelings? How could I possibly point [00:07:00] at that thing that has been so helpful and label it as toxic?

And we have to struggle against like sort of the, the wounded parts of us that are unable to hold these two truths simultaneously. Because it's really a both and, yes and, right. So that tension, that conflict, that cognitive dissonance that shows up, that can show up as shame, because we, I'll speak for myself.

Because when I first started this process, I continually felt guilty that I was speaking negatively about something that was connected to a really positive experience. Not just for me, but for so many people. So, again, we're not going to solve any of these conflicts, just to name them. So that helpful versus harmful. And the way that shame shows up around that.

Also the shame of like when we lose our community. And when we lose our place in the hierarchy. When we [00:08:00] surrender our status in some way. And when we let go of trying to straddle those worlds. There's a real sense of loss and grief.

But there's shame attached to that too, because often when we exit and we're seeing, I'm seeing this a lot with the Org right now. When we exit or when we're considering exiting and we speak our dissent or discomfort. Because the folks who are in and we'll get to this in a minute are experiencing their own shame and the way it's internalized in the way it's showing up, they begin to, whether they mean to or not. I really think in most cases they do not. They start to shun us. They start to shut us out. They make us wrong. They victim blame.

We feel rejected. And even if we know cognitively that it's unjust. It still hurts like hell. I mean, pains me to know that [00:09:00] there are people discussing that I am the one causing harm. That I am the one stirring up trouble. That I am the one who is seeking to take down an organization, which is certainly not my aim. I just want the truth out there. I just want people to stop being hurt.

All those things I know about myself are true. And, every so often I get a knot of shame and my belly, because I have been othered. And that's just part of the othering is these natural feelings of shame. So that's a part of it.

The shame of having been involved in something that we know has caused harm. The shame of having enabled something that we can now label as abusive. And, and this is not going to be the case for everybody. It depends on what your role was and all that. So I'm not going to go into the nuance of that and the complexity. I'm not saying this is everyone's experience. But some of us feel. Wow. I really enabled these dynamics. I really participated. [00:10:00] I used the four agreements as weapons from time to time to silence people and myself. I was silent in training environments when people were being verbally abused. I didn't say anything. I actually stepped forward and in stepping forward, pushed someone aside or cast a shadow on someone else. There's so many examples.

I also want a name for the trainers out there, former trainers. I taught the dogma that was later used to weaponize. Or maybe I taught in a way that was very similar to Marissa and perpetuated these abusive cycles without even realizing it.

There's so many layers to this. So shame around the part that we played in the hierarchy.

And I just, again, want to say with so much compassion towards all of us. We did what we thought was right at the time. And we did what we needed to do to exist within the system as it [00:11:00] stood. And we have to grapple with, on the other side of that, how do we experience that shame?

And when we speak about shame, we don't often underscore that there is such a thing as healthy shame. And when we make shame itself, something that we need to turn away from. And this is part of what feeds these dynamics and feeds this. Well, really kind of, it's going to move us into the apologist arena.

Like, when we turn away from shame and say it that is a bad thing. I shouldn't feel shame. We actually miss an opportunity for accountability. And that shame is wired into us for a reason so that we can self-reflect and course correct. And when we don't do that. When we just are like shame, bad. Must turn away. Then we overlook the harm that we're causing.

And this happens all the time in wellness cultures. I see it so much. Cause it's like, oh, that's negative. It's dark. I don't want to look at that. I don't want to give any energy to the shame that I feel. And shame [00:12:00] spiraling around something is very different than healthy reflection. Like whew, that thing I did. Not cool. I need to make repairs around that.

Like that's, that's really all we're asking for. When I speak about accountability, it's a call for that self-reflection and a grappling with healthy shame.

So side note there, but really important.

All right. Apologist shame.

The way that folks who hear about harm, who are still associated and sort of complicit to that harm without even realizing it, are naturally going to offload that shame in order to stay. It's just part of the process. And I'm not going to go heavily into this, because I spend kind of a whole episode on this, which is episode 59. If you missed it. You should take a listen to that one. Cause this can look all different ways, but it's essentially, usually shows up like [00:13:00] gaslighting, victim blaming, tone policing.

And also, it tends to create this strengthening of bonds within the group that is resisting the resistance. They sort of flip the narrative and become the ones who are being victimized. Which, and I want to say, it very well may feel that way to them. I'm not making light of that. It may feel that way to them because of the ramifications of said whistleblowing and said exposure.

But they flip the narrative. They become the ones being victimized. And then the resistance becomes the enemy. And there's generally a lot of offloading of this internalized shame that can't be felt because feeling that shame would require accountability. As I've said before.

Ultimately I want personally to stay in a place of compassion. And to do my best to remember the things that I did and said and thought in order [00:14:00] to justify choices that ultimately in the end, weren't necessarily in my best interest or in the best interest of those around me. But I did what I did in order to sort of survive and learn at whatever pace I was learning at. So, I want to stay in that compassion.

And at the same time, this work that I've been doing, learning from anti-racism activists and educators is really helping me to understand, like I can have that compassion and I can also act. And I can also call for accountability. And I can also say, that's not okay. I can also use my privilege to speak up. And to draw boundaries and lines around what is okay and what isn't, so that I can protect myself and other people. We want to be able to understand. But that does not mean we have to excuse poor behavior.

**Candice Schutter:** [00:15:00] Deconstructing dogma episodes 24 and 25 feature a two-part conversation with Dr. Barb Wesson, a former Org trainer, Body Verve facilitator, and early on affiliate of the Org. She stepped away in 2016 after 19 years with the practice.

Tracy, Barb and I share stories. And I wonder aloud at how to heal from the deep spiritual wounds that I experienced, not only at the Org, but in new age wellness in general. Barb gives Tracy and I some sage advice that at times sends us all into fits of laughter. It's a really fun convo. Here's a sample.

**[00:15:40] Barb Wesson - DD #24/25 (excerpts)**

**Barb Wesson:** So I've been doing my own thing since 2016. And if anybody out there in listening land wants to know how to do it or what to do, gimme a call. Cause I, I was teaching 10, 12 classes a week. I didn't change anything about my professional life except I stopped calling it that.

And interestingly enough, [00:16:00] until you did, I believe it was number 33. Until you did number 33, I was allowing people to just call it the name. And after that I went, no. No more. And I actually, anytime somebody calls it that, even my husband. Anytime somebody calls it by its original name, I'm like, don't call it that anymore. Please do not give that energy to me. Because I don't want it.

And it's been really fun and powerful to say that. And to say, no, it's kind of culty. I don't wanna be engaged with that anymore. And it, it's been very powerful. Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Wow.

**Barb Wesson:** Yeah, and it's been good for my spirit.

I feel like in the talking about it all, I wonder where spirituality still fits. When [00:17:00] something becomes culty, there's always a sense of spiritualness about it. But what truly is spirituality? And when is spirituality not culty at all? And how do we start to ferret out that which is spiritual from that which is being manipulated for the sake of cultiness, which the Org did all the time.

That's just another part of conspirituality, I would say. Because it portends that she got the information for all of us.

And I don't necessarily have the skills for myself to hear my own fucking voice.

**Tracy Stamper:** Right.

**Barb Wesson:** Right?

So she has to give me my voice. And that makes me crazy.

You know, you can't tell me what [00:18:00] my body is saying to me.

**Tracy Stamper:** Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** Right. And when our, when our mentor is teaching us that, that is a possibility. I will channel on behalf of the entity that is the Org and give you this wisdom that is coming from beyond.

And at the same time, I'm gonna tell you that you need to source it yourself and then give it to your students. There's sort of this hierarchy of

**Barb Wesson:** Yes.

**Candice Schutter:** But it's not gonna be, you're not as connected to, I mean, we used to call them the source.

**Barb Wesson:** Right.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** We used to call Marissa and Raul the source.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

So like. And when I say that y'all out there who weren't part of it, I don't mean that like we were like, God, the source. We were just like the source of the teachings.

**Barb Wesson:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** Right. They are the source of the Org. And the Org was sort of, I don't know. I didn't think of it as God, but like there was this sense of that it was this like divine wisdom that was coming through them and they were like the purest source, which makes me laugh now.

So, like, we could learn to do it. But it's still wasn't coming from us. Like what you're saying, [00:19:00] Barb is so important. It still wasn't coming from us. The way that, at least I'll speak for myself, the way that I interpreted it was that I was gonna go in as a teacher. And get these pearls or whatever from beyond. And like, yeah, I'm sensing my body; however, the cue is like coming from.

**Barb Wesson:** It's coming from the Org. It's coming from.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Barb Wesson:** What it was coming from was the ultimate source of the Org, which is that entity that talked about.

**Candice Schutter:** Which is the dogma actually. So basically the bait and switch is that we're being told that the dogma is this pure channel. Like that we're channeling something that is unknown that we've tap into, but ultimately it's the dogma that we're just regurgitating.

How do we even describe and converse. Cuz it's like as soon as we wrap language around what spirituality is.

**Barb Wesson:** We've lost it.

**Candice Schutter:** Exactly. And so then it's like there's always gonna be this exception [00:20:00] where somebody can abuse it and misuse it.

**Barb Wesson:** Exactly. And that's true about everything in life. It's true about everything. We can abuse people because of their emotional makeup, you know?

**Candice Schutter:** Sure.

**Barb Wesson:** If someone's vulnerable. You know, if someone is anxious. Well, I can do something that will make them even more anxious, and then I can soothe them. I can gaslight, and then I can love bomb. So yeah, you know.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Barb Wesson:** Every single aspect of us can be manipulated and twisted around. And it's just that we're more, I feel like we're more familiar with our mind, our body, and our emotions. And so it's easier to come, come to an understanding about how we can manage those. But then when we go to the spirit world, if we bring it back to what brings meaning in my life, It's easier. And that's spirituality. And you can't tell me if it's right or wrong, cuz none of us really know.

We don't know. Why do we need to find out? Why do we [00:21:00] need to care?

**Candice Schutter:** I think part of it is, and that's kind of where, at least where Monica and I had come to in our conversation was like, in order to survive our humanity, we need to create stories and try to piece it together. And we might never get it right. But like, we need to do that in order to make it through the day sometimes, you know?

**Barb Wesson:** Yeah. But you can't make up stories. You know, you can't make up stories. Those are called assumptions.

Oh, man. Took you a little too long.

**Candice Schutter:** It did.

**Tracy Stamper:** Those are bad. Assumptions are bad.

**Barb Wesson:** Bad.

Don't make up stories. You dunno what the truth is.

**Candice Schutter:** Gosh. Yeah.

**Barb Wesson:** But that is what we spend our whole life doing is making up stories.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

**Barb Wesson:** And mostly we're indoctrinated with other people's stories.

**Candice Schutter:** That's right.

**Barb Wesson:** And so we get to this point where we say, you know what? I wanna make up my own story. So this is my story of spirituality. And this is what I believe.

It's [00:22:00] the complexity of us as a human, which is spirituality at its essence is we are really complex human beings. We are complex beings in this humanness. And we all need to decide for ourselves what is going to bring us meaning, and that opens us up to spirituality.

Way back in the beginning, you talked about the traits that people have that are most likely to get sucked into cultiness and one was idealistic and was the other one optimistic?

**Candice Schutter:** It's like a sense of idealism and a sense of vulnerability in some way. Like transition, newness, loss, whatever, any sort of vulnerability. Janja Lalich jokes and says, you could have just gotten a haircut and you feel sensitive about. That's a joke she makes.

Cause it's like just vulnerability, right?

**Tracy Stamper:** Yeah.

**Candice Schutter:** You just feel vulnerable. And you're more susceptible.

**Barb Wesson:** Well, and, and if we think about the Org. The Org asked [00:23:00] us over and over and over again to be vulnerable.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

**Barb Wesson:** Over and over again, it asked us in every training to just let ourselves open up to this vulnerability so that we could truly hear the gift of source, their source. Right?



And so it's an interesting thing to put together my idealism with their push for vulnerability.

**Tracy Stamper:** Oh yeah.

**Barb Wesson:** Yeah. Which also comes with self-esteem. And am I good enough?

And my body was never good enough. You know, we can go through that over and over again, how I was too fat and not pretty enough and all of that.

So no, you can't be in the videos, Barb. Just not quite good enough.

**Candice Schutter:** That shit makes me so angry.

Well, and I just wanna say that on the idealism piece, I'm glad you brought that in because I think for me, one of the reasons I feel more relaxed around being able to trust myself is [00:24:00] that I don't need to solve this puzzle.

**Barb Wesson:** Right.

**Candice Schutter:** Like, I've been trying to solve the puzzle. And like make myself different than I am. And so even if I step in another pile of culty shit, which I will. That's part of.

**Barb Wesson:** I'm not going to.

**Candice Schutter:** The path.

Famous last words, Barb. Famous last words.

**Barb Wesson:** I'm 60. I'm gonna say that time is on my side.

**Candice Schutter:** Okay. Barb's off the hook.

**Barb Wesson:** I have less years to get into trouble.

**Candice Schutter:** This is true.

**Barb Wesson:** So therefore.

**Candice Schutter:** Statistically.

**Barb Wesson:** The biggest part of spirituality is trusting. As Janice Stanfield would say, trust the mystery. You know, if we could allow ourselves to do that.

But all of us are answer seekers. We are all seekers. And which is probably another aspect of one's personality that drives them toward [00:25:00] cults. Because cults have all the answers, you know. The Org was the best movement experience in the whole world. Marissa said it over and over and over again on a chair in a studio with black on and high heeled boots sitting on.

And we had to share that with our trainees. It was the first thing the trainees had to see was her telling them that they have just entered into the world's best somatic movement program.

But I'm sorry they won't put you in the book. They won't put you in the history of somatic movement book, Org.

**Candice Schutter:** No.

**Barb Wesson:** If they won't put you in there. How did you become the world's best somatic movement practice?

**Tracy Stamper:** And you actually mean that literally, Barb.

**Barb Wesson:** I did. I have the book. Yes. It says that the Org is not [00:26:00] considered a somatic movement form. In print. I can send you a copy.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Barb Wesson:** Cause it's amazing. I read that and I went, wow.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

**Candice Schutter:** Definitely counter to what we were taught.

**Barb Wesson:** Yes, very counter. Anybody who tells me they have the answers to everything is no longer in my trust bucket.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Tracy Stamper:** Trust bucket!

**Barb Wesson:** Right? I just made that up.

**Tracy Stamper:** She's full of them.

**Barb Wesson:** Candice, that's the problem. I'm full of it. I really am.

**Tracy Stamper:** Oh my god. And all this time, I've had a fuck-it bucket. I needed a trust bucket.

**Barb Wesson:** We need both.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah, you gotta have both. You gotta have both, right?

**Tracy Stamper:** I need both. Ok.

**Barb Wesson:** We need both buckets.

**Tracy Stamper:** Ok.

**Barb Wesson:** We need both buckets.

### **[00:26:46] Fiona Winter - DD #28 (excerpts)**

**Candice Schutter:** Another episode that is quickly becoming a very timely favorite over on Patreon is [00:27:00] Deconstructing Dogma episode 28, which features a delightful conversation with Fiona Winter.

Fiona is a 40 plus year fitness veteran who resides in the UK. And she sits down with Tracy and I to share candidly about why she finally decided to cancel her teaching contract with the Org.

She shares about her experiences in teacher trainings, why she decided to say no to an invite to become a trainer, and she also offers some helpful tips for folks who'd like to continue teaching movement while incorporating considerations around consent and inclusivity.

Here's a quick preview.

**Fiona Winter:** So I spent the next 18 years, I suppose, before I heard about the Org, teaching adults fitness classes. I taught tap dance. It was the beginning of MTV. So I would sit religiously and look at all those dance videos, all the Michael Jackson stuff with a mirror by the side of the tv, so I could kind of work it out back to front. And then would [00:28:00] go into class and say, right, we're doing Thriller. This is the routine we're doing.

And there were generally people sort of mid twenties upwards who danced as a child, uh, but not had the opportunity to dance as an adult. And they would come to my classes. So I always had that mixture of dance and fitness.

But along the way the UK were pretty hot on qualifications. And I'm a Virgo who likes to do the right thing in the right way. So I took myself off for teacher training, realized a lot of the skills I had that I hadn't realized before, kind of brought those skills to my attention. And fairly soon afterwards they invited me to go back to college and do adult education certifications and go and train with them.

And at the time, they were the leading teacher training company in this country. And, and still probably looked at as one of the best training companies.

So I taught other teachers to teach aerobics, which was a little bit different in the UK to the [00:29:00] US. I became an assessor and what they call a verifier. So I would attend other training organizations' courses and check they were doing everything as they should do. And trained other people then to be trainers.

So by the time I heard about the Org, which was 2000, that was the world I was in when I found the Org.

And I came home from that convention, said to my husband, I want to go to America. Cause that was the only way I could train.

So within three months, I think, of seeing the class I went. And just from a personal level, you know, my husband could tell the difference when I come back and done this class that had just opened more possibilities to me. And he was like, yeah, she can have more of that.

**Candice Schutter:** Good for everybody.

**Fiona Winter:** Yeah. Yeah. It was, it was. It really made a huge difference to my relationship with my kids, my [00:30:00] relationship with my husband, and, you know, my appreciation of life.

And by the time I reached the fourth level of training, cuz there were no further levels at that point, I did get an invitation to be what would've been the second batch of trainers, which I think was where I would've met up with Tracy again.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

**Fiona Winter:** But I already knew from a previous experience I'd had where I'd been to a training that I was invited to. It wasn't one of the regular ones. It was a one-off that we had to pay for. Which in my case meant a flight, accommodation, you know, 10 days off work. But I felt flattered to be invited.

And I just sort of realized it wasn't all as it seemed. The, the curtain that, oh, the curtain was starting to pull back, let's say. And um, I saw people not walking their walk and talking their talk. And there was inconsistency. [00:31:00] And things didn't seem to be aligned in a way that I would like.

So when the call came, I was both excited and happy. But I knew straight away that I wouldn't be going into this. I was already at that time running my own courses in seated and adapted work and training fitness teachers and other teachers who trained with the Org in the UK to adapt their classes into seated versions. But doing it with safety and with understanding of principles. So they didn't just do what I did. They could create their own thing. They understood the principles of taking a move from standing into a seated position. And I could see that that would've just been sucked in, without crediting, without acknowledging where that all came from. And that didn't feel right. So, it didn't, it didn't feel very honoring. And it didn't feel, um, very professional.

So that was one reason I didn't go. There was the finance. They were asking for a lot of money, [00:32:00] which I didn't have. And I wasn't willing to go into debt for. And I also could see how much my time would be taken up with trying to get trainings. I could see already that that was gonna be my job. And actually I love teaching. I didn't wanna do admin.

So with huge reluctance, I said no. And I was so on the verge of, I wanna see all these people who I love being in their company. I love the energy. the Org was the first place I'd really had female friends, even though they were scattered across the world. And I still have some of those friends today.

**Candice Schutter:** So it was a special training. Was it an all belt thing?

**Fiona Winter:** Well the invitation seemed to be to explore teaching as it applied to the Org.

So I was kind of all in for that.

**Tracy Stamper:** That's right up your alley.

**Fiona Winter:** Precursor to bringing in a level which was purportedly about teaching.

What it seemed to be was a brain picking exercise. [00:33:00] And there were people of all different levels of training. And there was a charge for it.

I think I did less movement on that training than any other. Because we were basically in small groups, looking at tasks. Looking at issues around, around words, funnily enough. Around language of how to explain certain things.

And I was interested to a point, but there was an underlying tension amongst Raul, Seth, Marissa. And just generally the feel of the building. It was palpable. And, um, It was quite, I want to use the word threatening, but that's my experience of it. Um, you know, uh, when voices are raised and people are storming around, that's, I find that threatening. Um, it's not, it's not an environment I'm used to.

So that was weird. That was just weird.

And there seemed to be a real dissonance between what people thought they were going to and [00:34:00] what it was. And when that was expressed, people were basically told we weren't being grateful. Which kind of didn't ring true when I'd paid to fly across the Atlantic, get accommodation, and pay for the course.

So my way of, of working it out was to, um, recreate a lot of the names of the different moves into people's names in the room. And that was quite amusing, cuz it was quite a lot of them. So we were just basically sat in a corner amusing ourselves to kind of lighten the tension.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm. Right.

**Fiona Winter:** Tells you a lot if that's what we had to do to get through it.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah. Trauma bonding, levity sessions.

**Fiona Winter:** Yes. Trauma bonding. Yeah.

**Tracy Stamper:** That does speak volumes.

**Candice Schutter:** Right?

**Fiona Winter:** Yeah.

I came away with a feeling of yuck. So I think that was the first sign for me of just like, okay, this is just who I am. And that is one of many qualifications that I do.

But what kept me there [00:35:00] was, there were occasions when I love the choreography. And it definitely saved me time. And it definitely gave me a whole range of music that I probably wouldn't have been exposed to. So I love that.

And also in this industry, there's an integrity. And if I'm at the top of my game, and I'm trained in a modality and I'm offering it, then I need to be paying my license because that's how the industry works in this country.

And I remember getting quite, um, quite sniffy, if that's the word that you understand.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Fiona Winter:** Across the world?

About people who didn't pay that license. But I knew they were still doing those routines with those names. And for a long time, that's what kept me in, was a sense of integrity.

**Tracy Stamper:** Mm-hmm.

**Fiona Winter:** And then I started to realize, if the organization doesn't act with integrity, and if people aren't being treated well. And I'd heard stories as my time went on. And then coming into the podcast, made me realize, [00:36:00] oh, there's a lot more stories than I knew about.

**Tracy Stamper:** Yeah.

**Fiona Winter:** And people have been a lot more impacted by those actions.

And I think also listening to the podcast made me realize just how much what I was offering wasn't this routine by the Org. This was something that I had 20 years of my experience with it. Plus the 20 before.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Tracy Stamper:** Yes.

**Fiona Winter:** And I made the decision that, um, my integrity was about not supporting an organization that I no longer felt were worthy of that, actually.

Not the modality necessarily. But the organization, and the way it treated people.

**Tracy Stamper:** Yeah.

**Fiona Winter:** And I didn't, I didn't want to be seen as being associated with that.

**Tracy Stamper:** Wow.

**Fiona Winter:** So a few months ago, I did not renew my license.

And I think I noticed today, actually, there's still one place where it actually says something about the Org. And I'm like, [00:37:00] that's coming off straight away. Other things are gone.

it's been an interesting transition. It's morphed. It's been quite a long time for me.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Fiona Winter:** And I own what I teach.

Hell's bells, I was doing a cha cha cha when I was four.

**Candice Schutter:** Right.

**Tracy Stamper:** Hell's bells.

**Fiona Winter:** Yeah. Hell's bells.

[00:37:34] valerie - #30

**Candice Schutter:** Last week, I dropped a conversation with a long time friend, Valerie Branch. Valerie and I worked together back in the early 20 aughts at Org HQ, and in this

episode we discuss our longtime friendship, she shares about her experiences back in the day at HQ, how she struggled to make ends meet working and teaching for the practice, and why she finally decided to leave the Org for good. [00:38:00]

**Valerie Branch:** So I was the receptionist. If anybody called HQ between 2000 and 2006, probably, you talk to me first. I was the voice of this organization for the longest time, and yet I didn't feel like I had my own voice. I'm still just now coming into that, which is a beautiful journey into its own.

Um, I was on the cover of the book.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Valerie Branch:** That was a huge chapter in my life, very formative.

So as I see names and stories coming online, I'm reconnecting like, oh, I know that name. And so it's nice to have this connective forum again, kind of bringing this chapter back to life for me.

So, it was a heady beginning, and then it was a struggle to stay afloat. I was doing it all. I was teaching some combination of classes and working there. It was hard to make a go of it, even as [00:39:00] an employee and as a teacher. And it unfolded so many lifelong lessons in and out of the studio.

I came into work one day. And I stopped on my way to go get a Starbucks. Because I am an emotional eater. And that was a stressful environment.

So I got my dopamine up and yeah, I'm gonna help with the mailing out. And we take it to the mail.

And he said, Hey Val, can you uh, come and see me? And so I go into the living room, 'cause we were still working outta the living rooms. It's so, um, something I noticed. And then he launches into his own history of addiction that I did not know about, wanted to know about, overly sharing. I had a habit and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. And anyway, long story short, people really cared about me. And now I'm, you know, and I care about you.

And so I see you in here with, you know, a coffee and a donut. And I was really kind of perturbed that he said it was a donut because it was not a donut, it was a chocolate croissant. And that is very different.

**Candice Schutter:** He was food shaming you.

**Valerie Branch:** [00:40:00] Oh, well, there's a word for it. Yeah. I don't know. He was, he was, um, yeah. He didn't ask if I wanted help. He was just gonna help me. So he was doing an intervention.



**Candice Schutter:** Wow.

**Valerie Branch:** And I was like, wow, this is awkward.

And now I just wanna eat like five more.

**Candice Schutter:** Of course.

**Valerie Branch:** You go in one place, you never knew where you're gonna come out. And then he'd get us all stoked about a business opportunity. And when it wouldn't manifest, then not only had we put all of our eggs in that basket. And I couldn't tell anyone 'cause it's super secret.

Shh, we're gonna buy this building and it has a mezzanine and there's a clock tower.

**Candice Schutter:** Oh my God. The building.

**Valerie Branch:** The building.

**Candice Schutter:** I forgot about the building.

**Valerie Branch:** And it was gonna, we're gonna, ah, and then well, you know, um, they couldn't come through.

And here's the thing I learned about Seth. When he doesn't know what he is talking about, he talks louder.

**Candice Schutter:** This is true.

**Valerie Branch:** He's very razzle dazzle. He is a very.

**Candice Schutter:** Very razzle dazzle.

**Valerie Branch:** He believes his own PR. And I wouldn't have anybody promote [00:41:00] themselves that didn't believe in themselves or the product. And yet that is not enough to be solid ground.

**Candice Schutter:** That's not the product. That's the thing is that what Seth is pitching and selling isn't actually the product.

And it's almost always disconnected from the actual product. And when I say the product, I mean the thing that drew us all in. The thing that we fell in love with, the thing that genuinely had transformative experiences with, you know.

Like he had no intimate understanding of that whatsoever.

**Valerie Branch:** He didn't. And I'll tell you exactly why this matches up with my experience.

I was reading over some copy that they had for some, uh, marketing materials coming out. He was looking over, he goes, I can't stand this woo woo talk they use. I hate these words. And that's the CEO. And his vision is different from the creator's vision. That's a huge disconnect. It's like a mind, heart disconnect. Right?

It's like a mind-body experience that leaves you wanting more and saying, [00:42:00] I'll have what she's having. And he's like, I can't stand it when they talk like that.

Excuse me. That was my experience. That's what drew me in.

So my first in dance with being let go happened, uh, gosh, I'm thinking it wasn't even six months in.

Um, sorry, it's just not working out, you know. We love you. We think you're great. Here's your final paycheck. Right.

And it was also, I was highly encouraged to maybe think about teaching. And so I did. I expanded that to 13 classes a week.

And then I don't know why I was calling into HQ for something, probably support materials as a teacher. And Seth is on the phone. He's like, Hey, I'm so glad you called. I'm really excited. We'd love to have you come back on the team. We're building a new team. There's some opportunities.

[00:43:00] And this is probably an amalgamation of a couple different conversations over the years, but essentially it goes like this.

I'm gonna have to think about it.

Why? There's nothing to think about.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm. That's right.

**Valerie Branch:** Excuse you.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Valerie Branch:** My gut was so tight in a fist. I was so nervous on the phone. And then Seth said, I wanna let you know that we're different now. And, uh, this is a place of joy. We come from joy.

**Candice Schutter:** Mm-hmm.

**Valerie Branch:** Now why I didn't run away at the time, I am not sure. But I was desperate. I needed money. The teaching wasn't cutting it. And I was being praised for how far I'd come as a substitute teacher subbing for everybody in the county. So I, I came back in. And it was a hybrid of teaching and working at the office.

And then we changed to downtown headquarters. And I took a hit because of that. We moved to a place where I had to pay for parking. And I didn't have the agency,[00:44:00] or it never would've occurred to me to ask for some help to finance that. It set me back. And it was closer to where I lived, but it, it set me back.

But the fact of the matter is I had to continue teaching in order to afford working for the practice.

And then I was also doing workshops and traveling for them. And that was exhausting. Rewarding, and exhausting.

I remember telling Marissa, I'm like, I just, it's almost like I'm coming down with the flu. And she said, Hmm, don't know what it is. Trainers seem to, yeah.

Excuse me?

**Candice Schutter:** Like get ill? People seem to get ill?

**Valerie Branch:** Well, they have to have a practice that grounds them every day.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Valerie Branch:** Even when I was teaching 13 classes, we could go to our teacher trainings with her. And I said, I'm taking a bath every day, still water. Be still water. You need to light a candle. I put rose quartz in my bath, baths. I was massaging my feet daily. Coconut oil and. [00:45:00]

Take two baths a day, Valerie. That was the answer.

The answer could not, could never be that 13 classes a week is too much.

Even what's his name, was like, you need to be able to do this. There's something you're not doing right. That you cannot do 13 classes a week. You need to look at how you're doing what you're doing. What is it?

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Valerie Branch:** Even when they're saying, listen to your body. Listen to your body. What are *you* doing wrong?

**Candice Schutter:** I just really appreciate, I guess part of having you on is just to really celebrate how we bolster each other in community when things are going sideways. And like why, part of the reason why it's so difficult to leave, and why I feel like I was really blessed as I hear more and more stories. Because there was a group of us that left together and around the same time.

**Valerie Branch:** The, we still have each other's con, the connection with each other. No matter if we in or out. It transcended.

**Candice Schutter:** We didn't have to lose that. It did.

**Valerie Branch:** And we never [00:46:00] questioned. We never questioned, oh, a sense of loyalty. Or we got that every person was doing what was right for them.

**Candice Schutter:** But I think the, the difference was it's like, well, why aren't other people having that experience as much? And I think the difference is because we got so close to the center that there was no denying. Like the cognitive dissonance got so big for each of us that it broke. We broke away. We broke away. We broke away, times five. So then we had that common ground.

Now, what's interesting about it though, from the standpoint of the series and cult dynamics and healing and recovery is that we didn't talk about it. We joked about it. We, you know, like you said, we would commiserate in like a funny way. Oh, that thing that Seth said. Or that Marissa did. Or that Raul did. Or, but we didn't know, I don't think, I didn't know. I didn't understand that I had something even to deconstruct. I didn't understand because I was still [00:47:00] indoctrinated into the ideas.

**Valerie Branch:** No, I don't, don't think.

**Candice Schutter:** I was what they call physically out, but mentally in.

**Valerie Branch:** Still for a long time. For a long time.

And, um, shepherding my words around that. So for someone who's such a wordsmith, I'll tell you the irony for me is that I didn't speak my own voice, 'cause I didn't know what my own mind was.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Valerie Branch:** Or if I had an opinion, it didn't feel safe to share. And it would upset the dynamic. I got that from my family. Uh, repeats in the workplace. Culture at large.

And I am of the belief that the more perceptive, sensitive, empathic what, what have you one is the more finely tuned that you will be to the needs of others. And I am an exceptional editor in real time.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Valerie Branch:** I know what side to show. I'm very diplomatic. It's served me well. It's been a great way to navigate. Going along to get along with minimal blowback. [00:48:00]

And it is hard to live your life as a tall, bright, full, healthy, thriving, I'll say tree, if you're always trying to make yourself a topiary that fits someone else's garden.

**Candice Schutter:** Yeah.

**Valerie Branch:** It's exhausting.

So it's been a very interesting journey. And it's given me a lot of tools that I can see in my body and my voice and my spirit. I credit the practice. I just think it's not unique to this practice. I'm grateful for having it, if this is the, the form in which the tools were presented to me and I was able to receive it and run with it and show others that. Super happy for it.

I've done my time. I still celebrate, what it has given me. And where I've gone from there, and what I choose or don't choose to pick up and take with me.

**Candice Schutter:**

What would you say to [00:49:00] somebody who's just coming out. Since we're so far removed at this point. Like what would've helped you? Or what advice would you give to that younger Val when she first separated from?

**Valerie Branch:** Um, trust yourself.

Trust your gut. Trust yourself.

And if it needs time and space for you to know what that feeling is about, give yourself grace around it. You certainly don't have to understand it or know it or be able to spit out, here's the reasons why. Uh-uh.

Listen to it.

And you don't have to do it alone now.

**Candice Schutter:** And there's so much more.[00:50:00]

Later this week, Tracy and I sit down with Jill Pagano.

Jill, Tracy, and I did our brown belt together, and Jill is another former second generation trainer who was feeling fired up and inspired to sit down with Tracy and I on the heels of Shannon Geltner's two part drop on the main feed.

Part one with Jill Pagano drops on Patreon this Friday.

If you'd like access to it, and or if you're interested in exploring any of the episodes featured in today's sampler, head over to [patreon.com/thedeeperpulse](https://patreon.com/thedeeperpulse).

And just a side note, bonus episodes feature audio and video content, and they drop weekly. Content can be connected to your favorite streaming platform, or it can be streamed through the Patreon app. Transcripts of each episode are also made available.

To learn more, or to access your 7 day free trial, head over to [patreon.com/thedeeperpulse](https://patreon.com/thedeeperpulse).

Thank you for listening today and always, and I will [00:51:00] see you back here next week with another main feed convo. We will be moving away from the Org for a time and diving into some hard hitting episodes on capital C cult dynamics. You'll definitely wanna tune in for next week's episode.

I'll see you then.

Ciao.