

## Interview on COVID-19 response with Erin, a provider

**00:00 Whitney:** Hi, my name is Whitney. Welcome to Rising from the Ashes Trauma Talks, a podcast series brought to you by the UB School of Social Works the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care. Our trauma talk series provides a platform for people who have worked within the field of trauma, as well as those who have experienced trauma, to share their witness of how strength and resiliency have allowed themselves and others to rise from the ashes of adversity. Today I'm joined by Erin Connolly, a licensed clinical social worker, a private therapist, and a school social worker, as well as a board member of the campaign for trauma informed policy and practice. On behalf of the Institute, Erin, thank you so much for being here today and for sharing your story with us.

**00:52 Erin:** Thanks for having me Whitney.

00:54 Whitney: truly it's our pleasure to have you on the podcast today. And I'm wondering if to get us started you could just let us know a little bit about the capacity in which you're interacting with trauma survivors?

**01:04 Erin:** So, currently I am working in a school district that is title one with a lot of poverty, a lot of community challenges... So, that's my direct work. And then I'm also a private therapist and currently also leading a dialectical behavioral therapy skills group. So, a lot of the participants have either been trauma impacted, or had a major life stressor, or that continues to consume their lives.

**01:34 Whitney:** Thanks, so much for that context. It's clear that you have a wide range of experience working with trauma and trauma survivors. And in an individual context we are all going through this sort of collective trauma event, you know, as you and I speak today COVID-19 is certainly not over. We're living in it, and there's a shared experience of challenge and adversity that could very well be present no matter who we're dealing with. And how we respond to that as practitioners really does matter... So, I'm wondering how it is, even in the face of all of this disruption and uncertainty, you've managed to continue in your role where you do interface with trauma survivors?

**02:19 Erin:** Well that's a... that's a tough one. How do I manage to continue in my role? Well with this school social work, that was like, you really had... we had to figure things out quickly. We were informed on March 12th that the students... that would be the last day of school and March 13th we had a professional development day -- gather all your things and go. And you know, hopping on the computer and trying to connect with families and students was one of the most challenging things ever, especially in the district I work in. You know, a lot of families are challenged with not having access to Wi-Fi, not having access to computers. Our district has done a really good job of getting computers and getting hotspots and Wi-Fi. The other big challenge is that, you know, making it personal and trying to really understand what's going on, not being able to always see what's happening with the student, you know, face to face or what's happening in the home. So, that was that... that was one big piece but the other piece was, you know... I was like oh my gosh 'I was built for this. I was built for a crisis.' You know, and for the first two to three weeks I went and they let me go do some fundraisers, let me help with the people that are food insecure, you know, just go. And I knew it was coming and I, you know, I

crashed and because that's what we do when we're trying to be helpers and supporters and caregivers, so, you know, it's my response. I had to take a pause and regather my ways of doing things and pace it to be able to be that support to the people that are most in need.

**04:08 Whitney:** Sure, that is so important. So, not always easy and I really appreciate the acknowledgement that it is vital to be reflective and to consider what you need to fill your own cup so that you can sensitively attend to others. And it sounds like embedded in what you're describing is the importance of being tuned into the aspects of trauma-informed care, which invites us all to stop asking what is wrong with this person and moves us toward considering instead what has happened to this person. Doctors Roger Fallot and Maxine Harris have pioneered some seminal research about the implementation of trauma-informed care. And in doing so, have identified the frameworks five guiding principles as safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment. Today we're going to explore how these principles are acting as tools for providers and systems of care, and how they've shaped and continue to shape the work that you do, Erin, in the era COVID-19. Beginning maybe with psychological and physical safety and, more specifically, how do you establish your own sense of safety? And how is that useful to you in your role?

**05:22 Erin:** I wasn't there when we first started because I jumped into the 'let me dive in... let me function on crisis,' and I have a background in a yoga practice and mindfulness practice. I got certified as a yoga teacher in 2015 and it's amazing how quickly you forget things when you're in the middle of crisis. And just making sure that everybody's safe. That's the very first thing safety for others, safety for yourself, everything is safe. So, technically I was safe. I had a roof over my head, you know, I had food on the table. I had access to basic needs so, that's why you know, I just went hardcore. And when I was able to own it -- I had to pause, you know, I started tapping into yoga and my yoga studio. I was so grateful I offered daily free classes via zoom and then did some processing afterwards. My studio is trauma-informed. They do a lot of trauma-informed practices so, I spent some time you know, really just getting back to my mat into the basics of just connecting my body and mind with my breath. And you know, recognizing that I will do the best I can for who I can when I can.

**06:34 Whitney:** That's really profound knowing that you have such a job where you're essentially on-call most or all of the day, and you never really know what's coming, even without COVID-19 happening. But perhaps even more so now as you respond during the pandemic, where there is this new stress and isolation and maybe trouble at home for the young people you support. And I think it could be very easy to get caught up in that feeling of not doing enough and risking your own safety. And with that in mind I find myself wondering how your school has demonstrated sensitivity to the ways that staff needs to keep themselves safe that may evolve along with these swirling seeds of evolving external circumstances?

**07:20 Erin:** So, our district has been working on chop learning and understanding what trauma is and becoming trauma-informed. And prior to working at this school district I worked in medicine. I worked as a medical social worker. I've worked as a coordinator for a philanthropic organization around trauma so, when I was able to you know, start working with the school district and started out in an elementary school, then I was at a high school, then it was at the elementary school -- I learned different levels of what trauma informed care looks like. But I

have to say that the district really kind of said like 'we're gonna pause also, and we're gonna make sure you know safety and basic needs.' Our priority you know, education is so important – especially, we know, with brain development and just developing as humans. We need that edge exceeded education; however, we have to meet the needs of our daily living and I kept repeating the statement of Maslow before Bloom, so really focusing on you know, basic needs before everything else. And being in a district that is challenged in many ways, food insecurities, homelessness, a lot of you know medical issues, and just so many different things that the school district partnered with us to say like, 'hey social workers,' you know counselors all the people that think about these things on you know, in addition to the teachers doing their daily work, how we could support each other and the school itself. We, you know, there were a couple times where they did lunch money, we call them lunch for kids, but we gathered together for lunch virtually you know, and that was in the beginning. It was easier in the beginning. As time has gone on it's gotten harder to find that time to spend as a collective, you know, spend time in grade meetings. And the principals great. Like just you know, do what you can as best you can. And then our school social workers, we have social work team meetings once a week as a whole district. And then we also have it as a peer support so as best we can through the screen you know, to support each other.

**09:28 Whitney:** Absolutely. Connection is so important in making yourself feel safe in this event and certainly sometimes to combat that isolation that a lot of us are experiencing. It is really helpful to access the sense of universality that we have and enduring this experience and figuring out how to move forward together in those creative ways. And I have to wonder, how does the availability of these supports for your own safety impact your students?

**09:59 Erin:** When we're able to reach the students, because that is a big challenge is not being able to reach the students... So, I was excited when we decided as the district that the social workers and counselors would post something on our platform daily. Well, wellness tips and then another social worker said they were posting a joke. So, since then I've been posting a daily joke and a daily wellness tip and as a school, we've done three different interactive videos, where one of them was passing a paper airplane with a positive quote on it. So, we each did a little clip and sent it. So, we posted them together as a whole video. And we did a push-up challenge for one classroom as well. I was very proud of myself because I used to talk and use the beat of Eye of the Tiger, however, after that thing I jacked up my shoulder so I was done with the push-up contest. But it was still again, that like you talked about, community and collective and being creative on how we reach the students and the families and letting them know like, 'hey if you just log on and you see this video and that's what you do today, okay,' but you know, having them trying to encourage them to make an effort even if it's for five minutes was... is so important to us, knowing that not everybody's gonna be able to function as we hope. You know, that they can do the work that they need to do... so, I think that has been the way that we are connecting with the children and their families as best we can.

**11:31 Whitney:** Wow, so really taking the weight off of the student's shoulders of having to perform in school and do well in class as a first priority, and letting them know that it's okay if they aren't feeling that they're doing their very best work and really holding space for them to think about what they need to move forward. And also, certainly, you're modeling that to them by yourselves taking those actions that you've mentioned. And I have to imagine that that helps

bolster safety. And it sounds like you've already managed to establish trust as that seems like a really important element of freeing the students to genuinely say, 'okay I really don't have to push myself beyond what I feel is right for me in this moment, and I won't be punished for it.' So, I think that's really remarkable especially in light of COVID-19 sort of disrupting our sense of trust in our larger systems in a lot of ways. And so, I'm wondering if you could make comment to how you've noticed trust manifest in your role between yourself and your colleagues, your school, your students or whatever makes sense to you at a time when...

**12:37 Erin:** Yeah, it has been tough to trust our systems so that is a really great question. It goes back to the first piece, which is safety can't establish trust without safety. So, you know... and doing our best not to even in context, or tone, put any judgment on people and where they're at, you know? There's one of the mantras that I've kept in my mind for a long time that I heard in a training that I did for yoga. It was called 'yoga gangster,' and it was around adolescence. It was 'no shame, no blame, no judgment.' So, when we don't shame and blame and judge ourselves and we work really hard not to do that, we cannot do... we can not even blame and judge others, and that goes back to what happened to you versus what's wrong with you, 'cuz shame and blame and judgment comes in with that, with the context of you know, what's wrong with you? So, trust happens with just being real and acknowledging that this all sucks. It hurts, it's tough, and you know, just continuing to be... to offering support. Obviously, that is even in itself hard because we don't know what supports are going to be available from one minute to the next... So, I think that if you know, you follow through with what you're saying and what you're asking and what you're you know, offering there's a tendency to build trust. But, always for me... I always work under the assumption that there has been a major life stressor before COVID happened, but now it's guaranteed, right? We all handle things differently and some people might love this being an introvert, staying inside, but we still even... introverts need connection in some sort. So yeah, building trust comes from that first foundational thing which is safety.

**14:31 Whitney:** Wow. Thanks, yeah, I really love the richness of that answer, especially when you mentioned how you strive to always operate under the assumption that there's been a major life stressor when you're working with clients. And so, that really encapsulates this universal precaution of the framework that helps us avoid re-traumatization, and that to me really stands at the center of a trauma-informed approach. And I think you're also spot-on about the interconnections between these principles. And so, thinking in that vein, I am noticing that much of what you've shared also really applies to 'choice.' And so, with that in mind, I am wondering about the flip side of things here and how your district has given you access to making meaningful choices to make sure that you're able to flex and really do what you need to do?

**15:25 Erin:** I mean they really trust that we're gonna do what we have to do. You know, there's times when it's not going to happen but I work towards putting the boundaries in place like I am done work at 3:35 and I did do that this week because I had to you know? And I... there was a couple things I really, really needed to get done and I just kind of got on the people. And I have you know, and it felt hard... I felt bad and I felt like a nut. This has got to get done and I'm not gonna spend my entire weekend worrying about it but it's the approach. So, the choice happens when we are... when we've established you know, trust and kind approaches versus being you know, aggressive. So, there's a... we can do things in a kind way. I like to call it kindly direct,

kindly assertive. But I think that the school district... I guess I don't know. I mean... I'm not gonna speak for them but like just trusted us to say like, 'okay this is something new for all of us and you're the kind of team... as a short team... you're going to figure this out and you're gonna make it work as best you can,' you know? I actually took one... I have taken lunch quote-unquote, and I have put air quotes often like because, you know, if I'm going from 8 o'clock in the morning sometimes 7:30 you know, straight through and I'm like ok I'm gonna... I have a half hour with no meetings, I'm going for a walk you know? And I wouldn't necessarily do that if I was in the school setting because I also know that I'd be done at 3:35 and out the door most the time. Sometimes they get stuck a little after, but I mean... and I have to say our principal, and you know... it just kind of reassures us that like, we have to you know, do the best we can and take care of ourselves.

**17:10 Whitney:** Absolutely, and I'm hearing that there have been some new possibilities maybe about what choices you can make for yourself at work and that maybe some of the choices that you've been supported in making may even become a part of your routine long after the coronavirus is a thing of the past just to help you keep yourself centered in a really busy day -- in a hectic environment in a school. And on the parallel, I'm wondering how you've noticed the choices that the students you work with now have available to them have or may be illuminated new possibilities that they'll carry forward as well?

**17:45 Erin:** In my school in particular we've had such an amazing response to attendance compared to other schools. But again, you know, our school has a few more resources maybe than the other schools in our district I recognize the teachers have you know, figured out different platforms to offer different options for learning and I also noticed outside agencies and organizations you know, providing so much information and options. There's a lot of choice for a lot of things, and that is probably going to lead into what you're going to mention about empowerment. Like you empower people or yourselves with your choice, and you know, it's really like building that that house, that building that whether it's a human or it's a structure, there's... it's just building, you know, that trauma-informed approach.

**18:38 Whitney:** You're spot on. There's absolutely some empowerment in being able to make choices and to even get to the point of being able to trust ourselves to make good choices, especially if we've endured trauma. And really even right now as we all experience a sort of collective and ongoing traumatic event where we don't always have control over everything, we may wish that we did in our lives, and we can remember that we maintained absolute control of ourselves and how we choose to respond to everything going on. And that's an empowering reminder for ourselves. So, I'm wondering how you're finding yourself feeling empowered in times of COVID-19 and in your role?

**19:19 Erin:** Oh geez. I think a lot of alone time and you know, being okay with... which is my daily overthinking ADHD because I'm not necessarily hyperactive, but like my attention issues... I always loved when my therapist described ADHD as the balance between creativity and intellectual like... a constant balance of like trying to be you know, understand the intelligence and the comprehension and the cognitive stuff... and then you got the creativity over here and I'm like, creativity is so much more fun... but sometimes we have to be like smart in

our decisions. I think that just people believing they're trusting when you know, people trust you and then you feel like okay that's uplifting. That makes me feel like I can do more. I can do stuff and not question my responses or my actions as much as I used to. You know, having done this work for I'm saying probably about 20 years like, intentionally doing the work 20 years, I've been you know, a social worker a little bit longer than that... but the learning curve and just accepting that I'm always a learner. Like I'm always gonna be learning. I'm always a student and we all are because... we have... somebody has to learn from somebody so it just makes me feel like okay that is empowering, you know, to think that I have that opportunity of choice and the belief in me that I can share my purpose in life, which is being of service to others.

**20:54 Whitney:** Wow I really like how something that it seems like has emerged for you is more clarity and insight around your own talents and abilities as well as more confidence that you can mobilize these skills and abilities to really make a meaningful difference. And I truly imagine that you're doing just that as you embody these principles in the work that you do. So, with that said I'm wondering what sort of strengths you notice emerging with the students and families and colleagues that you work with when you notice empowerment is present?

**21:29 Erin:** I think the biggest one would be the kindness. And I say that's a strength because that's compassion, you know. I think that internationally America is often looked at as, and I only say this from my experience of when I have travel, that lend more of its you know... the European thought is that there's a lot of cutthroat responses to things and you know not necessarily always super compassionate, and that plays into the politics. I don't know I just I think that was probably one of the biggest strengths is that the compassionate peace. But also, really that collective care -- but we have to have... we can't have that unless we have compassion not only for others, but mostly for ourselves and learning that patience and kindness and compassion are going to help regulate us so that we can relate and I'm totally starting to go down the Bruce Perry's Three R's, the regulate relate reason. I'm constantly using that as a guide to making sure that we really do... I mean if we want to get into the deep talk of bringing like... you know, we have to start with the base of the brain and getting people regulated and feeling safe and going back to the foundational things that you were just talking about safety and trust you know? Oh, I could go off like on totally 10,000,000 tangents but... and I think the strengths that I'm seeing from people is just the compassion and the care and I have given myself one... it doesn't always happen but 6:30 p.m. Monday through Friday I need to watch the world news. Not because I want to see what's going on except for the last five minutes which is the you know the good story and I also watch Ellen like everything on Ellen. And I am constantly crying but happy tears like a sense of relief because it takes a lot for me to cry... so, let me... Really... all that there is to say is there's so much, there's so much good in this world and it is really an unfortunate blessing in the skies whatever you want to term it as, that it took this for us to recognize that as humans were innately good people and we mean well and we want best for others and we know that trauma often taints that and turns it around into a challenge and a negative that people get consumed with.

**24:02 Whitney:** Certainly, and in our current scenario you know, this is not a net good thing to have happened to our world. People, they're suffering and illness and loss and yet many are really taking notice of the compassion and kindness people can come through with in times of

dire need and the resilience of us all in being able to endure this experience and there's so much healing that can come from restoring a sense of connection and an ability to see the good in ourselves in the world around us which really speaks to the principle of collaboration. And we've touched briefly on the creative and new ways that people are finding to collaborate and I'm just wondering if you can make comment to what you've noticed as a result of that collaboration in times of COVID-19?

**24:55 Erin:** So, collaboration for me is in part the big pieces around the connectedness, right? It is understanding people and you know, understanding, or at least trying to understand. I've really worked this year with my students and just in general to say like we're not walking in people's shoes, we're walking with them. That's collaboration because when we try to walk in people's shoes, we try to change things. And a friend told me one time, and this has definitely shifted my practice in anything I do, especially around collaboration and as a therapist as a social worker, is that helping can be seen as the sunny side of control because we want to fix things. We want to make things better. We want to make people okay. We want to help them feel, but we often, not all of us, but many of us, will often skip the part of like finding out what's really happening and what do they want? What do others want? What do you want in your own healing? Part of our nature is to try to control things and feel safe. And going back to what I originally said about the idea of I was born for this the chaos the crisis is because that's how I was brought up. Like I had a very chaotic childhood you know, youth. And that's how I functioned and how I try to control things.

**26:20 Whitney:** Absolutely.

**26:23 Erin:** And it was... it was in a sunny way, it was like in a caring way, but... and then you know things happen, you're like 'okay I can't do it that way anymore so let me figure out ways out.' So, I know I'm going off on a tangent but that comes back around to the collaboration of just really trying to understand people and where they're at and what has happened to that and what is their sense of control and what's their sense of purpose and what is their sense of you know, what will work to collaborate. Not all... collaborations don't always work and that's okay. And we just have to acknowledge that. And do we reroute it and say like maybe this is another way about going about it? And maybe it's connecting to somebody else whether it's a project or just or relationship.

**27:06 Whitney:** Sure. These are really nice points, and as I hear you talking about these challenges that a lot of us in the helper role absolutely grapple with on a daily or even hourly or minute-to-minute basis, I know you're in a school setting too, which adds a whole other layer of potential challenges as well as unique opportunities when it comes to collaboration that are certainly impacted by federal, state, and local policies alike. So, I'm wondering if you could just mention how those policies have impacted the way that you do collaboration in the setting that you're in?

**27:41 Erin:** Yeah so, I think about the C tip, the campaign for transform policy in practice and that is such a great example. You know, this and you being part of it with the national trauma campaign and advocating for trauma-informed language trauma-informed action in Congress in

legislation and you know in funding and one of the things that we know was funded was around education and at the federal level you know. And giving money to States and saying here go for it you know 50 states. 50 different ways. And then, how many counties are you know?... because I can say that well in Pennsylvania, we've had one of most archaic education systems you know and it's finally coming around. There was legislation passed I think last year around all schools are required to have trauma education. So, I think when you talk about schools it's going to be different everywhere and how its implemented. But the beauty of that and the creativity is when you can reach out to another school district or go on their website and try to learn what they're doing and how do you partner with them and how do you make it as consistent as possible? Because at least even in our district there's a lot of transients... like people are moving from one place to the next into another school district or you know, into another area. So, it's the basic principles of what we do with social workers? Which is reach out to somebody and ask the questions and figure it out. Make a... make a plan and see how you can best partner because that's what it is. We have to partner and work together as a whole.

**29:33 Whitney:** Mmhmmm. Absolutely. And I am just so struck by your ability to see these little windows of opportunity even within what can feel like an incredibly limiting experience for some of us and I just think the way that you're able to hone in on the creative and connective moments that we have where we can work harmoniously to leverage many people's diverse strengths to do things differently is just an inspiration. And truly there's no doubt that COVID-19 has been experienced as traumatic by many and maybe even most of us, and yet if we do take the time to notice and focus on these values, we are able to see and access these silver linings and really make meaning of and emerge from these trying experiences stronger than ever before. And so, with that in mind I'm wondering what you think the psychological and spiritual and emotional coping skills that we can garner during times of stress and adversity like these we face with the pandemic may be able to help us bring these positive possibilities into view for ourselves?

**30:44 Erin:** I think the very first one is to practice the self-compassion. And self-compassion for me is you know being authentic to the self first, and acknowledging that there's stuff that happens like, it hurts, it's soft, it does not feel good -- but also finding the good stuff, you know? I'm talking about like when we're talking about like COVID or even if you weren't... haven't been affected physically, there is an emotional mental social effect that is happening and that eventually turns into physical. So, it's everything. It is interconnected, and I think remembering that... and I'm hearing more and more people talk about mindfulness and meditation and yoga and I just remember how many people would fight or disagree or say I'm not flexible. I can't do... well first, love, yoga is not just about the poses. There's so much more to it and I was one of those people and so, I became a yoga teacher and did the studies and you know... and I always say to people only you are you breathing and they're like yeah, and then all of sudden you're doing yoga because you have to breathe right and that's the one of the few constants we have in life. We have the constants. We're alive if we're breathing. And the other big constant is change, and just kind of you know, acknowledging that being authentic with yourself and with others and learning. I think this is my other bit, my other I guess, peace would be after you work on connecting your breath with your body and mind and all those pieces, is learning how to be okay with your responses as long as they're safe. A lot of people say I'm sorry a lot. I'm sorry. Yeah, we all do. I still do it. I'm sorry that I just rambled on... you know, shifting our language

from sorry to thank you, you know, like 'hey Whitney thanks so much for letting me ramble on.' I know you're gonna clean this up and it'll sound all perfect and wonderful you know, but if you know is just shifting our language and it that goes into the whole cognitive, you know change. And our behaviors... and just practicing that the gratitude... gratitude as an attitude you know? I have taught the students that you know, I think the self-kindness, compassion, gratitude -- all these fluffy words -- they don't all have to be like so soft and fluffy. They can just be real and say like, 'hey thanks,' you know, and just acknowledge... I think people get caught off guard with that and they feel like they still have to say sorry and be hard on themselves. And I think that this is an opportunity for us to learn those lessons if we're open to them. I recently had somebody tell me that during a yoga retreat I must have said something to them about something in their career... I don't know, I honestly don't remember. And a year later or a couple of years later, I saw this person they live in another state, and they're like it's because of you and what you said... What did I say? So, you know and... and... and I will say that like an you know, Whitney, you are one of those people like you say stuff sometimes I'm like huh, okay. Like I know that you're newer to the... having the... so close to having that degree of Masters in Social Work, but you were born a social worker. You were born somebody that was. And this is my observation, my opinion you know, whatever. You identify with, it's your thing but like all the people you met, you have made an impact on me. You have made an impact on our team, and you know, it's just as... its yeah... it's just it's, being open like we're both open to hearing these kinds of things and I just hope that people out there in the universe, you know, wherever they are... that we start practicing the self-compassion so that we can all be part of that collective care and healing.

**35:01 Whitney:** Well first of all to your point about gratitude, thank you for those incredibly kind words. They truly mean the world to me. And I think the rest of what you said is truly profound and really universal. it's very easy when you go from helping one person to the next to the next to not take a pause and really reflect on what it means that you're holding that space for others. And we do sometimes lose sight of the power of presence and I think you're totally on track. And we at the Institute have been hearing so many people endorse that they've been noticing gratitude in ways that maybe they didn't before. And so, in addition to experiencing this sort of from the other side, and then the interaction that you described, I'm wondering what do you notice yourself finding gratitude in lately?

**35:49 Erin:** So, as you say that I'm gonna like deviate just a tad with the gratitude the other thing that I am learning, and this is something that again, goes back to the self-compassion the self-worth, the self-everything is what I'm learning. Not to compare, and just being grateful that I have what I have. However, we as humans or I mean... I you know, I live on my own you know, it's been a really big challenge in a very... I need my downtime, but I'm a very social person. I need to keep busy you know, that kind of thing... and that's reflective of like my first few weeks of this. I'm like I gotta do something, you know I did a fundraiser. I got food for people. And I did all that stuff and then I'm like, huh okay, so I'm fulfilling that part of me but the other part of me is you know, also comparing like this weekend people were down the shore, like gosh I wish I had a shore house... I just want to be near the beach. That's my biggest regulator, but I just... I kind of pause and I'm like okay, I am so lucky to be alive. And while things can be really difficult not to lose sight of that... like stuff sucks sometimes. And just sitting with that discomfort. And then afterwards, I'm like, oh okay... I'm grateful that something brought it up

enough to for me to be able to cry... fugly cries you know, the one where you're like you can't catch your breath? And you're like oh my gosh my face is swollen for 24 hours and then also being able to binge watch TV shows that I'd never thought I'd do, and go on Instagram and follow really funny people and those kinds of things. So, I am grateful for my life, my breath. I'm even grateful for the challenges that are being put in front of me right now because it's just... it does show my resilience and it allows me to reflect and share my experiences and stories with others. And then also to you know, I think we were talking before we started going on about the Enneagrams, like I am a seven and optimist you know? I am just hopeful and... but the one thing that, as I learned in that other podcast, was like we tend to not pay attention to our own stuff. We're always like, yeah, everybody else get lost in that. So, I'm grateful that I've had that opportunity to listen to more podcasts and really hear what people are saying so that I can continue to grow. And again, I'll go back to it is my purpose to be of service and share my good things. I need my bad things too because they sometimes can be really funny.

**38:50 Whitney:** I think truly, you know it's really heartening to see that this crisis has drawn out creativity and strength and gratitude and resilience in yourself and in so many others. And as we bring our time together to a close today, I'm wondering if for those who are in similar spots to yours you can offer just a few final words on what stands out to you as the most profound reasons as to why providing trauma-informed care is particularly crucial right now?

**39:13 Erin:** Wow, it's been crucial for a long time and I really feel like you know, I'm so glad that we've been talking about this as very small grassroots groups, you know you see other groups, you know connection all those that you know, the groups that are... have been working you know, really hard to bring trauma informed, trauma awareness, trauma confidence and care to the state. Right? Like you know, I think about Sandy Blooms Work ASA Study, you know there's so many people that we could mention. But like, and I've been fortunate enough to get to work with some of these people directly. I think that it's the foundation of trauma-informed care you know, whether it's this model it's the SAMHSA model, it's the you know, the yoga model the ... any model that we're looking at. We keep hearing the common themes of safety, care, compassion, awareness, and I think that it... people just want to feel safe; they want to be okay, and they want to feel like they're heard. And they're seen without the shame, blame, or judgement. And you know, there's how many billions of people on this planet? You know, seven-eight billion people, and to think that we come in contact with like point zero, zero one percent of them and this is our opportunity for those of us that have been trained, are you even just... even trauma where like noticing even if we just have one shift and that's from what's wrong with you – what happened to you, and the other shift of compassion and patience and kindness for self. I think we're gonna... this is the time that you know, our stage is ready for us, to like get it out in the world and say like, this is the only way to do it because if we could go back to the other ways, and to the to the old norm or whatever... because this is normal. This is so abnormal, like even to the typical are they a typical... like, this is the opportunity. So, I hope that you know through our work it's you know, whether it's me as a school social work or as a private therapist or even just talking to you on this now, that the one, two, maybe five people are like, 'huh I want to get involved, I want to I want to be engaged, I want to connect and I want to use my voice,' whether as I share my story or I share a support for an offering.

**42:04 Whitney:** Wow. What wonderful words to close with! And Erin, on behalf of the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today and to share your witness of strength and resiliency. It's been a pleasure and an honor and we're just so grateful to have you on.

**42:25 Erin:** Oh Whitney, thank you so much, and thank you for all you're doing and I can't wait to continue our work together.

**42:30 Whitney:** Ditto friend, take care!