

S2E12 - KRISTY SARAUSKY

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SPEAKERS

Kristy Sarausky, Elle Billing

E Elle Billing 00:00

Hi, my name is Elle Billing. I am a chronically ill queer femme, and I'm tired. I'm here this episode and every episode to dig at the roots of our collective fatigue, explore ways to direct our care and compassionate and sustainable ways, and harness creative expression to heal ourselves and our world. Welcome to Hoorf -- Radical care in a late capitalist heckscape. My guest for this episode is Kristy Sarausky. Kristy Sarausky is a trained recovery coach from Connecticut Community Addiction and Recovery. She has her master's degree in adult education. But she says that's not what makes her who she is. Because she's so much more than any title, qualification, or label. Kristy spent her teen years drinking most weekends, and in her early 20s--the same thing she thought she'd slow down her drinking in her 30s once she had kids, but that didn't happen either. Truth be told, she drank to fit in -- which is different than belonging -- and to ease her social anxiety, avoid grief, and to escape from the reality of painful relationships. And to cope with her high sensitivity. She knew her drinking habits were quite common. And she also knew that they weren't healthy. Alcohol worked really well, until it didn't. Then she mustered the courage to address her habits, and then their underlying issues, and her whole life shifted. Kristy now works as a gray-area drinking recovery coach; she believes we can only make true and lasting change when we come from a place of self compassion, tender and fierce self compassion. Learning to become compassionate with herself knowing that she's a worthy person who deserves good and true things changed her inner world. And now she does the same thing to help guide others to lovingly learn to prioritize their own mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical selves. I'm really excited to have Kristy on the podcast today. Hi, Kristy. Welcome to Hoorf.

K Kristy Sarausky 02:20

Hi, thank you so much for having me.

E Elle Billing 02:22

It's so great to have you here. I'm really excited to have you on the podcast and to talk to you

today.

K Kristy Sarausky 02:29

Likewise,

E Elle Billing 02:30

you know, I've interviewed a lot of people that I've known before, and I've interviewed, you know, my friends and who have interesting creative jobs or who work in caregiving fields. It's always nice to have somebody that I've never met before. Because I get to learn something new, and I get to meet new people. And this is one of those cases where I get to meet somebody that I haven't talked to before we actually connect on camera. Before we hit record, we were actually chatting quite a bit. I was like, I haven't even hit record yet. We're getting good stuff.

K Kristy Sarausky 03:00

I love this too. People are fascinating.

E Elle Billing 03:03

Yes.

K Kristy Sarausky 03:03

And as long as like, you know, people can hold similar views similar, they don't have to be or values, maybe more right that similar values. They don't have to be the exact same views. Yeah, I just love meeting new people and finding out about people's stories. And it's fascinating. So thank you so much for having me.

E Elle Billing 03:24

Yeah, thank you for being here. And I think having a podcast with a pretty niche title, I think helps get guests that at least are gonna be --

K Kristy Sarausky 03:36

Yeah, we know who's listening and who is not.

E Elle Billing 03:39

Yeah. We're gonna be on the same path. Yeah, we're all care oriented. Probably a little unhinged.

K Kristy Sarausky 03:45

a little unhinged, all very aware that we live in a dumpster fire. Yes.

E Elle Billing 03:50

And we're all like working together to try and make it through while building something a little better.

K Kristy Sarausky 03:57

Yes, exactly. Exactly.

E Elle Billing 03:59

And probably we use humor to cope. Because

K Kristy Sarausky 04:02

100% deranged. Very dry sadist humor.

E Elle Billing 04:07

Yep. You're my people. So on that note, welcome to Hoarf, which I don't-- I know you. You said you'd listen to like one and a half episodes so far. I don't know if you got to the part where it Hoarf is a sound my dog makes. That's--

K Kristy Sarausky 04:24

okay. Okay,

E Elle Billing 04:24

that's where it came from.

K Kristy Sarausky 04:25

thank you no I hadn't heard that And I was very curious

thank you, no, I hadn't heard that. And I was very curious.

E

Elle Billing 04:29

Yeah, I have a deaf dog. And she is amazing. And she I mean, she can bark, she does bark. She's very loud. But she also makes some really interesting sounds and one of them is hoorf. Like a hoorf sound she also knows how to whisper. She knows she's not --

K

Kristy Sarausky 04:48

WHaa??

E

Elle Billing 04:49

I -- She's too smart for her own good. She is a cow dog. So she's a very intelligent breed but she's not very good with cows. So that's why I have her. And at night, she knows she's not supposed to bark because people are sleeping. But if she wants to wake me up, she gets like right in my face and goes [raspy sound]. And the first time she did it, I said, Are you? are you whispering? Like, how do you even know? I don't know. I don't know. She just does she knows. So there's the whispers. And then she hoorfs. And she makes these other really high pitched whining noises that drive us all crazy. But

K

Kristy Sarausky 05:27

well, I love that your names a tribute to her. I feel like when you talk about care and receiving care and providing care, for me, at least like our dog -- who, unfortunately, his time had come and he died last July -- was a huge part of my daily care. And, honestly, a really big part of my sobriety journey. He was a rescue, the care I received from him in that relationship was huge. And I think like as a highly sensitive person, and I, you've yourself have described yourself as being really sensitive. And I don't know if you identify with the term highly sensitive person, as well. But sometimes it's just easier to attune and tune in with animals more than humans. And yeah, so he was just a huge part of my journey. So I really appreciate paying homage to Hoorf.

E

Elle Billing 06:28

Thanks. So since we're, since you mentioned receiving care from your, from your dog, your dearly departed animal. How have you received care this week, specifically, or in the past week?

K

Kristy Sarausky 06:42

Well, starting this week, I have not received any care yet. Yet. I am, solo parenting at the moment my partner's away, the kids are at school. So we don't have a lot of supports where we live. So part of my care is making sure that I give care to myself, because I don't have a huge

support network. And one of the ways that I do that is spending time in nature. So Monday mornings, once they get the kids out the door, I usually go for a nice long walk first. And that feels very regenerative for my spirit and my soul. And then I always feed the birds and the squirrels in the backyard. And there's something about that, that feels very life giving and supportive. So that's been it so far for this week. But I am going on a trip a few provinces away to visit a friend in a couple of days. And I know that that will be a very care receiving trip because I won't have to make meals. Right, they won't have to like, clean up because they'll be in a hotel room and that kind of thing. And I'm really, really looking forward to that reprieve.

E

Elle Billing 08:03

I have a friend, several states away right now who was sick this weekend, and we were texting and talking on the phone. And they-- this is the first time they've been sick and not and live. They're living alone. And like, all the other times they've been sick, they've had partners or a spouse or people living with them. And they were just feeling really rotten and lonely. Like "I need medicine and I don't I don't want to get up and go get any," you know you can DoorDash Walgreens, and they didn't know that. So like, all these ways that we can,

K

Kristy Sarausky 08:42

we can receive

E

Elle Billing 08:43

Yeah, receive care when we're like solo on our own. But sometimes we still need another person to like, let us know what's available.

K

Kristy Sarausky 08:52

Yeah.

E

Elle Billing 08:53

And then I was like, Okay, have you eaten? Like, what do you have for food -- do you need- I can Venmo you for DoorDash if you need. Like just trying to figure out ways to like, help somebody who is solo is such an interesting way of living now.

K

Kristy Sarausky 09:13

Yeah, it is. And I think also like, lowering our expectations of ourselves, which is hard to do for me, but just saying like, okay, you know, I don't have that extra set of hands around tonight. So we're gonna order in for dinner and not make it mean like I'm a quote unquote, like, lazy mom or the ways that we shame ourselves and beat ourselves up.

- E** Elle Billing 09:42
The amount of food delivery that I had, when I was when I was going through burnout. Like that is like a disability expense or like what the ADHD tax or whatever you want to call it.
- K** Kristy Sarausky 09:56
Yes.
- E** Elle Billing 09:57
--that a lot of people I think who are either abled or neurotypical, or whatever category that I'm not in, that people don't think about, they're like, "Oh, well, you know, food delivery is a luxury" and like for some people, some of us, that's how we eat.
- K** Kristy Sarausky 10:15
Yes, I, I really appreciate you bring that up.
- E** Elle Billing 10:19
Yeah, do both. Right. Like, and now I live on the farm, we don't have delivery, the amount of mac and cheese I eat. And I just add different things to it. So I don't get bored. My, like so much vegan mac and cheese because I don't have to think about it. I can make it on autopilot. And it requires no energy input from me. Yeah, that's my farm version of DoorDash.
- K** Kristy Sarausky 10:44
Yeah, fair enough. Like whatever, quick, easy. You can make it happen. We also do that with cereal in our house. There's a lot of cereal, cereal, oatmeal cereal.
- E** Elle Billing 10:58
When I was teaching, I would go through periods where I was even before I went through burnout, where I was just really in it. And I would just have cereal for lunch every day. And one of the teachers in our department who was from another country in Southeast Asia. She's like "you eat a lot of cereal." Like it was just so weird to her, which I understand it's weird to people from the US I think, to eat cereal for non breakfast meals. I was like "I am lazy." And she thought that was really funny. And I'm like, "it wasn't a joke."
- K** Kristy Sarausky 11:34

Or just,

E Elle Billing 11:35

I don't have time or energy or the executive functioning to plan and pack a lunch. Yeah, all I have to do for cereal is buy a few boxes of cereal and some oat milk. And I can and I have lunch for a week.

K Kristy Sarausky 11:47

Hmm.

E Elle Billing 11:48

I'm like, then I can just focus on all this other stuff they have us doing at work.

K Kristy Sarausky 11:53

Yeah, I totally get it. Totally understand.

E Elle Billing 11:57

So your website is called Sober Soulmate. And I spent some time poking around on there to get ready for this interview. And I'm super excited. I think our journeys are at least a little bit similar. Where the gray area drinking was the thing-- I've talked about my my recovery and sobriety on other episodes before,

K Kristy Sarausky 12:23

okay

E Elle Billing 12:24

so people who have followed along on her for a while, some of this may be repetitive, but for anybody who's listening for the first time, I don't want to leave them out. So like if I had found your website like five or six years ago, you know, when I quit drinking or, you know, 10 years ago, at the beginning or the end of my divorce, I think my healing journey, I'm just trying to think of like how different it could have looked.

K Kristy Sarausky 12:46

Yeah,

E

Elle Billing 12:47

when I started my going through my divorce, my best friend invited me to ACA, ACOA, which is the 12 step group for people who don't know, adult children of alcoholics. But it's not just for adult children of alcoholics. It's adult children of alcoholics and other dysfunctional parents. So it was a group that originated from like when Ala-kids and Ala-teens aged out of the program and didn't have anywhere to go. Yeah. So starting from there, I kind of cobbled together like different strategies and tools, from therapy, counseling, ACA, but I didn't even see my own drinking as a problem. Even after several years of 12 Step. I was doing 12 Step work and I was still like, "Oh, this isn't this isn't a problem." And then my cousin died. When he was 40, from complications due to alcohol abuse, it was actually when he was trying to get sober. There was this huge domino, very traumatic thing that happened. So he passed away and that was when I finally was like, I don't need to do this anymore. And I just think like if I had had the language for gray area drinking, which now that I, now that I do, and I've been sober since 2018. And I look back

K

Kristy Sarausky 14:05

congratulations,

E

Elle Billing 14:06

thank you. And I have like, I have this lens for looking at the way alcohol is marketed, especially to women and femmes. I just wonder how my story might have been different.

K

Kristy Sarausky 14:17

Absolutely.

E

Elle Billing 14:18

Right. So all that is background. What can you -- because this is what you do, like you do gray area drinking recovery work. What can you tell us about gray area drinking and especially how it impacts women and femmes? Because you work mostly with women? Yes?

K

Kristy Sarausky 14:36

Primarily. Yes. Yeah. So very similar to you. And I really appreciate you sharing that story. And I know it's very hard for us to put our stories into like a two or three minute blip because there's just so much to them, but I appreciate you sharing what you couldn't catching me up and the other listeners up to speed. I'm very similar to you. I, I struggled with my relationship with alcohol for a long time. But I probably struggled even more with my relationship with denial. Because you

E Elle Billing 15:20
Oh, yeah, I feel that.

K Kristy Sarausky 15:22
Yeah. Because

E Elle Billing 15:24
like, I'm not laughing because it's funny and laughing because it's true. True.

K Kristy Sarausky 15:27
I know. It's like, oh, I'm in a 12 step program, but I don't have a problem with it. Everybody working

E Elle Billing 15:33
I'm working on my emotional sobriety. That's the thing. And then I'm like, oh, no, I shouldn't be drinking either.

K Kristy Sarausky 15:39
Yeah, because it's really hard. It's funny that you mentioned emotional sobriety, because that's a big part of the work that I do. And sometimes I have people that aren't sober, that want to come into my world and work on emotional sobriety. And I try and very gently convey that that's really hard to do when you're drinking. Because you always have an off switch, you always have a way to escape your emotional discomfort. And emotional sobriety is all about learning to stay with ourselves through emotional discomfort. I'm so very similar to you.

E Elle Billing 16:17
Like, I'm sitting with my discomfort right now. I'm doing really well. Thank you.

K Kristy Sarausky 16:24
Okay, let's stop there. So what is there?



E Elle Billing 16:27
So it's just like, No, everything's just really resonant.

K Kristy Sarausky 16:29
Yeah. Okay.

E Elle Billing 16:30
And I'm thinking about how like, I always joke, that I don't have any vices left. Because I've identified them all

K Kristy Sarausky 16:38
Yeah, I haven't identified on mine, too, but they're still definitely there. We all need our --

E Elle Billing 16:44
like, if I know it's a vice is it still a vice. Like if I'm doing it mindfully. That's my joke. If I'm mindfully eating a package of Oreos.

K Kristy Sarausky 16:54
I'm mindfully binge watching 12 hours of TV isn't really a problem.

E Elle Billing 16:59
Yeah, like I'm doing a mindfully

K Kristy Sarausky 17:02
I feel you. Yeah. And so I feel like if there had been more language around drinking and acceptance around different levels of alcohol use and and talking about different levels of alcohol use, I may have stopped drinking sooner. But possibly like you. The way I felt about it was, I guess, in that last probably five or six years, there's been a lot more talk about things being on a spectrum versus one way or the other way. And

E Elle Billing 17:45
I think that's true for for a lot of things. I mean, I think one of the things that patriarchal capitalism does really well is put things into binary, binary, and binary. Yeah. So like, you're either an alcoholic or you're not. Well, that's how it works. Exactly. And once you figure that

either an alcoholic, or you're not. Well, that's how it works. Exactly. And once you figure that out, you're like, oh, yeah, it's a spectrum.

K

Kristy Sarausky 18:07

It's a spectrum. And so for the longest time, I really struggled with, I didn't identify with the term alcoholic. So, does that mean, I don't have a problem? Question mark. Like, I must not have a problem, if I don't identify with the term or it doesn't feel quote unquote, bad enough.

E

Elle Billing 18:33

And I'm not out of control,

K

Kristy Sarausky 18:35

right. like, I'm still going to work. I don't feel like I need to go to AA or rehab. So I guess I just keep drinking, because that's what everyone else does. And so these were like the thoughts that I was grappling with for a really long time. And yet, there was like this little voice inside that eventually got louder and louder and louder was like, It's time to stop, like you are on the saddest merry go round right now of having default plans of drinking Thursday night, Friday night, Saturday night, feeling extremely hungover and shame on Sunday, and then saying, this is the week things are going to change. And then you don't drink Monday and you don't drink Tuesday. And then by Wednesday, it's like, well, I'll just have a glass and then one glass turns into two and then by Thursday, you're recreating the cycle all over again, except you're getting older and your body doesn't recover as much. And you become very, I became very aware of the shame that I was feeling about drinking around my kids, and tucking my kids in at night. I'm trying to get them to bed a little bit earlier. So I could drink without feeling guilty, but I would have already been a glass or two deep, tucking them in and turning my head away from them. So they can smell the wine on my breath. Because I remember being a little girl, and smelling rum on my dad's breath and hating it. And I was just in this very repetitive cycle of this. And something happened at the age of 36. And I can't tell you what it was, but it was just like this realization, like, this is my life. And this is how I'm spinning it. Like, I think I've been sold big lie. Like, this is what I aspired to this. And it was just kind of like, I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know how to quit drinking. I don't know how to get sober. I don't know what but not this. I am not doing this anymore. And it was a very lonely journey, because nobody that I knew that drank like me, ever quit. They still drink in the same ways that I drank.

E

Elle Billing 21:17

Right? We hear so many stories about, you know, I mean, the classic tale of somebody who's hit rock bottom, and then starts their recovery journey. And I think for a lot of us who were in that gray area, there isn't a rock bottom.

K

Kristy Sarausky 21:36

No, I didn't have a rock

E Elle Billing 21:38
we're just sort of treading water.

K Kristy Sarausky 21:39
Yeah, treading water when--

E Elle Billing 21:41
I can look back and see like 80% of my bad decisions started at the bar or at Beer Fest.

K Kristy Sarausky 21:47
Yeah, absolutely.

E Elle Billing 21:49
And for me, too, it was like it was making me physically sick because I have migraine disease and some mental health stuff and other chronic illnesses. And it's like, my medication works better now that I don't drink here, right. Like, I can't even have vinegar. Like my tolerance for fermented anything is very low. And I was at the point where I was like, down to two things that I could drink without getting instantly sick. And I was like, why am I putting in so much effort to find the thing I can still drink?

K Kristy Sarausky 22:28
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 22:30
Like, why do I care?

K Kristy Sarausky 22:32
What is this hold?

E Elle Billing 22:34
Yeah, like, why is it important? And that was really what it was, for me. It's like, why? Like, so

Yeah, like, why is it important? And that was really what it was. For me. It's like, why? Like, so I've lost all these other things that I think taste good. Like, I'd put a lot of effort into becoming a beer snob, because I like I like, like, microbrews and I like the art of it.

K

Kristy Sarausky 22:49

Mm hmm.

E

Elle Billing 22:50

I lost all of that. Because those beer makes me sick. Okay, well, now what? Okay, maybe I'll find some, like niche distillery that makes something I can still drink or like, I can be into white wine or whatever. Like, why do I care?

K

Kristy Sarausky 23:04

Oh I think you bring up such an interesting point. So like, there's a few things that I run into over and over again, when I'm working with people who are questioning their relationship with alcohol. And one of the big one is around identity. Because so many of us identify ourselves by our relationship with alcohol. And that you're a drinker. A partier, you like craft beer, you're a wine snob, or your red wine drinker or party. You know the thing. And when we're trying to renegotiate our relationship with alcohol can really like be a bit of a mind trip because you're not sure if you want to be sober-sober, but you're not necessarily a drinker anymore. And I find that like that in between stage of being a drinker and being sober. Like what people call sober-curious right now. It sounds very, like light hearted and fun and oh, I'm just gonna be open and exploratory. But it can be it can play some pretty nasty mind games on you. Being in the drama of not having made a decision one way or the other. And it can eat up a lot, a lot of mental space. And like you, I would say like I, I definitely I've been a person who's been on antidepressants since I was 16. And I go back and forth and sometimes at the same time, between anxiety episodes and depressive episodes, and Alcohol is a depressant that makes you more anxious. Like it's just like pouring gasoline on like a mental illness fire.

E

Elle Billing 24:59

Don't do that. Yeah. Well, and then, you know, I was late diag- I used so you had said something earlier about the descriptor of, or the label of highly sensitive person, and it was one that I had identified with in the past. But I have ADHD. I'm neurodivergent. And I didn't get that diagnosis until I was 36. And the more that I learn about neurodiversity, and neuro divergence, the more I'm like, oh, that's where I am. That's where I fit. And a lot of my hypersensitivity, I think, is a combination of neuro divergence and trauma.

K

Kristy Sarausky 25:38

Yeah, that makes sense. That makes a lot of sense.

E

Elle Billing 25:42

And, you know, trying to quiet some of that down was kind of what I was doing for a while. I mean, there's all kinds of reasons why people drink

K

Kristy Sarausky 25:52

all kinds.

E

Elle Billing 25:54

I don't remember what it was that triggered the thought. I think it was about being sort of sober curious, but it being really kind of a mind trip. Going to Target. You don't you don't have Target in Canada?

K

Kristy Sarausky 26:06

No, but I've been to Target

E

Elle Billing 26:08

but you've been to Target. Like, it's to the point where like, you can't even go to Target and not see like wine mom stuff. Like it's everywhere. When I was growing up. Of course, I wasn't like super, like tuned into alcohol marketing. But I remember like the Budweiser commercials. And it all seemed really like sports adjacent. But like going to Target I don't really remember ever being aware of alcohol adjacent marketing, right? Like now. It's like you walk in on Valentine's Day. And there's like, before valentine's there's like a huge display. And it's all like Rose-themed pun stuff. Yeah, Yes Way Rose. Yeah. And Wine All Day. And like the socks that say, like, Bring me another glass of wine. Like all that stuff. Like, it's cute and kitschy. And like, if that's your thing, that's your thing. But at the same time, it's like, it's everywhere.

K

Kristy Sarausky 27:06

It is everywhere. There's a really interesting history behind that. And have you ever heard of the book *Quit Like a Woman* by Holly Whittacre?

E

Elle Billing 27:16

I have not, I'm going to link it in the notes.

K

Kristy Sarausky 27:21

It's excellent I think you'd really enjoy it She talks about how I'm not great with dates But I'm

it's excellent. I think you'd really enjoy it. She talks about how I'm not great with dates. But I'm gonna say like, post 2000, probably some were between 2000 and 2010 women were identified as an emerging market. In big

E Elle Billing 27:44
that'll do it

K Kristy Sarausky 27:45

big alcohol. Just like big tobacco, it's there's a very similar trajectory that big tobacco and big alcohol went on. And they started targeting women as an emerging market to to boost up their profits. Yep. And so that's when we saw a big increase in wine, prettier wine labels, funnier wine labels, like just trying to make everything much more marketable to women. And then it became like, we became the marketers of it. When we started, like, I'm a wine mom, I'm this I'm not, and we started, you know, really perpetuating this marketing campaign on ourselves, which is horrendous to see. But it's true. And it to me, it's just heartbreaking when I look back now and when I go to places like Target even though we don't have one here, to see the way in which women and femmes are so under supported, and instead of giving us the support, the reprieve, the rest, the compassion, the community care, the community care that we need. It's like here. This will solve your problem.

E Elle Billing 29:12
Have some more wine?

K Kristy Sarausky 29:14

Yeah. And alcohol works really well. Until it doesn't

E Elle Billing 29:21

until it doesn't. Yep, cuz you always have to wake up sober the next day.

K Kristy Sarausky 29:27

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. You always have to wake up sober. And, in some ways, and this is gonna sound a little strange, but in some ways, I'm very grateful that I did have alcohol when I did when I needed it, because I don't think that I was prepared to deal with certain trauma, with certain grief, with certain realities and alcohol kept me from having to deal with those things until I was ready. And when I was ready, I stopped drinking.

E Elle Billing 30:13

And that isn't even necessarily a commentary on you. That says something about the failure of our systems. I mean, I've heard before that addiction is less, you know, it's a disease, but it's more a symptom of a social problem. We don't have the community support. I worked in K 12 education for a number of years. And, you know, we talk about, you know, they always do like the drug and alcohol spiel, the thing that they just don't seem to make make sense for kids, or for teachers, or for people who are working in the, at least at that level, is that being socially embedded is the biggest deterrent, and the greatest protectant against the other risk factors for drug and alcohol abuse. Like if you're socially embedded, and you have a social network, and you have a support system, you are less likely to turn to substances to deal with your shit

K Kristy Sarausky 31:17

Yeah, it makes perfect sense. Yeah.

E Elle Billing 31:19

If you would add social embedding, right? A support system to help you. I mean, I don't know your whole story.

K Kristy Sarausky 31:28

No, no. But yeah, we can talk in these generalizations.

E Elle Billing 31:32

In a generalized sense, if we had better if we weren't so isolated. Yeah. Socially, there would be less of a market for things to numb us. ,

K Kristy Sarausky 31:45

Yeah absolutely. Like they wouldn't be able to dig their claws in, so to speak, as much. This is one of the things that's making me very hopeful about generations more useful generations, I-- you described yourself as a geriatric millennial, and oh, my gosh,

E Elle Billing 32:06

it's such a silly term, but I know, it's what they call us now.

K Kristy Sarausky 32:11

Where we see like, a much larger movement in, in younger generations of not drinking, and sober curiosity. And we are seeing the boom, of course, like, in alcohol free alternatives, alcohol free beers which is like I have mixed feelings on that But also like talking about your mental

tree beers, which is, like, I have mixed feelings on that. But also, like talking about your mental health is much more acceptable than it used to be. Talking about going to therapy is much more accepted. And even in some regard celebrated with certain generations. And it's like, you can see that social, being socially embedded helps.

E Elle Billing 32:57

Yeah. So speaking of like, okay, we're, we're geriatric millennials, and talking about our mental health and stuff. There's a lot of more awareness about generational trauma, and how it impacts you know, everybody, or not everybody, but like how it impacts people and families. So you, I read a little bit on your website. There was some, there was one line that I that I pulled, because I really, I thought it was really powerful. That if you can pass along your wounding, you can pass along your healing. And that just, I wanted to dance. Yeah, because for for one, I've seen it like I've seen it happen, like, the more I heal, or the more my sister heals, or the more anybody in the family heals like it. It ripples. I have a friend, my friend Bunny said recently, healing isn't linear. It's mycelial hmm, yeah, it's one of the most beautiful images seeing and in my isn't that gorgeous?

K Kristy Sarausky 34:03

Yeah. The structures the the mushroom roots.

E Elle Billing 34:07

Yeah, because it doesn't just affect one person. You don't heal in a line it just, yeah, you heal out and around and it impacts people around you. And so in your work you work with, with people and like you said, I mean, that was part of I guess your manifesto or your your your whatever, like you can pass along healing. So what kind of healing work are you doing with people and are you seeing with your clients?

K Kristy Sarausky 34:35

So I work with it sounds like two distinct groups, but it's not. People who identify as gray area drinkers and they want support in their sobriety. And then I also work with primarily women who identify as having a mother wound and have a very difficult relationship with their mother, whether they are in relationship with their mother or not, you can still have a very difficult relationship with your mother, even if you're not in a relationship with her anymore. And what I have found is that the people that come to me for mother wound healing, don't necessarily identify as gray area drinkers. But all the gray area drinkers that come to me definitely have some mother wound healing that they have to do. And I think one of the things that we often can shy away from that term, because we think it's like, Mother blaming and shaming. And here's just another way to heap on to women, which is never, ever my goal, it's about extracting ourselves from the narratives that people have given to us, or we have grown up with and foraging our own path forward and taking care of ourselves. So the way that I see this is like, they start working on their own stuff, they start acknowledging and processing the anger they had at the trauma or the lack of attunement that they received as a child. And a lot of it is like working with that anger and working with the grief, the grief of what happened, and

shouldn't have, because you didn't receive proper nurturance, or protection, or guidance, or what didn't happen, and should have. And then taking those pieces and figuring out how you can start getting those needs met through like a process that I call re mothering.

E

Elle Billing 37:00

I've heard that term before or re parenting .

K

Kristy Sarausky 37:02

Re parenting. Yeah. It's a very powerful, empowering process. But it comes with a lot of grief, a lot of grief. And I think grief work is paramount to this process. And also offering ourselves so much compassion, because we didn't know any differently at the time, the maladaptive behaviors that we took on whether it's you know, drinking in excess, or sex or shopping, or scrolling, whatever the thing

E

Elle Billing 37:42

people pleasing

K

Kristy Sarausky 37:42

people pleasing, you're looking for relief. That's all it is, is maybe not in the most adaptive way, but just looking for relief. And learning to like, cut yourself some slack and show yourself some compassion. And then learning how to get those needs met in more adaptive ways.

E

Elle Billing 38:05

That's really powerful. I know I've been through the the anger and grief process. And there's three kids in my family. It's my brother's oldest, I'm middle and my sister's younger is two years younger than me. And I'm the one that is home with my parents now helping take care of my mother. And I try to speak as positively as possible about her and our situation since this is a podcast. And yes, I try to be very consent based and how I speak about my parents.

K

Kristy Sarausky 38:35

Yeah.

E

Elle Billing 38:35

My mom and I had some really difficult years. And I've definitely been through the anger stage.

K Kristy Sarausky 38:42
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 38:44
And I've there's a lot that I've grieved, there came a time where there were things we learned about her mother and her mother's mother that really shed a light on

K Kristy Sarausky 38:55
Yes!

E Elle Billing 38:57
why things are the way they are on that side of the family. And it was illuminating. And you know, it didn't excuse, it doesn't make anything okay. But, like it explains how things happened the way they did. And, you know, when you said the word compassion, like having compassion for myself, and the choices that I made. And those maladaptive like, you know, earlier I said, I have no more vices left. Well, when I did have vices, I was just doing the best I could.

K Kristy Sarausky 39:29
Yeah, for sure. And you learn

E Elle Billing 39:31
compassion and accountability together and that compassion for myself, but also, when I learned to have compassion for my mom, like it really broke me open.

K Kristy Sarausky 39:42
Yes.

E Elle Billing 39:44
Like it was not something I expected. I mean, of course, there are still times that are tough. Being a caregiver for an aging parent who hasn't dealt with their shit. Yeah, and who now has a like a progressive illness is is its own.

K Kristy Sarausky 40:02

That's so much

E Elle Billing 40:03
kettle of fish.

K Kristy Sarausky 40:04
That's so much

E Elle Billing 40:06
I can testify to the power of, of working on the mother wound, because I wouldn't be able to take care of my mom with compassion and with a focus on consent and keep my sense of humor. When things go wonky around here, if I hadn't really spent time working on those things, and like really digging into them.

K Kristy Sarausky 40:31
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 40:31
And I think what you do is so important. And I think it's really under under understood. It isn't understood enough as something that we can do before people are gone. Like there are there are things to grieve, that have already happened. And by working through them, we can, we can have peace now. While people are still with us,

K Kristy Sarausky 40:54
yes, I think you're absolutely right. And a big part of it is finding the ability to extend that compassion. I'm really glad for you that you were able to get some answers, like looking through your family history with your mom and her mom. And it like you said, it doesn't excuse things, but it shines a light on why. And when you understand why. And then it's like, oh, she did that because x, y, z or how she was raised, it wasn't because I'm bad. I'm a bad daughter, or I'm an ungrateful daughter, or I'm, you know, X, Y or Z filling in the blank.

E Elle Billing 41:43
Any of the other wiser brains tell us

K Kristy Sarausky 41:46
Yeah,

E Elle Billing 41:47
yeah,

K Kristy Sarausky 41:48
it's not because I'm a bad person, it was just, that was the best that she could do with what she had. And, and being able to hold that nuance, for a lot of people that grew up with immature parents is very hard. Because we often grew up in these for lack of a better term, like black and white households with black and white thinking,

E Elle Billing 42:16
it gets back to that binary, right?

K Kristy Sarausky 42:18
I'm the parent, you're the child like all these, like black and white roles that we fulfill this binary thinking. So when we come into this healing part, it's a lot of new mental work and new like programming in your mind. Because you can say, yes, my mom did the very best she could. And I needed more. Or she did the very best she could, and it wasn't good enough. And let both those things be true. And not let one hugely outweigh the other. It's a It's hard work.

E Elle Billing 42:56
Holding that tension.

K Kristy Sarausky 42:57
Yeah.

E Elle Billing 42:58
And, and holding it gently,

K Kristy Sarausky 43:00
gently and Yeah. And, and it's okay. If you go off the deep end of one of those well, and let the

pendulum swing until it you know, settles in the middle again. Because it's also like, you know, that anger within you might come back when you reach a new stage in your relationship with your mom or you uncover new information or whatever. And that's okay. Like, we don't have to lock it up and put it in a box and put it away. Or the grief like our grief comes all the time. And as you know, your relationship with your mom progresses and eventually finishes where it's going to earthside

E Elle Billing 43:43

yeah, there's always new grief because of the nature of her illness. There's just a lot of anticipatory grief to it. Yeah, never ending. Yeah, just has a different. It just looks different.

K Kristy Sarausky 43:55

Yeah, anticipatory grief. I'm so glad that you brought that up. I think with mother wound healing, there's so much disenfranchised grief. It's like grief that isn't recognized in society. Like you can't say anything bad about your mom without coming off as being really ungrateful because you know, moms know best and family is everything. And when that hasn't been your experience, it's like grief with no place to go.

E Elle Billing 44:29

Thank you so much for being here. If listeners would like to work with you on either gray area drinking or their mother wound or both. How can they find you?

K Kristy Sarausky 44:40

The easiest place is that my website which is [www dot sober soul mate dot com](http://www.dotsobersoulmate.com) and it spelled the way you would think it is

E Elle Billing 44:51

and I'll link it in the show notes as well. Great. Thank you so much for being here. Kristy. Really appreciate this conversation.

K Kristy Sarausky 44:59

Thank you so much. much thank you for having me.

E Elle Billing 45:04

Thank you for joining us on this episode of Hoorf. To view the complete show notes and all the links mentioned in today's episode, or to get a full transcript of the episode, visit [Hoorf](https://www.hoorf.com)

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