

**Ep #67: The Habits That Build Emotional Intimacy
with Dr. Kavetha Sundaramoorthy and Dr. Erica Bove.**



Full Episode Transcript

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Kristi Angevine

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Ep #67: The Habits That Build Emotional Intimacy with Dr. Kavetha Sundaramoorthy and Dr. Erica Bove.

I'm your host, Kristi Angevine. Welcome to Episode #67 "The Habits That Build Emotional Intimacy." What exactly is emotional intimacy? And how can you cultivate it? What's the connection between intimacy and our habits? If you want to better understand the habits that build emotional intimacy, today, I bring you a dual interview with relationship experts, Drs. Kavetha Sundaramoorthy and Erica Bove. Let's get to it.

Welcome to *Habits On Purpose*, a podcast for high-achieving women who want to create lifelong habits that give more than they take. You'll get practical strategies for mindset shifts that will help you finally understand the root causes of why you think, feel, and act as you do. And now, here's your host, Physician, and Master Certified Life Coach, Kristi Angevine.

Hello, hello. As my longtime listeners know, habits are more than just our automatic behaviors, they also encompass our default ways of thinking and feeling. And when you really explore what's underneath the surface of our individual habits, it's quite complex. Add in relationships and the complexity increases exponentially.

So, to help me with this complexity and explore the habits that help with emotional intimacy, I have not one but two relationship experts on the podcast today, Dr. Kavetha Sundaramoorthy and Dr. Erica Bove.

Kavetha is a psychiatrist and physician relationship coach. After losing her mom to suicide when she was 18, she went into studying psychiatry to better understand the human mind. She soon realized that information alone wasn't going to keep her from repeating intergenerational patterns. So began a 10-year journey to integrate Eastern and Western modalities into her unique approach to healing, which she uses to help physicians heal their relationships from the inside out.

Erica is a reproductive endocrinologist, Certified Life Coach, and expert in sex and intimacy, who recently joined Kavetha as her head coach inside *Emotional Mastery for Female Physicians*. In the fertility world, she has a

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keen interest in marrying an evidence-based approach with intuitive knowing, in the context of a trusting physician-patient relationship. In medicine and coaching, she believes the best outcomes result when you see and understand the whole person.

Together, in my first dual interview, the three of us discuss the small and big habits that build emotional intimacy. Let's get to it.

Kristi Angevine: Everybody, welcome to the podcast today. We have another very special episode, and this is a dual interview. I have two amazing guests with me today. And the topic, you're going to absolutely love. Kave, Erica, welcome to the podcast.

Erica: Thank you so much. Thank you for having us. This so exciting and fun.

Kristi: Yeah, I'm really excited too. For those of you who are listening to this and don't know my two guests today, I'm going to have them introduce themselves and just tell you a little bit about where they are in the world so you can know who they are. And then, we'll dive into the topic about habits related to building emotional intimacy. Why don't you guys introduce yourself?

Erica: All right, my name is Erica Bove. By training, I'm an OB-GYN and fertility specialist. I found Kavetha about four years ago, when I was in the middle of some relationship changes myself. And just felt called to work with her. Because what she had was liquid gold, and really resonated so much, in so much of my experience.

And not only that, it really showed me the way forward in terms of growth and starting to really live my most authentic life. That was just truly the greatest blessing, in terms of my growth, has been working with Kavetha and the path to that.

Then, after working with her for some time, I decided to become a life coach myself. And during that time, I did another one of Kavetha's programs and really, this is my passion now. It really is. Thinking about

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these things, breathing these things, trying them out, getting fodder even in my own family of how we can best explain this and live this.

And so now, I am, with Kavetha's team, as her head coach, we are forging forward into the future, and really just figuring out all the best ways to get this message out to people, which is just so beautiful.

Kristi: I just love the camaraderie of OB-GYNs. And obviously, as a fertility specialist, it's a little bit different. But how fun that you have this history of being an OB-GYN and doing fertility work, and then to have such a shift to incorporate such a different aspect to understanding the world, thinking about relationships. I just think that's so fun. Not everybody that's a fertility specialist does that, right?

Erica: No, no. And I think you're right. It applies in both directions. Because sometimes I work with single people, but sometimes I work with a lot of couples too. And you can see all the different dynamics at play there. And so, I think sometimes just taking a step back and looking at the big picture...

I think there's also, fertility is so darn hard for people. And I think that if you think about all the limiting beliefs that come up in that journey, because it's something that's so important to many of us, is having a family and bringing that forward. It's been such a beautiful lens to say, "Let's actually coach today, instead of talk about your next steps."

Because I know we can't get to any next steps unless we address what does it mean to be a mother? And all these different things that come up. And so, I think it's just enriched everything. Even today, I just found out that one of my very favorite patients, after several, several years, delivered a beautiful baby boy last week, after so much struggle. And honestly, I feel like the heavens have opened. I'm just like, this is a miraculous world we live in and it's all connected, right? It's not separate.

Kristi: That's so good. And I do wish I could go back in time and bring myself a coach during some of my fertility things. I didn't know what I didn't

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know. And now, there's some people close in my sphere, in terms of clients and colleagues, who are in the world of fertility and are coaches and they bring such a different approach to how they work with their patients.

So, I love that we have this nice tangent into fertility and how coaching and mindset work intersects, and is just such a wonderful thing. To a lot of people listening, that will hit home with them about how important that work is.

Erica: Thank you for sharing that, Kristi. That's amazing.

Kristi: Yeah, I wish everybody who's listening to this, I wish she could see us. Because right now, all of us have big smiles. We're doing air high-fives. Erica, Kave, and I have never met before. And yet, very quick rapport. So, I wish for everybody's listening to this, you can see that we're all kind of perma-grinning. Without further ado, Kave, why don't you introduce yourself so people can hear about you?

Kavetha: Absolutely. Thank you so much. Oh, my gosh, yes. Actually, Erica and I, have, as she was saying, known each other for four years now. And we've never met in real life. I can't even imagine that because she's such an important part of the way I think and plan, day to day, now. That's pretty amazing, the opportunities that this sort of medium has given us.

Similar to Erica in some ways, I actually grew up in India. I came here to do my psych residency. And then, I did my Fellowship in Child-Adolescent Psychiatry. Through all of that, outwardly, it looked like I should have the answers; I was double board-certified in psychiatry. And yet, my inner and interpersonal life was really struggling.

I had some trauma growing up. And really, the only thing I knew to do is to push that down, to keep going, and become successful and whatnot. But I often say, there was a point at which I was like, "Alright, I've had four uncomfortably painful separations and a divorce. Maybe it's me." I just sort of paused and stopped dating for a while and said, "Okay, something is up,

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I need to figure this out.” I didn't have any answers. I didn't know where to even begin to look.

So, I just sort of waded through many Eastern and Western modalities, going back home... There's actually a very good center for meditation and introspection, which is 20 minutes from where I grew up, and I'd never been there! I went there from the US. So, that was the next few years.

And slowly I started piecing things together. That started giving me some sense of steadiness inside. And that steadiness started reflecting, as it does, in our relationships. I fell in love with that journey. And I promised myself that I wouldn't have a child until I was somewhat certain that I wouldn't pass on this trauma.

I feel very blessed, because I didn't even know how to imagine the life that I have now, 10 years ago. I never saw it. I didn't have a model for it or language for it. And it's through this work that I have the life I have, and I feel called to share it.

Kristi: And I think that's a nice, such a beautiful way, of describing and planting that seed of hope for people who may be in a set of circumstances, and have a particular way of looking at things and emotionally responding to things. That, right now does not feel how they want it to be, and they're struggling to imagine anything being different.

This is the nice plug to say, “It's okay if you cannot imagine something different. That does not actually mean that something different is impossible.”

Kavetha: That's right. That's exactly right. Yes.

Kristi: Part of the philosophy of this podcast, for everyone listening who knows this, is that I teach that our habits are not just the behaviors that we habitually do. But they're the way that we sort of automatically respond emotionally. They are the automatic, unquestioned, sort of autopilot ways that we think about ourselves and think about the world. They're so much more malleable than we might think they are.

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And it just requires curiosity and compassion and awareness, to sort of look and see, and then be more deliberate about them in the situations where we want to. So, I love that we get to have the two of you talk about habits that can really cultivate emotional intimacy.

Can one of you start off and maybe you explain what you even mean, what the definition of emotional intimacy is, for those who are listening?

Kavetha: Sure, I can give my two cents and I would love to hear Erica's take, as well. I think of intimacy as "Into me you see".

Erica: That's what I was going to say. I was going to say that.

Kavetha: Oh, there you go. So, when I started working with people who wanted to improve in emotional intimacy, oftentimes, and I've done this too, we're looking for the other person to open up. We're like, "I wish they would open up more. I wish that they would share their interests," and such.

And that's very important, but I think, oftentimes we forget, that intimacy is built by us showing our hearts. And that takes first, knowing our hearts. Knowing what's in there, being able to sit with what's in there, slow down enough to process what's in there without judgment. And then have the curiosity and the vulnerability and the courage to share that with somebody else.

To me, it starts with "I'm the foundation. I need to know my inner world, and be with that." So that's how I would define it.

Kristi: That's so great.

Erica: That was beautiful. Very similarly, I think "Into me you see." And so, I think about vulnerability as a strength. The way I grew up, it was like, if there was some flaw, sometimes it may be better not to show that flaw, or to put some makeup on it, or whatever that metaphor is. In the context of a very loving family, it was just very important to present a very together image of oneself, right?

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And so, for me, when anything didn't jive with that image of perfection, then I would shove that somewhere else. It's that frame shift of, actually, this is where you are most beautiful. Sometimes it's those things that you don't want other people to see. And that's where the beauty is, that's where the space is, and that's where the love is. That's where the love comes in. Right?

And so, when I can be with somebody who understands that, and reciprocally gives that and receives that, that is the most beautiful exchange that I can imagine.

Kavetha, like what you said, that it has to start with ourselves because I can't share something that I'm not aware of. I can't take off a mask I'm not even aware of. Sometimes it's involuntary, right? Sometimes, we're not aware. But it's that beautiful exchange that is rooted in self-knowledge and vulnerability.

Kristi: I love that you said that vulnerability is a strength, because that's a different way of thinking about vulnerability. Because sometimes you're like, "Well, if I have to be vulnerable, I'll do it in certain circumstances. And then, I'll apologize for it, and I won't do it again, until next year, maybe once, right?" But if vulnerability is a strength, and vulnerability is a skill you can practice, what a great shift.

And Kavetha, I was so glad that you mentioned too, that it starts with that self-knowledge. And the image that comes to my mind, is if we don't have this sturdy sort of foundation, where we know "this is me, this is who I am, this is my relationship with myself." If that's not there, sometimes the vulnerability can be a little bit complicated.

Because it can be these attempts at getting intimacy by being overly vulnerable, when maybe you don't have anything to fall back on. Maybe with somebody who just didn't really [inaudible] your vulnerability. Or just having a wall up, where "Well, I can't be vulnerable because that's too risky."

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Kavetha: Totally. I want to add on that. I'm so glad you brought that up, because I think two things; one, we tend to, or at least I have in the past, thought of emotional intimacy as being emotional agreement. And it took me a while to recognize that the other person does not have to agree with my feelings or point of view for them to be valid, and vice versa.

And it's more about just genuinely being interested in the other person's world. In fact, if they were exactly like me, then it'd be kind of boring. So, emotional agreement, emotional intimacy, are two different things.

And also, as you said Kristi, vulnerability, if the intention is to share versus the intention is to get someone to like me, those come across a little bit different, right? And so, I'm glad you mentioned that there are some times we may share vulnerably in a sort of anxious way.

Kristi: If my motivation is to be liked by someone else, and so I think sharing will help me be liked. And then when I am liked, I will then be able to feel something that I... Because of what I'm thinking about the person liking me, the shortcut is, if I like me, and I'm steady and stable, then I won't be so graspy about sharing this thing, in hopes that it will make them respond this particular way. It's like, I can share. They can agree or not agree, and we can move forward.

So, this brings up the idea that when we think about emotional intimacy, we can all have different thoughts about what intimacy is, so I'm glad that you defined it. But I'm curious if there are particular sort of myths about emotional intimacy, or ideas about where people think intimacy is just agreement. If there are other sort of myths or misnomers or 'mis definitions' that you hear your clients or people that you work with, talk about when you bring this up.

Kavetha: A couple of things that come to mind, is the emotional agreement. And then the other one, is compatibility. We don't like the same things, right? We used to. We got together because we both liked skiing and

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traveling, and now one of us does, and one of us doesn't. And so, we're not emotionally intimate any longer.

Coming away from that agreement and compatibility and the sameness, to "I can be emotionally intimate, actually, with somebody who may not even speak the same language as me, if I'm curious," I think that shift is an important one to make. And, Erica, I'd love to hear anything else you want to say.

Erica: Yeah, I think that it's hard to isolate emotional intimacy, because it's so connected with spiritual intimacy. And in romantic relationships, physical intimacy. I've heard some people say, "Oh, I can be sexually intimate, but not emotionally intimate." And for people who are in that boat, maybe they have some trauma or something else that prevents them from opening up in certain ways, but I think that takes a lot of compartmentalization.

And so, I think the myth that you can separate it out, is a myth. Because I think it has to be integrated with the whole self. If you ignore something, it's going to come out in a different way, and usually strangely. But integration is something that I strive for. And for my clients and my friends and my family who are open to it, I try to hold space for that as well.

Kristi: Let's talk about what are some habits that can help cultivate emotional intimacy, as you guys are describing it.

Kavetha: Erica and I could literally talk about this for days. It's all we talk about and think about, in terms of how do we help our clients, as quickly but as powerfully and as inherently... Meaning, it's in their being rather than just a thing that we learn? And how do we share that? So, a couple of things that come to mind, and Erica and I will just go back and forth; I know, she's got some great ideas.

One of them that I think of, is that I want to be first, slowing down enough to make time and space, time as in physical time, but space as in quietness, to be with myself and allow things to come up. Not thinking that, "I cannot feel certain things." Like, "If I have a certain feeling, it'll be too much. I can't

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bear it. I can't tolerate it." When we are shying away from that slowing down and solitude, then the intimacy that we do try to create has a harried energy to it, as well.

So, I think that the most important, at least for me, and this took me so long. It sounds so simple, and yet I cannot tell you how long it took me to know even what the heck am I feeling? What am I feeling? I just used to feel a jumbled the sense of discomfort. And maybe I could describe it as anger, because that's a surface irritability. But I couldn't really, beyond that, I didn't know how to sit with myself.

And I think that's a number one skill, to not be scared of your own inner world, first. And to slow down enough to... We talk about it in our programs as "being the driver of your bus". If your bus is your mind, and the passengers, they change all the time, they're thoughts and feelings. They get down in certain stops, and they get up on certain stops. We're not attached to any one passenger. We're not trying to cling to a passenger or trying to boot out a passenger. You're the driver of your bus.

And so, being willing to connect with your different passengers, but stay in the leadership of being a driver, I think that skill is paramount.

Kristi: Oh, my gosh, so many things about what you just said, really resonate. And I love that idea, that when we don't have our own sense of sort of comfort with all the different emotions, the whole range... We won't say negative or positive so much, because that binary is not the most helpful.

But just the whole range of emotions, when we don't have that understanding of what it's like to experience those feelings, perhaps to name them if we choose to, when we don't have that it's going to be a challenge to feel anything, and then be able to communicate about it or for it to someone else, in a way that makes any sense.

Erica: It's so hard, though. I mean, it's so very hard. I mean, this also took me years. And it really started for me, working with Kavetha; just years. I

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mean, now I feel like I can sit. But I remember at first, I just had this recurring thought, “The silence is so loud.”

And then I realized, why do I enjoy a glass or two of wine at night? This is not to say that anybody who drinks the wine is about... But for me, I realized there's certain ways I push away the feelings. And so, it's this awareness.

And this goes along with your work, Kristi, so much, is this buffering that we do, whatever form it takes; overeating, overdrinking, overworking, overexercise, sex sometimes. It's just those things numb us, to the point where we don't sit with our feelings and understand what really is going on for us.

So, the first thing, is starting that process. And then, trying to figure out, once it is uncomfortable in the beginning, how you navigate that discomfort. I call this, with my best friend, “emotional sobriety”. And I have to sit. Sometimes I just write: What am I feeling today? And then I just clearly say, “Angry, grateful, hopeful, worry,” the whole thing. And then I'm like, “Okay, I just have 10 feelings coexisting, awesome.”

Sometimes I keep those to myself, sometimes I share them with my best friend, Jenny. But it's that emotional honesty that I say okay. And then that space, Kavetha, you taught me that, that gives that awareness in that space. And I look at and I'm like, “Well, that's so interesting. Why do those five emotions coexist right now?”

And then you can start to get to the root of what's really going on. But it can be super uncomfortable, at first. Which is why I think so many of us resist that very first step.

Kristi: For somebody who's listening who has that classic discomfort, maybe they are a head without a body, or their emotional lexicon feels like “Well, I feel good, stuck, angry or happy. But I don't know anything else. And if you ask me to describe a feeling in my body, I'm going to look at you like you're speaking some weird language.”

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Or somebody who maybe just doesn't know what that's even like, and the silence is so loud. To actually have time and space and go, "Okay, what am I feeling? What do I call it? Why might I be feeling this?"

It's totally normal to not know, as both of them said. It takes time. If you have developed a habit of disconnecting from your emotions, or just maybe nobody taught you how to feel your feelings, how to name your emotions. It's completely normal, if you don't know yet how to do that. And it is also because it's learnable, it is something you can absolutely learn.

Kavetha: Absolutely. And I want to add also, that ruminating is one way that I used to distance myself from my emotions. But it didn't feel like I was distancing myself, because I was feeling intense things while ruminating. So, I thought I was actually solving the thing. But that's another way of distancing yourself from the sensations in your body and sitting with them.

Erica: Thank you. And I feel that too, and sometimes I still struggle with that. One thing that Kavetha taught me in the course, is how to actually embody the feeling. And so, the first step is slowing breathing and closing your eyes. There're even meditations that we have on this. And she's like, "What color is it? Does it feel warm? Does it feel hot? As you breathe, is it moving anywhere?" All that.

Sometimes our feelings do have colors or textures. And by breathing in and being with that very sensate feeling, it diffuses it in a way that transforms it, actually. And so, I think that if we can use our senses in that way, that's the first place to start, in terms of sitting with our feelings.

Kristi: And that combination of what the both of you said, for the person who understands this intellectually, it's like, "Okay, so you want me to close my eyes, and you want me to get very concrete about the sensations I feel the possible textures, characteristics, qualities, movement, temperature. Okay, that's awesome. So, every time I do that, I start thinking. And then everything gets intense." Yes, that is normal.

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Because if you have a tendency to go out of your body and into your head and start thinking and thinking and thinking and just ruminating, it may feel very intense. Because you're having, I don't know, 75,000 thoughts all of a sudden, in five minutes, and it feels quite intense.

And so, you might think, "This is what it feels like to feel my feelings." But that's different than not ruminating and focusing on the physical. That embodiment piece, it's just a new skill to learn. And many of the overthinking ruminators can think they're feeling their feelings, and really, it's more of a resistance or let me fix it, let me solve it, let me think about it. And it may still feel intense, but it's different than what it feels like when you're doing what you're describing so nicely, Erica.

Erica: Thank you.

Kavetha: I wanted to also add, because it just occurred to me, that a lot of people have also said, when I've introduced this skill, "I don't know what I feel. I don't feel anything. I don't feel anything in my body. I just feel angry in my head. I don't know what I feel." One helpful thing that I found, is to just say, "Okay, where do I most feel that nothingness?"

Kristi: That is such a great starting point.

Erica: And that's to be able to localize, right?

Kavetha: Yeah. Start with where you are, basically. You don't need to have a lot of answers. You just start with whatever little path or quote or little question mark, that's coming up. That's a good place to start.

Kristi: Totally. So, what other habits help with emotional intimacy?

Kavetha: Erica, do you want to take this one?

Erica: Yeah. We touched on this a little bit, but just living in a state of curiosity. Sort of curiosity, if we have a partner, about them and their reactions. So, I'd say it's sort of trying to really understand where things are coming from, with a very non-judgmental space. Because I think that if we can get curious about it, we can start to understand it. But there's no

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blame, or there's no lack of responsibility; curious minds want to know, right?

I think we also need to get curious with our own selves, to be able to have that intimacy too. Because I don't know about you guys, but I am full of self-judgment. There's the arrow and then the second arrow of all the things. So, if I can stop with the first arrow and get curious, then I don't have that second layer of self-judgment that is very paralyzing sometimes.

I think it's that positive intent. I talk about this a lot with my close people. Starting with that state of positive intent, and then becoming very curious. And then, there's a lot that comes out of that space. Kavetha and I then talk about very concrete ways to do this.

Some people set weekly meeting with their partners and have specific questions about what's going well, what's not going well, what's one thing we can do in this week that will improve things for us. Figuring out what that means for each person and creating space for curiosity. I truly think that's the secret to a beautiful life.

Kristi: Curiosity as a habit. I can't think of pretty much most situations where that's not a useful thing to deploy. Unless you're running away from a tidal wave or something.

Kavetha: We can figure out why later, just get away. Having not yet figured out how to be curious with myself, I couldn't sustain it. I'd start curiously, but then they would say something or roll their eyes in a particular way, and then I'd be triggered again. I hadn't really figured out how to be with myself, and notice the triggers come up and sit with that.

I could force myself to be curious for the first pass, but then they only had to do something, get defensive or make a snarky comment or whatever. Or not even that, maybe even respond nicely, but not the way I would have wanted. And then I'm back to that space of blame and anger, right?

So, one of the things that really helped me, as Erica was saying, is that I try to remind myself, the other person's reactions are about their passengers.

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It's not about me. I'm curious to know what passengers are coming up for this person, that they're thinking and reacting this way. I mean, it makes absolute sense in their mind. Right? It's absolutely logical in their mind. So, I just want to know, what are the passengers?

And then another thing that I found really helpful, is to separate what's being said, with what might be the underlying need. So, those two things. Being with myself. And holding onto whatever another person is coming with; it's about their passengers, not about me. That lets me be like, hmm, this person is getting angrier when I say this thing. I wonder what passengers are coming up for them? And to think about what might be a need under whatever it is, the words that they're using, in the moment.

Erica: Yes. One thing I wanted to add to that, Kavetha, which you taught me, is staying in that space. So, you just described that. I think so many of us type-A personalities are like, "And this is what we're going to do to fix the problem." That cuts off, that amputates, our ability to stay with that curiosity and go deeper. Because we then we go into action mode and fixing mode. But we have to resist that temptation to do that, because then that's where the real stuff comes.

Kristi: Yes. It's so attractive to go into action mode and fixing mode. And there's a time and a place where that may be the best, most intentional, lovely course of action. And this is not it. For emotional intimacy, usually, there's that nice pause prior to any collaborative adjustments or solutions, that may come up.

Are there other things that have come up as you're thinking about this, or that you'd want to add, in terms of small habits that can cultivate emotional intimacy?

Kavetha: Yeah, one of the things I wanted to add, that just came to me. Completing the 'what not to do', jumping into fix it, which is so tempting. Because clearly, we know what should be done and what they should do. It's so tempting to be like, "I know how to fix this." I have a rule for myself, that I wish I had had at least 10 years prior to when I instituted it. But the

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rule is: I cannot give suggestions until the other person feels understood. I'm not allowed to give suggestions.

The way that I know that someone feels understood, and this is just my own observation, is that physiologically they relax, right? They're sitting forward and having a lot of energy. And then, when they feel understood, this is kind of 'yeah, yeah, that's it. That's what's happening.' And the words are less important than the physiological relaxing.

And then the other thing is also, reassuring. We might not fix, but we might jump, as people who want to take care of other people, to jump to reassure, "No, no, it's okay, honey. What? Your car isn't working? Take mine." Whatever it is, we want to reassure.

There is a place and time, as Kristi was saying, for all of these things. None of it is good or bad. It's just that when we rush to reassure, again, we have short-circuited the possibility of coming up with some gold that we previously hadn't yet unearthed.

Kristi: That's so interesting. So, why might we rush to reassure? Why might we rush to fix? What's in it for me? When I can make somebody else stop feeling bad, because I've fixed it.

Erica: Yeah, it's also like, make discomfort go away. Because you actually are choosing to come out of the discomfort phase in a way that might short-circuit it, actually. But you have to intentionally have discomfort in the service of your dreams. To sit with that and to move forward. That also is a skill. For those people who are committed to this journey, it's a fun thing to do overall, because it just opens up all these possibilities. However, we all have to accept that it's not always going to feel great.

Kristi: Yes, yes. Not always going to feel great, but doesn't have to be for forever, right?

Erica: Correct. That's exactly it. That's exactly it.

Kristi: It's temporary.

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Kavetha: Yes, it's temporary and you actually feel much more confident in the world. Once you have sat with that discomfort a little bit, there is nothing that you feel like you can't do. Because it all comes back to, can I feel that feeling? I can feel that feeling. Then, I can do whatever it is.

Erica: Yes, it's this groundedness. Sometimes with "habits" that we don't really aspire to have, it's this ping-ponging all over the place, that we are not the driver of the bus, we don't have agency. But when we can really plug in and be grounded and know that we have that calm, compassionate center, then that is the foundation for whatever then comes.

Kristi: Absolutely. And I find it's actually so much more difficult. I don't know if this is universal, because I haven't done this randomized control trial. But this what I think, is that most people, once they practice and learn that skill of being with the discomfort of either watching someone else share something, watching someone else suffer, being with their own emotions, that that in, terms of difficulty, pales in comparison to how it actually is when you're kind of running away from or resisting or trying to fix or not feel something.

Because it maybe feels unsafe, or you don't know how to do it, whatever the reason is, it's actually much harder to do all the other stuff. And so, sometimes I think there's this idea that, if I stop and feel my feelings, or if I'm vulnerable with someone else, that will be really difficult. It's a skill to learn, so there may be a learning curve there. But it's actually not as hard as the stuff that is done in the name of avoiding the primary thing in the first place, right?

Erica: 100% Brilliant. It's really brilliant.

Kristi: I was going to ask for something really concrete and a small actionable thing for people. And if you got something, you're welcome to share it. But I think what you said, Kavetha, about the idea of, I'm just going to make sure the other person seems and appears like they feel heard, seen, and understood before I make any suggestions. It's such a beautiful one. And I can see how you could turn it towards yourself, placate your

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own habits and change, etc. But is there anything else that either of you would want to add on this topic?

Kavetha: We talked about feelings and needs, right? There're feelings, and then what are they showing me that I'm needing, or the other person's needing? And for me, I found it helpful, especially for recurrent patterns, recurrent stuck things, to sit with myself and figure out, what are my underlying needs?

I used to struggle here, because I would find a need, but it would be about something about the other person. So, it would be like, I need you to be more physically affectionate, for example. And I see this a lot with our clients, is that they'll say, "I've asked so many times. I've asked so many times. And he or she says that they'll do it, but then they don't."

So, I think it's important... One question that's helped me, is to ask myself; even if this person wasn't in this interaction with this issue, what is the need? Then it removes that other person's stuff; you should be more physically affectionate. I can state it as, "I seem to feel really loved when I get touched."

Which is very different than, "There's something wrong with you. Your family doesn't hug enough, clearly and that's why." So, asking yourself; what is your need? That is preceding even, this person and their entry into your life. Can you frame it that way? That makes it easier for the other person to hear it as a universal need, rather than "I'm doing something and I should be different."

Kristi: That's gold.

Erica: That's great. Yes, so my thought was, gratitude, in addition to curiosity, is one of the other secrets of a beautiful life. And so, appreciation cannot be underestimated. So, we all need gas in the tank. And I think that when we say, "One thing I really appreciate about you is X-Y-Z," that's filling the well. Which also then becomes protective when hard things come as well.

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And so, it could be little things. It could be big things. But just injecting a little bit of that every single day, is a habit. Right? And one that has just huge dividends over time.

Kavetha: Yes. One of the things that I like to say to our clients is, "If you see something, say something."

Erica: I caught you. I caught you doing good, right?

Kavetha: If you see something, just blurt it out right then and there. "Oh, thanks babe." Just blurt it out, right then and there. You don't need to have a big process for this and sit down once a week. See something, say something.

And you're watering your garden, as Erica was saying, which makes it easier when there is something that you need to bring up, that needs some collaboration and shifting. You know, it's easier to withdraw from a full emotional bank account than from something that's overdrawn.

Kristi: Yes, totally. This is so great. You guys have dropped so many practical tips and beautiful concepts. And I know, it's going to be so helpful to everybody who is listening to this in their car, on their walks, wherever they might be.

I know you've piqued a lot of people's interest, and they're going to want to go read more, learn more, work with you, etc. So, can you just tell all the listeners how they can find you?

Kavetha: I want to say go to our website, but our website is being redone right now. So, I think the best way would be to check us out on the Facebook group. What do you think Erica?

Erica: Yeah, I think that, and also check out the podcast too. Because there's so many good links there that link into... People can read more and more about that.

Kavetha: Absolutely. We have a Facebook group called Your Brain On Trauma. We talk a lot about how trauma, big Ts and small ts. Feeling

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unseen or feeling like you have to be academically really successful in order to please your parents, all of these things that might be smaller ts. But also, bigger Ts. How that influences our relational life later.

So, we have a Facebook group called Your Brain On Trauma. We have a podcast that is going to be called *Emotional Mastery*. But right now, it's called *Your Brain On Trauma*, as well. Both of those are places where anyone can find Erica and myself to connect with, and our whole team. Actually, we have tons of physician coaches who are all sort of uber-excellent in their way of delivering this information.

Kristi: Thank you, both, so much for your time. And so much for dropping all sorts of wisdom and information. I look forward to seeing your new website. And I look forward to having these conversations continue in the future. So, thanks so much.

Erica: Thanks, Kristi. Thanks for the work you do, too. It's really changing lives. And so many of us feel stuck in our habits and to really understand that there are ways out, and ways to a more beautiful, truer life for ourselves. I mean, you're doing such important work. Thank you so much.

Kavetha: 100%. I want to echo that, Kristi, I barely read emails, and I read every email that you send. It's always really interesting, your take on things, the words you use. I don't know, it sets my brain thinking in a different way. And I really value that. I also noticed that you really like IFS work. And that's a big love of mine, as well. So, that's something that I'd love to chat with you sometime about. But thank you for everything that you're doing for the world.

Kristi: Absolutely. Well, one of my habits that I've gotten better with, is to have comfort with accepting compliments. So, thank you so much. It's so kind of you.

Kavetha: Love it.

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it in real life. Trust me, I know. And this is where coaching can be a great resource. It helps you bridge the gap between theory and your lived, everyday reality.

So, if you're interested in getting my expertise to help you unravel the root causes of your habits, so you can be more intentional with this one precious life. There are three ways to do so.

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If you're interested in Internal Family Systems work, and want to just dip your toe in with a single coaching session, I've got you covered there too. Internal Family Systems is a model in psychotherapy that sees the mind as comprised of many distinct parts that interrelate, like a family may relate. And right now, you can still sign up for a single session using Internal Family Systems informed coaching, at HabitsOnPurpose.com/IFS.

Lastly, if you're a female identifying physician, and you want a community where you work alongside other physicians, the next Habits on Purpose for Physicians CME Small Group Coaching Program starts this summer, and you're going to want to get on the waitlist for it. You can learn all the details HabitsOnPurpose.com/HOPP. I'll talk to you next week.

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