

CATHY WURZER: Perhaps this figure rings true for you-- 70% of adults in the US have experienced at least one traumatic incident in their lives. Now, the CDC defines a traumatic event is something that's marked by a sense of horror, helplessness, serious injury, or the threat of serious injury or death.

Some adults who have experienced trauma and are ready to talk about it have turned to Laura Anderson. Laura is the Creator and Co-Host of the Duluth-based podcast *What They Don't Tell You About Being A Survivor*. Every other Friday, she hands the mic over to a guest host to share their story, however they want to tell it, with little or no editing.

To talk more about the podcast, Laura is on the line right now. Laura, it's really great to have you here. Thank you.

LAURA ANDERSON: Thank you, Cathy, for inviting me to share this space with you.

CATHY WURZER: So you call yourself a co-host, not the host. Why a co-host?

LAURA ANDERSON: Right. Well, when I was looking at creating this podcast, I had my own experiences of trauma. I know a lot of victim survivors. And unfortunately, there are folks who use victim survivor stories and experience for personal gain. Now, I hope that most of the people that do that do it without realizing it.

But this is one of the main reasons I have the guest as the host and not me. It's their episode, their experience. I'm just providing a microphone. And hopefully some folks that need to hear what they share, I try to empower people on their journey in life, especially when something has weighed them down.

CATHY WURZER: Do you find that they find that talking about their experiences, being the host, having it not filtered, is that something that's healing for them?

LAURA ANDERSON: Yeah. I've had a few hosts that have told me, even ones that speak a lot on radio, TV interviews, global speaking events, they tell me that it was a really unique platform and they talked about stuff that they normally don't get to talk about.

CATHY WURZER: Good. Say, why did you want to create this podcast? You kind of put yourself out there.

LAURA ANDERSON: Right. Well, I had for several years people requesting that I create a podcast, or a blog, or something where I talked about specifically domestic violence is my focus. But as you know, the podcast is open to any kind of trauma. And I had a realization one day that there's so much we don't talk about after a traumatic event.

And I'm constantly learning and I know other people are constantly learning because this information it's not like you experience a traumatic event and someone hands you a brochure-- so you've survived this, here's what to expect. So just having a platform where people can find out more that other people are going through and they're not the only person experiencing that.

CATHY WURZER: What are some of the main themes that survivors talk about that others, the general public, might not understand?

LAURA ANDERSON: I think oftentimes we hear about isolation and feeling alone. You know, especially in the US, we have this mentality about people pulling themselves up by the bootstraps, and suck it up, buttercup, and all those other phrases we hear, right? And in doing that, people mean well and they try to help people overcome trauma. But it's OK to not be OK. And I think that's a big thing that people talk about is just that need for space and healing at their own pace.

CATHY WURZER: I can almost hear some people saying, OK, how long does that last? Do you also talk about the resilience that survivors of trauma can develop because of their experiences and as they then move through the rest of their lives?

LAURA ANDERSON: Oh Yeah and the host decides what way they want to take it on their healing journey. And a reality for a lot of victim survivors is the trauma doesn't end. Like a classic example, that is domestic violence. A lot of times, once we get the victims away from the person responsible for the harm, it doesn't mean the trauma just stops there, right?

So healing is not something I think we should ever put a time limit on, right? Like, OK, you survived this, you have x amount of weeks to get over it. It's people's own journey, their own healing. And, of course, their support systems affect how they heal, because two people could be in the same incident, they could witness the same thing and depending on their support systems and their life experiences, that trauma is going to impact them differently and their healing journey is going to be different.

CATHY WURZER: It's like grief in a sense, really, because there's no set journey for grief either. It can be different for everybody.

LAURA ANDERSON: Yeah. And one of the worst things that I hear people say is people tell them, well, just get over it, or you're fine now, or why do you keep living in the past. And especially when we're talking with people with PTSD, it's not the past. It's very much the present, because they're still having those flashbacks, their brain is still trying to work through it.

CATHY WURZER: What have you learned as the co-host? I love the fact that you consider yourself kind of the co-pilot here-- what have you learned from your guests that has helped you on your journey?

LAURA ANDERSON: I have learned so much. I love doing these episodes. I love having conversations with people. And I think one of the big takeaways is we are all connected.

And it doesn't matter what culture, what country, your experiences-- we are all connected in some way. And hearing somebody on the other side of the country that, honestly, I will probably never meet in-person talk about stuff that I can relate to, that I have related to is so amazing, because it takes away that isolation piece.

And it's like, oh, the world really isn't that big. I'm really not just a dust in the wind kind of thing. But we are all connected and everything is intertwined.

CATHY WURZER: Where do you want to take this podcast, Laura?

LAURA ANDERSON: I have never really established or thought of that. Even from releasing the first episode, it's always kind of been like, OK, let's see where this goes. And the podcast has been downloaded in over 130 countries. And to me, that has been such a shock.

And it's amazing when the different episodes come out, I'll see different countries really spike in downloads for that episode versus other episodes. So I think I just want it to go wherever it needs to go for people to find hope and healing.

CATHY WURZER: I appreciate your work. I Thank you for it. And I thank you for your time here today. And best of luck moving forward.

LAURA ANDERSON: Thank you so much. And thank you for what you do and the stories that you share.

CATHY WURZER: Thank you, Laura. Laura Anderson is the Creator and the Co-Host of the podcast *What They Don't Tell You About Being A Survivor*. It's available wherever you stream your podcasts. And at menaspeacemakers.podbean.com.