

**“Sex Help with Carol the Coach” – April 7, 2014 Dr Caldwell blogtalkradio #6169609**

**Carol:** Welcome to the Carol the Coach show. This is "Sex Help with Carol the Coach" and I have to tell you it is good to be back. I am sorry that we had some technical difficulties. I was out of the country last week and I did my absolute best to, through the cruise ship, set up a show. I'll be doggoned if we just couldn't make the connection. I always try my very best to be dependable, to at least set you up with incredible information, even if it's a replay. You've heard us do a replay on conflict before. Dr. Joe Cort has done some replays for us. I had that all set up and then just could not get any kind of phone service that would get me to the show. So again I am sorry about that, but it is so good to be with you tonight.

I just got off the plane at about 10:00 this morning. It's been a whirlwind day. You probably wonder what is going on in Carol the Coach's life. I get off the plane with my husband, our friend picks us up, takes us home and we directly proceed to boot camp. I have this dog named Boo. He's only about 8 pounds. He's a Shih Tzu and Bichon, and he's called a teddy bear. I have left him at this facility with police dogs for 2 weeks. I kept saying, "I'm putting the Boo in boot camp." I would call and check on him, and the trainer assured me he didn't miss me at all. Now I don't believe that for a second, but it did kind of make me feel better. So we get there today and we are now going to be trained in regard to everything that Boo has learned. If you've ever had an animal that you've trained or are training, it is clearly the adult's responsibility to make the shift in behavior.

It's interesting that I'd be talking about that tonight, because when I worked with my sex addict's group, that's what we talked about. As a matter of fact, I gave homework tonight. I gave homework for them to Google how urges and cravings can actually evaporate when you're working a strong enough program. It's out of the promises in AA, but it also applies to anybody who has a sexual addiction. It takes anywhere from 3-5 years for the neuro pathways to change in the brain. Sure there are people that always have urges and cravings, but there are others that are working a strong enough program and have done that repeatedly and have moved those neuro pathways in ways that have allowed them to no longer crave the original addiction. So there is a lot of hope in a twofold way. One, if you work a program and you're calling people and you're going to 12 step meetings and you've got a sponsor and you've got fellowship; you're doing your readings; you're doing your meditations, you're praying, you're practicing mindfulness and you're exhibiting a lot of healthy behaviors; when you do those things consistently you learn that you absolutely can manage and control the cravings. This means that you're in full-blown recovery. But there is another subset of the population that they do all those things and one day, typically 3-4-5-6-7-8 years, and I know we're supposed to do it one day at a time, right; but from a neurochemistry point of view it takes anywhere from 3-5 years to re-circuit the brain.

You can actually one day wake up and no longer feel the urge to participate in behaviors that have gotten you in trouble, that have made you feel angry at yourself, that have created shame, that have interfered and interrupted your life, that have made you feel bad and guilty, that have brought down your self-esteem. That's the best news. It's incentive to want to change. Right

now we've got somebody in our group who is kicking butt and taking names. He has gone to a meeting every single day and he is absolutely participating in 8 of the 10 behaviors that I just talked about for a good strong recovery program. He is doing service work. He is volunteering all over the world. He has a very strong spiritual belief, so he's doing missionary work. For today, and he always is realistic enough to say it's just for today, he feels good about himself and he has seen God working anonymously in his life.

Now why do I say anonymously? Many of you have heard the old adage that there are no coincidences. When a coincidence occurs, it's God working anonymously. That is important for you to note for a variety of reasons. When you're really working a program and you are really connected spiritually, you will begin to see things that are occurring in your life that you know are divine intervention. I have a number of clients who don't necessarily have a spirituality. They say their spirituality is trees and being out in nature. That is spirituality, but what they're really saying is they don't necessarily believe in a God, in a Bible, in Buddhism, and that's okay too. You just have to figure out some way to believe that although you are incredibly powerful, there is something greater than you that is also playing in the field of your life. When you do, that gives you an opportunity to let go and let that play itself out and you don't feel so alone. There are a lot of different interventions that I promote. There is "Smart Recovery," which has nothing to do with spirituality, but it definitely teaches you some causative behavioral ways of thinking. There is "Recovery Nation," which is an online website that offers strategies for dealing with sexual addiction. They have coaches that will talk to you via phone.

I am a psychotherapist of 34 years, but I'm also a life coach, so my job is to help you heal the wounds. Then when that is done, as Patrick Carnes has taught us so well, you take your life to the next level and really explore what you want to do and be in your life. Now that you have curtailed the addict, now that you are first and foremost in your life and your family and your higher power, what do you want to do to actualize your potential. That's always exciting. Life coaching has absolutely no stigma attached to it. People envy people that pursue coaching. Wouldn't that be nice to work with a person and not feel bad about the wounds that you're healing? Not to look at, for instance, questions that I asked today during my sessions; how do you protect yourself; what's an unhealthy way that you protect yourself and what's a healthy way. Many of my clients say an unhealthy way they protect themselves is to isolate. They stay isolated from people to protect themselves from interaction. That's unhealthy, because that allows them to deal with the addict 24/7. Now a healthy way is to share feelings or to increase trust or to talk to their buddies, talk to fellowship, have a sponsor or mentor so they don't feel so alone. To read spiritual material to remind them that it's bigger than them. It's bigger than us. So think about that. How do you protect yourself?

Tonight I'm so pleased because I have actually had this man on my radio show before, Dr. Jon Caldwell. He is a DO, a PhD, he's a board certified psychiatrist who specializes in the treatment of adults who have experienced relational trauma and addictive behaviors. He works out of *The Meadows* and he has a passion for mindfulness. Mindfulness is that whole subset of behaviors that you can practice that actually ground you, reduce or remove anxiety, decrease depression, connect you to what you should be doing in your life. He really believes that if an addict practices mindfulness, actually the science of mindfulness, that will increase their own self-

compassion. When you are more compassionate to yourself, you reduce your guilt, you feel less shame, you actually can recover from addiction in a more expedient fashion. This is a man who is known across the world for his international scientific mindfulness studies, and he really has worked hard on developing mindfulness techniques and self-compassion, not only for the addict, but also related to healthy relationships. He maintains that if you practice these mindfulness tips, you will increase your relational processes. Let's face it; you've heard me say sex addiction is an intimacy disorder, and that means not only do you have to work on yourself, but you have to work on your ability to trust and you have to work on your ability to empathize in your relationships. When you do that and you practice mindfulness, you are much more likely to increase your own sense of mental health, sense of self-esteem and relationship skills. We are looking forward to interviewing him. He is presenting all over the world. He has workshops all over, not just through The Meadows, but also in all parts of the country. So I'm real excited to be interviewing Dr. Jon Caldwell in just a few minutes.

You know that you can always check in with us at (646) 595-3284 if you have any questions, and you can email me at [carolthecoach@aol.com](mailto:carolthecoach@aol.com). I will be happy to answer your call. While I was gone, I got quite a few emails and I got some listeners set up. It's scary to call this kind of a show. You're surrounded by so much shame anyway, and then you worry that somebody is going to know who you are and they're going to recognize your voice. But if you're listening to this show, more than likely you've got this issue. This show is all about support, that's why we have experts on like Dr. Jon Caldwell who is going to be talking about mindfulness.

Dr. Caldwell, welcome to the show.

Jon: Thank you very much.

Carol: You have been doing a lot of important work around this topic. I thought, if you could express and explain to our listening audience, in your opinion what is mindfulness?

Jon: Mindfulness really has grown out of contemplative traditions, religions and traditions that come from Buddhism, from contemplative traditions in Christianity and Sufism. Many religious practices have thought that trying to really spend time with our raw experience just as it is, noticing the present moment and noticing the experiences of the present moment have a lot of value for general wellbeing. These practices have been around for thousands of years actually, and in the last 3 decades or so here in the US, we have been studying these practices. Generally the way that most people talk about it is mindfulness. The definition that's mostly used for mindfulness was given to us by Jon Kabat-Zinn, and it's really bringing an unconditional nonjudgmental attention to our experience in the present moment.

Carol: That is really important, isn't it, to be nonjudgmental.

Jon: That's right.

Carol: So many sex addicts have so many negative thoughts about themselves and about this disorder, so you just did a great job of explaining mindfulness. Now you actually believe that there is a science to this, that it can be studied and it can be measured, is that correct?

Jon: Yes. There has actually been quite a lot of research done in this area. Again, Jon Kabat-Zinn is really the father of mindfulness in the US and in the West. Nearly 30 years ago, he developed a stress management clinic at the University of Massachusetts, and he started working with patients who have chronic pain, patients who are not able to get relief through typical medical treatment. From that beginning, he developed an 8-week course that helps people to learn the skills of mindfulness and self-compassion. He taught them some yoga, so they had more awareness of the body, and then he began to study what happened to these folks as they spent time in this 8-week course. What he found was that people had real genuine improvement in their pain, and they also had better quality of life. There are at least 2 things happening. One is that it seems to have a biological effect on the body. If you think about the toxic effects of stress and chronic stress, including things like pain and disease and psychological stress, then this is a way for people to learn to work with the body that alleviates some of that stress. It's a form of a coping mechanism, a way of being with our experience in such a way that it helps to reduce the stress and the strain on the body and the mind.

In addition to that, it seems to really help with general wellbeing and positive emotion. There's more joy and happiness and peace and calmness that comes through this practice.

Carol: This is a subjective question, but would you say that addiction is one of the most powerful stressors in a person's life?

Jon: We know that people who find themselves in an addiction oftentimes have been dealing with very stressful things for some time, and the addiction is a way to try and manage what's happening in their life. They've probably been dealing with stress for years, if not for most of their life, and they've turned to the addiction as a sort of way to manage that. The tragedy of course is that the addiction ends up being more stressful. Not only does it cause a lot of strain in people's social lives with family members and in their workplace, but it has a lot of stress and strain on the body itself. This includes anything from food addiction, substance addiction, sex addiction; all of these addictions create tremendous stress in the body and in the mind. So yes, I do agree with that.

Carol: My feeling was that oftentimes you've got these terrible traumatic experiences from childhood on up, and then in addition to that what ends up happening is you develop the addiction and now you have that double stressor of feeling bad about the trauma, sometimes even reenacting the trauma, and then having the addiction to cope with the trauma which makes you feel worse about yourself. So with mindfulness, what do you work on first?

Jon: Mindfulness and the different techniques that go with it are sort of interesting. The techniques can be specifically applied to the addiction or to the trauma, but they can also be applied quite generally and help both conditions simultaneously. When you think about it, some of the Buddhist psychology says that the source of our suffering here in this life is not necessarily the pain that we will all encounter, the pain of being in this mortal existence. We're going to run across problems with our body, and we're going to grow old, and we're going to lose loved ones and we're going to have changes in our role and what we're able to do in terms of functioning. Ultimately, we're going to die. All of that is sort of the natural pain of life, but the Buddhists said that we don't have to have suffering piled on top of that. What we end up doing

so much of the time, we push our experience away. We resist our own experience. We either avoid it, suppress it, repress it, or we find some pleasure like sex, food or drug, and we hold onto that as a way of avoiding what is really here, the emotions and the thoughts and the various pains that just come with being alive. There is a tendency to avoid what is uncomfortable and to hold onto what is pleasurable. In some ways, that basic tendency, that basic human conditioning, is present in both how people deal with trauma and in how they deal with addiction. These techniques I do with mindfulness are really helping us to not move toward holding onto something pleasurable or avoiding something painful, but instead to learn to be with our experience just as it is; to have a measure of acceptance and allowance, and sometimes even being able to befriend our experience. To be able to really welcome our experience and come home to ourselves in our own experience is the wonderful benefit of this work. It allows us to be here with what is here and not always run from our experience into addiction or into some sort of emotional upheaval that comes with trauma.

Carol: You used those words like repression and suppression, so for our listening audience, repression is when you absolutely forget about the pain and you ignore it and you avoid it and you don't even know it's there, whereas suppression is you minimize that. You're saying that those 2 things are coping mechanisms. They can actually be helpful initially but ultimately end up interfering with that acceptance process which is so important in dealing with whatever pain and suffering we've experienced.

Jon: Yes, I totally agree.

Carol: So that is a difficult concept for anybody out there listening who has been, unfortunately, I use the term "fighting" their sexual addiction. You're actually encouraging them to surrender to it, and to accept it as part of life so that they can then work with it and go with the flow.

Jon: Yeah, this is a very interesting point, Carol, I appreciate that you brought it up. There is a little bit of friction that's inherent in this process. When I'm working with people with sexual addiction, many of them when I bring up the topic of mindfulness and acceptance, they really struggle with how to incorporate that into their recovery process.

Here's just one practical example of a way I use mindfulness in my practice with people with sexual addiction. Sometimes what I find is that people can really get into a struggle with the addictive tendencies. This can be applied to alcohol, drugs, all the rest as well, but what they oftentimes do is many times especially in recovery, there's this struggle with what's happening in the mind, the cravings that are coming up around sexual addiction. People can sometimes find themselves really battling inside of their mind with the stuff that's coming up. I've had a number of people in recovery who say, "It feels like I'm just as distant and not present and struggling now that I'm in recovery than when I was actually dealing with all these cravings." As if the thought of don't do it, don't look, don't go to that side; all of that tension in the brain saps a lot of their energy and their awareness of the present moment. One of the things I find a practical technique is actually to try and release people from that struggle within their mind.

For example, if somebody in recovery from sexual addiction has a thought that comes up, a trigger; let's say they drive by a billboard and there is an image on the billboard that really triggers them into some thinking and maybe even an old memory about their addiction, the tendency for many people is to say, "Oh no, I can't think about this." There's this strong resistance to what is happening. The mindful approach would be to just notice that there is a craving there, and to step back from the experience and you might just label the craving with something very neutral. Again, nonjudgmentally, label it as I like to use the term "desire." The person would look at the billboard and say, "Ah, desire." Desire is a natural human tendency. We all desire. We all have sexual desires. We have desires for food. We have desire for pleasure, so we just label it very gently with something called desire, and then just notice there is this triggering happening in the body and in the mind. Instead of either latching onto it and following that trail to an old memory or resisting it very strongly, you just step back from the experience of what's triggering and just notice what's happening.

You might be able to pay attention to your breath, or you might pay attention to the feel of your hands on the steering wheel, and just notice this desire or feeling inside of the body happening. You don't have to do anything with it. You don't have to push it away. You don't have to change it. You don't have to run from it, but you can have a momentary experience or desire and then come back into something in the present. That doesn't mean you have to just sit there and wallow in that. You may pick up the phone and call your sponsor. You may decide I have to hit a meeting tonight, but you're not running from it or pushing away your experience, you're just recognizing that this is part of the process to whole-hearted living, to fullness, just being with our experience the way it is.

Carol: Is that what you would consider self-compassion? When you feel something, and instead of attaching shame and guilt to it, you just have that mindful awareness of it, reframe it, call it something like desire, and then move on from it.

Jon: That's right. It's been shown in a lot of studies now that the practice of mindfulness really seems to facilitate greater self-compassion. Whenever I work with people in recovery and I'm using mindfulness as a technique to help them, I always incorporate some tools around self-compassion. You're exactly right, they go hand in hand. Many times when we start to open to our own experience, we encounter some difficult feelings and thoughts, and it takes a lot of gentleness and self-compassion and care to really hold our experience in a loving and self-compassionate way so we can be with what we find there. The tendency for many people is when that desire comes up, when they're triggered by something in the environment or even something inside; let's say they remember a past event that has a trigger to it. The first thing they might think is oh great, here I go again, I can't believe I'm still in this place where these things trigger me. Why can't I get over this? Why can't I do this better? There's a lot of negative self-talk that goes along with it. This approach brings a lot of gentleness and compassion, so you might say I just noticed I got triggered inside. Again, back up from your experience; take a breath, and say, "So this is still part of my recovery process." These thoughts still come up. I notice desire right now.

There's a researcher that I presented with this weekend at the mindfulness conference in Boston, MA. Her name is Kristen Neff. She studies self-compassion, and she says the 3 elements that come with self-compassion are #1, mindfulness; #2 is self-kindness, being good and gentle with ourselves, and the third is recognizing our common humanity. In that moment, we might say to ourselves this is part of the human experience. Many people struggle with desire, whether it's food or alcohol or drugs or sex, this is part of being human and this desire makes me a card-carrying human, member of the human race. Those are some of the things that I say to myself when I notice that I'm doing something that is different from what I'd rather do.

We might also say things like, "I still have some struggles with this; I can accept that's where I am right now, and I'm still making commitments to move forward in my recovery." This is an acceptance and a commitment to continue our recovery process.

Carol: So one more time, those 3 things are that she referenced?

Jon: Self-compassion is made up of mindfulness, being aware of our present moment experiences; #2 is self-kindness rather than having punitive thoughts or negative thoughts about ourselves to really bring gentleness and compassion and kindness to ourselves; and the #3 thing is recognizing our common humanity that we're all in this together, we all have struggles. What she says is that many people have an aversion to practicing self-compassion, because we have this belief that if we don't hold our feet to the fire, if we don't really be vigilant with ourselves and really treat ourselves like a harsh taskmaster that we will go off the rails and we will be immoral or we will never reach our goals. It's really quite the opposite. The research that has been done on self-compassion shows that it's just the opposite. People who are more compassionate with themselves actually set and reach their goals more commonly. They tend to follow through and not procrastinate. They have a much more authentic and valued approach to their lives. There is no risk here of losing your moral ground by being gentle with ourselves. The truth is we all tend to be quite harsh with ourselves and we could all use a lot more gentleness and kindness.

Carol: That makes total sense. I know so often when I'm working in self-esteem workshops with people, I encourage them to find something they like about themselves, something they feel gentle about, because they're more apt to make the changes they need to if they're feeling good about themselves, as opposed to being stuck in self-loathing. It's all about being gentle, compassionate and kind. Yet we don't hear enough about that from psychotherapists. Why do you think that is?

Jon: I'm not sure. I think because psychotherapists are human and that we carry so much of our own stuff with us. We probably have those same old views that we have to reign ourselves in and we have to watch ourselves and be always on guard. I think it's important to have commitments toward recovery. We can't just sit back and not do the basics of recovery. We have to do the work, we have to do the steps, but at the same time I think there is really a growing awareness within the field that these techniques around mindfulness, being aware of what is and learning to befriend what is, learning to be with what is in a kind and gentle way really helps us to zero in on our true intentions for recovery.

I know for me personally in my own path to living more whole-heartedly and with less problems with addiction, for me a big part of it was really trying to drop into what are my true intentions for this process. Am I doing this because I feel like I have to, because people are asking me to do this? Am I doing this because it's the right thing to do? I have found that when I'm trying to make really difficult changes in my life, whether it's developing an exercise program or letting go of anger or being more kind to others; whatever I'm doing if I can try and bring a lot of compassion to the process and do it from a place of "I want to do this because I want to take care of myself," then I'm much more apt to make changes in my life than if I'm doing it because I need or have to or because it's the right thing.

I think psychotherapists are all in that human condition where we are still oftentimes believing that we have to be vigilant and rigid with ourselves, but the evidence these days is showing that it's quite the opposite. These techniques can really open the door to a truer intentioned pathway back to wholeness.

Carol: Absolutely. That's a nicely said way to talk about the fact that you believe that mindfulness and self-compassion play in recovery from traumatic experiences. I would imagine that not only are you referencing that self-compassion and mindfulness in one's own feelings about oneself as a survivor, but also in regard to the environment and perhaps the people that have aggressed against us. Tell me a little bit more about that.

Jon: You bet. I did medical school and then I trained to become a psychiatrist, and then I went back to school and received a PhD in human development, specializing in attachment theory and looking at how does childhood maltreatment affect early attachment relationships, and how does that influence our adult relationships and our ability to be resilient and to regulate our nervous system. That's been my line of research. Then I came across mindfulness in my own life and starting researching mindfulness as a way to help people who have experienced traumatic events and who have had unhealthy relationships.

I developed a 3-day intensive workshop that helps people with a history of maltreatment and insecure attachment relationships. What I find in the course of this workshop is really interesting. It's almost as if with some help around mindfulness and self-compassion that people are able to step back from their experience enough that they can notice what's happening inside of them. It's very interesting. When they are able to step back, it's almost as if they step back into that functional adult stance, as we call it at The Meadows. Sometimes therapists call it the witness stance or the observer. The ability to be able to step back from our experience and notice our experience, and when people that have had childhood trauma can do that, it's almost as if they can step back and in a process that looks a lot like re-parenting, they can be there for that wounded part of themselves, that wounded child. I've seen a number of times in using these techniques in people who have had trauma that they are able to step back and really be there for that wounded part of themselves that didn't get what they needed in childhood, and through these techniques be able to offer themselves what they didn't get as a child, offer that love and that care, offer that presence to see themselves in a way that they weren't seen very well by their own providers. To truly be there with themselves in a way that others maybe have not been able to do.

Carol: Truly they're doing the self-parenting that they're capable of but didn't know they had permission to do. That is so much a part of recovery work. It's not only talking to yourself with positive affirmations, but it's giving yourself permission to feel and to experience anything that comes before you.

Jon: That's exactly right. That's the beauty of this work, isn't it? When people can learn to do this work, it means they can be with whatever comes up. In fact, mindfulness is about working with whatever is there. If anger is there, we can say anger is here, can I be with anger. You don't have to be with anger forever, that we resign ourselves to a life of anger, but it means in this moment for just right now can I accept that I'm feeling some anger inside my body. Can I just accept that and be with that. We can still do self-care. We can still do all the things we would do but we approach it from this place of I'm not going to run from my experience anymore. I'm going to welcome whatever comes up with an attitude of curiosity and interest and care.

Carol: So obviously you have made it your mission based on your own personal work and then realizing how important this was for clients to put together workshops and to write about this. Tell us a little bit about the research that you recently presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Scientific Conference at the Center for Mindfulness in Boston. You shared your colleague's views; now tell us what you presented on.

Jon: As I mentioned, I developed a workshop and I conducted a study based on this workshop that was a study that utilized a treatment group and a control group. Half the people in the study got the workshop and the other half didn't get the workshop and I presented them with measures before the treatment group got the workshop, after the workshop, and again 6 weeks after the workshop ended, so I could see if the results of the workshop persisted over time. Basically this design means that both groups got all the measures, but only one group got the intervention of the workshop.

Then we researched whether the workshop helped these people to regulate their emotions, to have more mindfulness, and to write about their childhood traumatic experiences in a healthier way. What we found was that people who were in the workshop compared to the control group who did not get the workshop, they had much lower levels of rumination. This is a term we use in therapy for a lot of negative thinking. People who ruminate have a tendency to think about things over and over and over again and they can't let go of the thought even if it's negative. People who went through the workshop had less rumination. They had less negative emotion overall. They were more clear about their emotions. They seemed to understand their emotions better. They were able to regulate or manage their emotions better, and they were more mindful. When they wrote about their childhood experiences after the workshop, they wrote about them in a way that was more present, more open, and they used more words that indicated understanding and insight about their experiences.

That's the research that I presented at the conference.

Carol: How exciting, because you're really able then to have that control group substantiate the difference between the interventions that you presented.

Now I'm talking with Dr. Jon Caldwell, and he is a psychiatrist at The Meadows. You present mindfulness all over the country, both to colleagues and to patients and clients. Tell me about what you hope to be doing in the future, where you might be, and what our listening audience can look forward to. How might they be able to contact you?

Jon: I still work full time at The Meadows, so anybody that comes there I will have a chance to work with them. By the way, we use a lot of body-oriented techniques, mindfulness, tai chi, yoga, at The Meadows, so a lot of our trauma work at The Meadows has gone to this place where we really work at helping people to recognize what's happening inside of them. I also conduct workshops. I'll be doing a workshop in Chicago May 2-4, and this was really spearheaded by a gifted therapist, Joyce Babb, in the Chicago area. We should have a wonderful group of people doing a workshop there. This summer I'll be doing workshops in England, both with professionals and nonprofessionals. Then I'll be presenting at a couple of conferences in the late summer and fall on my research.

There are a number of ways that people can become part of this if they'd like. People can get more information on my website, [www.drjoncaldwell.com](http://www.drjoncaldwell.com). The workshop website is [www.healingisinreach.com](http://www.healingisinreach.com). The workshop is called "REACH," and it stands for Restoring Embodied Awareness, Compassionate Connection, and Hope. People can find a research project that I'm doing on my website if they want to be part of the research. I'm doing a new research study on attachment, shame and self-compassion.

Carol: What are the criteria for being a part of that research? Do you have to have an addiction? Do you have to be a patient? What are the criteria?

Jon: No criteria. It's a very basic introductory study that I'm doing just to get some basic information on the relationship between adult attachment relationships; how people deal with and express shame, and then self-compassion. Some of your listeners may be familiar with Brené Brown, who is a wonderful author and speaker, and she says that in her books and workshops where she talks about shame and resilience, we know there are huge amounts of shame involved in sex addiction, so her work is how do we deal with shame. She actually says that one of the primary antidotes to shame is self-compassion. I'm looking at this research project and I'm trying to better understand the relationship between shame and self-compassion and to follow up on Brené Brown's work on whether or not self-compassion can be an antidote to shame.

Carol: For anybody who is listening, Daring Greatly is a phenomenal book, although she's written The Gift of Imperfection. She really encourages people to be vulnerable and have self-compassion. When they are vulnerable and they're gentle with themselves, they connect more to themselves and to others. When you can connect more to yourself, it's automatic that you connect better to others, and that's when you really find wholeness in your own life. I'm glad you brought her up, because she really has a lot to offer. Again she is very research based also. That's what I think is so exciting about your work. It's not just your opinion, but it's also research that you're doing with anybody who wants to go to your website and do those surveys, or with people who have specific addictions or traumas and have pain in their life. Maybe you've had trouble escaping that pain.

As we begin to wrap up the show, Dr. Jon Caldwell is doing the REACH program, and he is going to be presenting in Chicago. One more time give us the dates.

Jon: May 2-4. We'll be at the Loretto Center which is a retreat center in Wheaton, IL, and we still have some slots available for that workshop. I do think it will fill up. Then I'll be abroad in England, but in the fall I'll probably be back in the States doing some workshops. At this point what I do is if people have interest and there are a handful of people that want to do the workshop, I will come out and do the workshop. I've tried to make it a very organic process. For me it's not so much about marketing or money, it's really about an opportunity to help people heal and help people wake up to the present moment, to be alive in this present moment. This present moment is all that we have, and there's so much happening in this present moment when we are able to be with it. It really opens the door to greater healing.

Carol: I don't know if you've ever read anything about Marci Shimoff's work on happiness, but she says to be happy you have to participate in 3 things; you have to live in the moment and be mindful; you have to work on your gratitude and appreciate what is; and the third thing is you have to reframe and ask yourself how do you grow stronger from something and how are you different as a result of anything that has occurred in your life that may not have been pleasant. That's what I hear so much of your work is about. It's really about saying to yourself this is what I'm experiencing, reframing it, and being able to call it something perhaps different from what you might have called it in the past, the struggle, the addiction. So much is changing in treatment centers. Treatment centers are no longer allowing their patients to call the addict "the addict." They're saying you're so much more than the addiction, that's just a feeling or a thought. Feel that and shift that to something else that also describes it that is perhaps more gentle.

So you really believe that as you grow into mindfulness and as you're more self-compassionate and you work diligently on just being mindful of what you can expect in your own reality and your own life that can make a difference in relationships. How is mindfulness and self-compassion related to healthy relationships, and how can something so personal, so individual in nature have an effect on the relational process?

Jon: This has been one of the driving questions for me in my work. This has really been the overlapping areas of my work, overlap between attachment relationships, our relationships in adulthood that are close and meaningful, and this idea of mindfulness. You're exactly right; there is this interesting question that comes up a lot which is how does being more at home with myself, being able to accept myself and being in my own experience help me to be a better relationship partner and have more intimacy. It doesn't take long for most of the people that we work with in our practices to learn that trying to change other people doesn't work very well. Often our greatest hope for moving our relationship to a healthier place is being able to change our self and have good boundaries in the relationship. This process is one of the powerful ways that we have to center ourselves, to really ground ourselves so that we can be in a relationship in a way that is able to allow for more intimacy and closeness.

For example, I study two patterns of relationships. One is attachment anxiety, and we call it at The Meadows "love addiction." The other pattern of dimension is attachment avoidance, often

known at The Meadows as “love avoidance.” For people who move through their relationships in a very anxious and preoccupied way; they are afraid that people are going to leave them, they feel like they have to do all they can to keep the relationship intact, they’re quite codependent, they’re always thinking about the relationship, they’re worried about it, and they may even unwittingly create a lot of crisis to keep the relationship alive. These folks are in that love addiction attachment anxiety camp. What I found is that mindfulness is a very useful way to help those folks to relax some of the rumination about the relationship, to let go of some of the fantasy that they have, and to center themselves so they feel like they can be enough. They don’t need a relationship to fill them up or complete them; they are enough on their own.

On the other hand with people with attachment avoidance or love avoidance, they tend to be afraid of intimacy. They tend to withdraw and pull back. They suppress their emotions, and they’re not very clear about what they’re feeling inside. All this is because they’ve had, oftentimes, very unhealthy relationships in the past so they have learned to not feel secure in their relationships. Mindfulness is a way for them to open to their own experience, to begin to feel the emotions, to begin to have more clarity and understanding about what they’re feeling inside. It helps this group of people to connect and to have more intimacy. I think both relationship patterns people can have, love addiction or love avoidance, both can be helped by mindfulness.

Carol: Absolutely makes sense. You speak so eloquently and so simply, and what you’re saying makes so much sense. I encourage anybody to work with you, attend your workshops. I’m speaking to Dr. Jon Caldwell. He’s a psychiatrist at The Meadows. He speaks all over the country on mindfulness. Again, Dr. Caldwell, your website is [www.drjoncaldwell.com](http://www.drjoncaldwell.com). I thank you so much for contributing the mental health of our listeners. It’s so simplistic, yet it can be difficult. It’s important to be gentle. Thank you again for your research on mindfulness.

Jon: Thank you Carol. It’s a pleasure to be with you again.

Carol: You take care and we’ll talk soon.

He’s an amazing man. I have a lot of patients who have seen him, and there’s not a finer doctor in the US.

You are listening to “Sex Help with Carol the Coach.” I’m Carol Juergensen Sheets. If you have any questions, feel free to intervene by sending me an email at [carolthecoach@aol.com](mailto:carolthecoach@aol.com) or calling the show at (646) 595-3284. As I end every show, I say “there will only be one of you at all times, so fearlessly have the courage to be yourself.” We’ll see you next week.

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