

**Ann:** Hi, Terry, welcome to the show.

**Terry:** Hi Ann. Nice to have nice to be here.

**Ann:** So I've heard you say something that has really impacted me. And you said that the same forces that are pushing our world to the brink are poisoning our most intimate relationships. And I don't think I could agree with you more and we are going to dive deeply into discussing intimate relationships today. But I'm wondering if we could start, let's start with just unpacking what you mean by that, about what forces are pushing us in this toxic direction?

**Terry:** Well, I just wrote this new book. It's just uh, came out. I'm gonna, I, Is this the audio or visual or both? It's gonna be visual too. Okay, great. Well, in that case, let me just say, this is the book it's called, "Us" published by, uh, Penguin Random House group. Uh, It just came out, uh, and um, uh, one way of describing the whole book is just a critique of what I call the toxic culture of individual. uh, and by that, I mean, look, We're living in very divisive times. It's me versus you it's us versus them. Uh, And uh, there's been a, a, a real disturbing uh, assertion of everybody's individual rights. You know, Back when the pandemic was rife, uh, I have the right to not wear a mask and, uh, inflict you with a disease. I have a right uh, to uh, walk around with an AR uh, 35 and uh, carry an assault weapon through the streets of uh, whatever. And um, the same uh, forces of, of me over we, uh, that are impacting us, uh, uh, collectively, uh, are ruining our relationships to uh, the people we love and even inside our own skulls. So this is how I say it. The essence of individual- and by the way, individualism is not a given. Individualism, uh, the even the idea of an individual, uh, came out of the heads of a group of uh, well off white, uh, guys in the enlightenment period, uh, people in the Renaissance didn't think of themselves as individuals, people in the mid, if you thought of yourself as an individual in the middle ages, uh, you could be uh, strung up on a rope- uh, that was disloyal. So this idea of individual and individual rights has its own history. One of the chapters in my book is literally the history, uh, of this idea of individuality. It very important. I mean, It fueled the American revolution. It fueled the French revolution and it's been, uh, it's been a blessing in many ways, but taken to extremes, it can be a curse. When the American uh, founders uh, created democracy, they were aware that there had to be another force besides the rights of the individual, or it would be anarchy. And they spoke in colonial days about virtue. And back in colonial days, when you lived in small towns, villages and farms, your, your neighborliness uh, was a given. And with the industrial revolution and, and, uh, bourgeois self-made amend that went by the boards and it was every man for himself. That's not the way democracy was uh, founded originally. There was another force of citizenship. Which went beyond the good of the individual, but basically the delusion of individualism- what the very word means- is I stand apart from nature. And individualism infuses with an older tradition, I've been critiquing for 40 years now called patriarchy. And patriarchy teaches us that not only do we stand apart from nature, we stand above nature and we dominate it. We control it. You know, People say it's a mistranslation, uh, but at least in the King James version, God gives Adam dominion over all the things that walk and crawl and fly over this earth. Bad idea. Yes. Uh, The Greeks were wiser. The Greeks called that hubris over weaning pride, which was the flaw of all tragic heroes is what brought them down. Was that over Today we would call it grandiosity. Look, we do not stand above nature and control it. Whether the nature we think we can control is the environment. Oh, sure. Well, we'll just throw some floor carbons out there and clean things up or whether the nature we think we can control, uh, is our spouse or our kids. Or our own bodies -I've gotta lose 10 pounds- or our thinking. I've gotta be more positive. We are not above and dominating nature. That is a crazy delusion that reeks havoc in our relationships and could kill us as a species. It could be our fatal flaw on the planet. The reality is we live inside nature. We are dependent upon nature. And in re at the relational level, what I say is that our relationships are our biosphere. We live in it. You can choose to pollute your biosphere by having a temper tantrum over here, but you're gonna breathe in that pollution in your partners withdrawal or lack of sexuality over here. You're an ecosystem you're not outside of it. You're in it. And once you wake up to what I call ecological humility, relational wisdom. Then all the terms change. For example, from a relational perspective, the answer who's right and who's wrong is -who cares? It doesn't matter. What matters is, how are you and I going to work this issue in a way that's going to work for both of us. You are not above it, you're in it. So for example, I deal with men a lot. You know, I'm known for my work with men. I get these big burly guys and they say to me, why should I have to work so hard to please my wife and I go- knock, knock, dummy because you live with her, okay? I, I don't talk about altruism, man. I talk about enlightened self interest. Happy spouse, happy house. It's in your interest to keep your biosphere happy and healthy because you're breathing it ,dummy. You're in it, but we lose that. We lose that. And I can I, uh, riff about this a bit?

**Ann:** Yeah, please. I'm loving it. Okay.

**Terry:** We lose it because of neurobiology. And I go into neurobiology pretty extensively in the book, not to scare people, but it's pretty readable, but

**Ann:** we love neurobiology on this podcast. So yeah, our listener, our listeners we call Neuronerds.

**Terry:** So, All right. Listen, the autonomic nervous system, far below consciousness scans our body four times a second. Am I safe? Am I safe? Am I safe? Am I safe? If the answer is yes, I feel safe. We stay seated in what I call the wise adult part of us, prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain 26 years old, it takes the part of the brain that develops last, the most mature part of us that can stop and think and use relational skills and be smart and deliberate. If the answer is no, I'm not safe, which has everything to do with trauma. If the answer is no, I'm not safe, we move into automatic- uh, stimulants are flooding our bloodstream. We move into fight, flight, freeze, or fix. Automatic knee jerk response. And we lose literally the prefrontal cortex shuts down in Dan Siegel's language. We move from an integrated brain to a fragmented brain, the sub subcortical parts of the brain, more primitive parts of the brain take over. And we literally lose the capacity to remember the "Us". Remember the relationship, that we're a team, and it becomes you versus me. Two adversarial individuals, win- lose, power struggle, uh, uh, uh, uh, that's how that's, how it goes. And that is crazy. Hm, When you are in survival mode, the- I, I call this triggered part of us, the adaptive child part of us. Prefrontal cortex, wise adult, triggered part adaptive child. You have a knee-jerk response, which is exactly what you learn to do in childhood facing your trauma. And most ideal with couples on the brink of divorce that no one else has been able to help. That's my be. And virtually everyone I see has been living most of their life out of the adaptive child part of them thinking that that is a mature adult and it's not. The adaptive child part of you doesn't want to use relational skills. It doesn't wanna be vulnerable. It doesn't wanna be intimate. It's only the wise adult part of us that wants intimacy to begin with. And so what this book and the workshop that I'm doing, I'm, uh, will talk, I'm doing my first ever "Us" online workshop very soon in June. What the workshop in the book is about is what I call relational mindfulness. In the heat of the moment when you are flooded, when you are in that automatic knee jerk fight flight fix, take a breath. Take a break. I'm a big fan of breaks. Take a walk around the block. Talk to that little boy or girl inside of you splash some water on your face, but don't go back into the fray until you are centered in the adult. Part of you you'll make a mess of it. You know, I gave workshops all over the country for 20 years. My favorite slide was this one: "other workshops, teach you skills. We deal with the part of you that won't use them." So the first skill, the error skill is getting reseated in that part of you, that's wise enough to understand it's not about you versus me. It's about us as a team. How are we gonna work this out in a way that's gonna work for both of us? No. I love that and how to get individuals believing that they are a team? Well, right. You, right. First there's the map. You have to wake up to the reality of relationality, but once you do everything changes and the book and my workshop is full of concrete skills, new language, new ways of app-let me give you an a simple example. She says to him, you're a reckless driver. He says to her, no, I'm aggressive, uh, but I'm quite safe and competent. Uh, She says, no, you're reckless. He says, no, you're overreacting. You recognize what I'm talking? Oh my so much, so much. Yeah. And this turns into what I call an objectivity battle. Is it this, or is it that? Good luck. This could go on for 50 years. Now, change your map and think relationally. She says to him, "honey, I know that you're not a reckless driver, but let me tell you, when you change lanes, tailgate, go 20 miles above the speed limit, et cetera. I'm sitting in the passenger seat, terrified. Call me crazy, but I get really scared. I know you love me. You don't want me to be a wreck every time I drive with you. As a favor to me so that I don't have to feel so bad- could you drive more conservatively when I'm in the car?" And he says much to everybody's amazement. Uh, Okay. What could have been a fight that lasted 25 years is done in 10 minutes, because it's not about you versus me. It's not about objective reality. It's not about who's right, and who's wrong. It's about the relationship as a favor to me. Could you- uh, okay, sure. That's the new world that opens up when you begin to think relationally. And our culture though, socialized us in a way that makes that actually particularly difficult, right? Like to, to be able to move out of the win, lose, right? Like what makes us feel threatened, right? Like Like what you were mentioning earlier, if we feel safe and we feel together with somebody, then we can use that wise mind. So in that example's a wonderful one. When she didn't take it at a, you're a horrible driver and he didn't have to fight for, for his ability to believe. Okay. No, I'm actually a really good driver. They got out of that dialogue and they got into the relational. They were able to, to move out of the threat, but our culture makes that pretty hard. Right. Like with, and that I think has been always your part with patriarchy and the over under, because I know that the idea of seating, the idea of moving out of the right and wrong.

**Ann:** Can you speak to us on that?

**Terry:** Well, our culture does not is an anti relational culture. Yeah. Our culture idealizes relationships in principle, but devalues them in fact, uh, and what this culture values is the rights of the individual. That's why I wrote the book. Yeah. Uh, And it's killing our relationship. I'm I'm writing a piece now, I won't say wish magazine, but the title of the piece is, uh, "Your Empowerment May be killing your Relationship." Yeah. And I make a distinction, uh, between individual empowerment, which is what this culture is all about, and relational empowerment. Individual empowerment is I was weak, now I'm strong. Go screw yourself. And, you know, as a couple's therapists, I gotta tell you, the bane of my existence is often individual therapist. I wouldn't put up with that if I was you, uh, and, and, you know, mothers and girlfriends and everybody, and their sister will cheer on somebody who is, uh, you know, not putting up with that goddamn bullshit anymore. And, but that's no, we can do better than that. Uh, I talk to people and one of the main skills I teach in the book and in the workshop is what I call soft power, soft, loving power. And let me say a word about it under patriarchy, you can either be connected or you can be powerful, but you can't be both at the same. Because power is power over when you step into power, you step out of connection. And so you have connection, affiliation, accommodation, quote, unquote, feminine. You have power assertion, independence, quote, unquote masculine, but they don't meet. And one of the things I say, as you know, is that moving men, women and non-binary folk into intimacy is synonymous with moving them beyond patriarchy and the culture of individualism one-couple at a time. And this is what I mean. I teach people in general and women in particular, the art of standing up for yourself with love. Standing up for yourself and cherishing your partner in the same breath and it's brand new for the culture. No one knows how to do this. You have to learn. So instead of saying, and don't talk to me like that, right. I would say, and I want to hear what you have to say. Could you tone it down so I could really listen. Instead of saying sex, I need more sex in this marriage. I would say, honey, we both deserve a good sex life. What do we need to do to jumpstart? This thing is a whole different energy, a whole different vocabulary. I call this helping them win. Here's the golden rule of relationality. Ready?

**Ann:** Mm-hmm

**Terry:** What do you need from me, to help you deliver what I'm asking for? Who sounds like, Who sounds like that? And I want you to be, I want you to be less shut down and, uh, closer to me, more sharing. What could I do to help you open up? It sounds like that it's all adversarial. God dammit. I'm lonely in this relationship and you're too vaulted and ain't gonna do it right. But people think that, uh, it is either, uh, accommodate or, uh, speak up like an individual. And I'm telling you, you can empower yourself and empower your partner. Both in the same breath, but you have to move beyond this culture and learn how to do that. No, one's taught you how to do that.

**Ann:** And I love how you put, move beyond the culture to do that. Right. Because it, it, to me, it feels like it takes it out of sort of the shame and finger wag and to say, you're struggling with this for a reason, right? Because you've been culturized to think in, in our society to think if I give, if I, if I join, I'm somehow weaker. If I am not winning, if I'm like, then I'm losing. Right. There's this such a polarization in that. Right.

**Terry:** That's right. That's right. And it's such bullshit, you know? Right. Um, I teach men for example, to trade in traditional ideal of strength with an ideal of elegance. Uh, In the west, uh, the way we fight is the rumble in the jungle-uh, Ali and Frazier. You hit me with your best shot. I hit you with my best shot. Last band In the east, someone comes at you, you step a quarter of an inch out of the way, give a little flip and they wind up against the wall. I call this relational jujitsu. You know what the quick I say to guys, the quickest way to disarm an angry woman, I can help you disarm an angry woman in five seconds, flat 50% of the time. It doesn't work all, but it's better than you're doing. You wanna know what it do? You know? You wanna know how to disarm an angry woman in minutes, 50% of the time you ready? Yes. Give her what she's asking for, um, but you have to lose your ego at the door in order to be able to do that.

**Ann:** Do you notice when you say that, that initially that may feel like a real threat to them? It's like, You don't get it, like I'm just gonna give in. I'm gonna, you know, it's, it's this, It's this sense of I'm gonna lose something. If I do that, what are you talking about? Then she's then she, then, then I'm always gonna have to give into her what I'm always gonna give into everything she asks?

**Terry:** No, here's what I teach people. You ask yourself in the heat of that moment. What is this going to cost me? Okay. If, uh, if she's angry at you because you left the toilet seat up, uh, uh, uh, okay. If she's angry at you, if you want your kid to go to this school and your partner wants your kid to go to that school, uh, then giving in to your partner may cost you. But if she's angry at you, cause you left the toilet seat up. And if she's asking for you to say, you're sorry, what the hell is that gonna cost you beside your stiff neck pride? So ask yourself, what is this gonna cost me? And if the answer is a lot, okay, dig in your heels and fight about it, go for it. But if the answer is this isn't cost me anything. Then I ask men to, this is my model- be a generous gentleman err on the side of giving, and this is all brand new for our culture. Uh,- I teach men how to do this, how to become what I call family men or on the side of being generous. It will come back to you.

**Ann:** Right. And this is actually not, I mean, you're, you're saying men, but this is not necessarily about gender, right?

**Terry:** This is about gender socialization. This is about what we, yes. Yes. So you, there, there's not a shortage of women standing up for their, and you know, what happens with women is that they move from, and, and collectively through feminism, they move from that, uh, collective over accommodation. What Carol Gilligan has written so beautifully about the tyranny of the nice and kind the loss of voice to I am woman here, me roar, you know, I found my voice and I'm gonna slam you up against the wall that that's not- in family therapy we talk about first and second order change. That's not a revolution. That's a rearrangement of the furniture. You know, One of the things I say, and there may be blowback, but after, and I am a fem, I'm a feminist family therapist. That's how I identify myself. But one of the things I say is after 50 years of feminism, uh, women have earned the right to be as obnoxious as men have always been. So, uh, When women do find voice, uh, quite often, they're so pissed off that they speak in a way that nobody in their right mind could hear. Uh, You have to be skilled. So I support what women are asking for. That's one of the key differences of relational life therapy, by the way, uh, we take sides. We're not neutral. And for 40 years, uh, it is a women who are carrying dissatisfaction. It is women who are calling couples therapists. It is women who are reading the self help books. Uh, We raise women to want more and know more about relationships than guys and women are asking for more emotional intimacy from guys than we raise most boys and men to deliver to this day., A woman drags a guy into couple's therapy so that the therapist can render them more relational and most therapists, because we won't take sides, we have to be nice to everybody, uh, throw the women under the bus. In RLT we agree with, yes, intimacy's a good thing. I want you, Bill, to roll up your sleeves and let me teach you how to do it. It's good for you. It's good for your body. It's good for your kids. Let's go. Now, the way that the woman is asking for intimacy could probably use a lot of work, but what she's asking for is legit. And yes, we take sides and there are lots of role reversals and variations. I really should say, but it's too bulky. The person on the feminine side of the equation, the person on the masculine side of the equation, but that's a little, uh, academic.

**Ann:** No, but I think it's super relevant in this dialogue because the same dynamic happens with same gendered couples. It happens like there is. So it is I think, a really relevant way to say it. And I think it takes it out of a, a feeling of like a male, female battle. Right. Because what we're, what you're talking about is getting out of the power over power under whether you're gonna switch roles and say, I'm taking my power back, which means I'm gonna power. It's It's about finding and it's really what I understand it's like, it's about taking the, the threat out of the connection. And moving it into, you know, in Any time we have a power over position, whether it's the more masculine culturalized individual saying, okay, I'm gonna, you know, if I'm, if I give in I'm losing, I'm weak. Or if it's what you're mentioning, like a woman going, okay, I'm sick of, I've held it all this time and now I'm gonna take my power back. Either way we're, we're staying in a threatening dynamic, right? We're staying in something that's gonna tell our nervous system, this isn't safe. That's right. It isn't gonna allow, it's not gonna allow intimacy. Right.

**Terry:** That's right. What, What shall we do together to make this work for both of us, we're a team, but of course what happens is that when you're trauma triggered this shuts down and it does become power over win, lose one up one down, which is a diluted way of being in the world. But, you know, that's fine when you're being chased by a tiger, uh, but it doesn't work in your bedroom. And so what this work is about uh, is the, the, the revolutionary uh, news in the book- uh, is that sh I call it relational mindfulness shifting out of that you versus me worldview. Remembering love, remembering that the person you're speaking to is someone you care about. They're not the enemy. And the reason why you're speaking is to make things better and that capacity to wake up. From that uh, adversarial trauma, saturated place to here and now I'm safe. We're a team to shift out of that uh, threat into skill and safety can be cultivated. It can be, it can be grown like a muscle. And, uh, there, uh, the whole book is about how to get to know

that adaptive part of you, how to be familiar with it, how to put your arms around it. You know, I say when an inner child kicks up was just another word for a trauma stay. When an inner child kicks up, you put your arms around them. You put 'em on your lap, you hear 'em out, you love 'em up and you take their sticky hands off the steering wheel. You're not driving the bus I am. And that's the art of remembering the us, which is what this book is all about. Once you remember the us, then there's a host of skills you can use, but you won't use them when you're busy, duking it out with each other. That's really mutually sad. Do you find it's hard to get, maybe I should ask it a different way. In what way do you find, um, the most difficulty in investing somebody, especially, maybe that has been you know, Brought to believe that if I, if I join, I'm losing. Sometimes it's really hard for those individuals to feel the threat, right? Like the person asking for the intimacy and the closeness and they can feel what's missing. And somebody that kind of is in the power position to really recognize that they are feel- that, that it's a threat that they're shutting down. Right. That it's, they don't feel threatened. Right. They feel powerful.

**Ann:** So when somebody, So when somebody feels powerful, and you're trying to help them see that maybe it's fear and threat. How do you find, how do you best help somebody make that adjustment? Or how did you do it? Right? Maybe, Maybe we could talk about your experience from kind of being raised in that more male script, into shifting, to feeling the safety and connection rather than the, than what you, the illusion of safety in the power.

**Terry:** Yeah, that's that's well said safety and connection versus safety by control, which is an illusion. Look. Well, I've spoken about the wise adult part of us and the adaptive child part of us. Beneath both of those is what we call the wounded child part of us. Dick Schwartz would call it the exiles, the, uh, the very young part of us that was just on the receiving end of the abuse or the neglect that's overwhelmed. And what you find is when someone's experienced trauma, you know, in, in the words of the great G uh, you rarely see the wound, you see the scar. Mm-hmm . And uh, in, in our relation, look I grew up in a violent, uh, home, as I've written about, my wife comes home and she criticizes. Okay. That immediately triggers my wounded child. I'm three years old. My towering father is screaming at me and I'm that wounded little boy I have about two seconds worth of tolerance for those feelings and my adaptive child, older part of me comes in and takes over. I'm a fighter. Fight flight or fix I'm a fighter. So how dare you talk to me like that? And yell and we'd be off to the, to the races. Um, I don't have to do the psychological work. You can do it in somebody's office, but in the, in the heat of the moment, I don't have to wind back to the underlying vulnerability. I just have to know how to deal with the adaptation uh, that covers that vulnerability. When every muscle and nerve in my body is screaming to fight, I have to take a breath or take a break. I'm a big fan of people taking physical breaks, walk around the block and I have to get myself recentered. I have to have internalized the wisdom that this knee jerk part of me is not gonna do me uh, any, any good. Now in deep healing, I may have to go back to the wounded uh, part of me that this fighter is covering up, but in the, but with Belinda, I just have to deal with that fighter. So, um, Let me tell you a story, this is the story I'm telling these days to illustrate how this works. Absolutely true story. Uh, As I said, uh, my beat are couples on the brink of divorce, and this couple is about to split up. Why? The man is a pathological liar. The wife says, if you ask him what color his shoes are, he'll say they're not shoes, they're sneakers. Guy lies about everything under the sun. And as I, uh, work with him, uh he's one of these guys you say to him, the sky is blue. He says it's aquamarine. He won't give it to you, right. Mm-hmm okay? So in five minutes between her report and watching him in the office, I get what I teach my RLT students, and I hope all the therapists listening, come to me for training, learn how to do this work. We have a beautiful two year training program. I ask RLT students to identify the person's relational stance, their knee jerk, adaptive child stick the thing they do over and over. And his stance I can tell in five minutes is evasion. This guy has a black belt in evasion tell him the sky is blue. He won't join you. Okay. So then I ask him something that if you're not thinking relationally sounds brilliant. Like where did you get that from? But the minute you think relationally, you get it. Once I get the relational stance, that is the adaptive child knee jerk response. The next question is what in childhood was the person adapting to? There's someone else on the other side of this Seesaw, I say, show me the thumbprint and I'll tell you about the thumb. The bigger the intrusion as a child, the bigger the walls the person's gonna have as an adult, show me the thumbprint. I'll tell you about the thumb. So I asked this guy who tried to control you growing up? Sure enough, his father, a military man. How to eat, what to dress, how to sit, how, what clothes to wear, what frat- everything. I say, how did you deal, uh, with this controlling father? And he looks at me and smiles, that smiles important. That's the smile of resistance. I like that. He looks at me and smiles and he says, I said, I lied. Brilliant. Brilliant little boys. And I teach my students always be respectful of the exquisite intelligence of the adaptive child. You did exactly what you needed to do back then, uh, to preserve your integrity under the circumstances, but adaptive then maladaptive

now. You're not that four year old boy and your wife is not your father. So we floated all this. They come back two weeks later, hand in hand, all smiles and they say we're cured. And they were.

**Ann:** Really?

**Terry:** Yeah. True story. So I say, okay, there's a tale here. He says, yes, there is over the weekend between sessions. She sent him to the grocery store to buy, say 12 things. True to form he comes home with 11. She says to him, where's the pumpernickle? He says every muscle and nerve in my body was screaming to say they were out of it. And in this moment I thought of you, Terry, I summoned my courage. I looked my wife in the eye and I said, I forgot. And she true . . . She burst into tears and she said, I've been waiting for this moment for 25 years. That's recovery. That's the way out of this mess. And that's what the book "Us", and the workshop, is all about teaching you how to do.

**Ann:** Oh, wow. I really love that example.

**Terry:** I think of in a couple's therapy, how important it's to bring the trauma in, in front of the other, you know, the wife got to see this pathological lying through a whole nother lens instead of just seeing him as being an ass, right. That can't tell the truth. He, she was able to see him as the boy protecting self, and that's pretty right. Yeah. Sudden, he got to see himself in a different light and got to see him Like and RLT, relational life therapy, is the only other person who does it is Janina Fisher. And we've talked together, but we do deep trauma work. Uh, With some, if the person's gonna be vicious. There's some contraindications, but 90% of the time we do deep trauma work in the presence of the partner. We do enter child work with the other person sitting there and you're quite right. It opens the heart of the partner. They've been on the receiving end of this adaptive child. Now they get to see the secret history. So, um, Uh, There are three phases in relational life therapy. The first phase I call waking up the client, this is loving confrontation, and this is what you're doing to blow your own foot off the relational stance. You're half of the vicious circle, uh, that will never, for example, um, a dysfunctional relief, angry pursuit is a dysfunctional stance. Angry pursuit will never get you more of what you want. Right? You will never get a partner to move closer to you by complaining about there being distant. So first we get what you're doing, that it will never work. What the adoptive child is up to. And we confront it. The art is called joining through the truth. Uh, Any therapist can collab or something, this is telling the difficult truth to the person in a way that's so loving. So on their side, uh, that they feel closer to you through the confrontation rather than, you know, I can't tell you how many sessions end, uh, the first sessions and with something like that, if I may role play in not the really role play Ann, who has been cheating on her uh, husband for 20 years. You know what, Ann? You're a decent woman. I have sat with indecent women to the bone- they're called sociopaths. And man, they're cold, but you're not, you're warm. I feel connected. Uh, When I talk, you're not, I think you're a decent, you know, what's so sad? I am talking to a decent woman who has behaved indecently for the last 20 years. Will you let me rescue the real you from this crap, best joining through the truth -who says no to that? I am Right, it just opens the nervous system up to this part of feeling you safe in feeling my most protected self. My most hidden self that I think would never, never be accepted by somebody. All of a sudden says, oh, that part of me, that I've hidden so far away. And I don't even know what it's about.

**Ann:** You're giving me a hand to kind of come forward in a relational way. And it just, you know, it needs safety and security. It makes me wanna explore. It makes me wanna be generous. It makes me want to be vulnerable. That's right. And there's an art. I mean, It takes a couple years to learn how to do this. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

**Terry:** But there's an art in holding the mirror up, uh, of your indecent behavior and holding you in warm regard in the same breath. So that's the first phase, the "care-frontation"- loving confrontation. The second phase is trauma work. Once I understand what the adaptive child part of you is bringing into the relationship, where did it come from? What were you adapting to? And we do deep trauma work, family of origin work, inner child work with the other partners sitting right there. Mm-hmm And then the third phase is uh, I believe it's abusive to confront somebody about what they're doing wrong and then not in the next breath, uh, swoop in and teach them what right would look like. And I disagree with some of my more trauma based brethren- and Dick Schwartz. And I have been around this block, uh, I don't, some people believe that once you remove the trauma, people will just know how to be intimate. Uh, As we were saying earlier, I believe we believe in an anti relational, uh, patriarchal narcissistic culture.

And we don't teach our sons and daughters the skills of intimacy. So the third phase is how you stand up for yourself with love, how you negotiate, what to do. And these are all the skills we do in the, in the workshop, by the way, what to do when you are in your wise adult and your partners, being your total jerk. How to cherish and how to grieve. There's a fair degree of grieving that goes on in the healthy marriage. We long for a perfect partner. And I talk to people about working with the partner you have instead of the one you deserve.

**Ann:** Well I always, I also think sort of the grieving, we, we want a partner that might perfectly mirror us so that we don't ever feel threatened. And I like to talk to couples about the fact that what your partner is creating in you is gonna be one of the most insightful things you can find out about yourself. And it is your chance to kind of go in and learn about yourself and learn about your own triggers. Isn't it? So it's like, it's a gift. It doesn't feel like a gift because if somebody can perfectly mirror you, then you don't ever feel threat and you can walk around and whistle, right? Like the end of every Disney movie, but instead that's not our reality. Our reality is we get confronted with our self-centeredness. We get fronted with our own narcissism. We get confronted with a way that we are not holding others. And we can learn because as you're talking and I know, I know we have to wrap, um, but to, to kind of bring it back to the, to why couples therapy, why your book, why working with yourself and learning how to do this is so important, not just for your, your relationship, but for yourself and your world is it feels like to be able to learn if I move out of that and I move into deep connection, and if you teach the skills that shift this. Your whole body shifts out of the threat response, we quit being so polarized and you can actually feel your desire for connection, because I think so often we lose even our desire for connection cause connection just seems like a threat. It just seems like I have to lose or give up. Don't get too close and it feels the way that you're describing your workshop, et cetera. You're learning. You're, You're teaching people to connect in this way that they may never have ever felt before.

**Terry:** You know, lives, People talk about relationships take work, but they never tell you what it is. The real work of relationships is in the moment. Yes. At any given moment, you can choose self protection or you can choose connection. And this is about empowering uh, all of us to take a breath, dig down a little deeper and reach for connection over self protection. Uh, Have the courage to take those uh, risks, uh, not in, in circumstances where it is objectively mean, not in domestic violence or something like that. Right. But in normal circumstance to, uh, to sooth the frightened or righteous or whatever, uh, little boys and girls inside. Of. Uh, And then to reach with that best part of us into connection, uh, with wisdom and compassion and skill. And um, we are born for connection. It is what we're designed for as a species. Uh, It's the only thing that's gonna make us happy. Uh, So our culture gets it wrong, uh, but we can get it right. You know, One of the things I say, Ann, is we may not have the capacity to bring peace to Ukraine or the middle east, but we can bring peace to our living rooms and our bedrooms. Uh, So let, let's start there.

**Ann:** And our neighborhoods. Yeah, that's right. I love that. I love that. Thank you so much. And your book is coming out this week, right?

**Terry:** It just came out just, uh, it just came out it just came out June 7th, uh, as we speak, uh, it is been hovering at about, uh, an a 30 on Amazon. It's the 30th, uh, 30th bestselling book in America uh, and uh, and the numbers are, are, uh, are accruing. So, uh, Keep your fingers crossed, uh, there seems to be a lot of um, excitement about this work and it's very great.

**Ann:** Well, My fingers are very crossed because the, uh, the, the message that we need more now than ever is that we need to quit polarizing and trying to be the best and to win and to be the most dominant. We have as a culture, we have to focus on connection, um, in the world. So I love the timing of your book. And you mentioned, and, and if you could do just, you mentioned you have a workshop coming up. Could you tell us a little bit about that? And all of this will be in our show notes by the way.

**Terry:** Great, great. Yes. And, and also go to my website. This is my name, Terry real.com T E R R Y R E A L. The workshop starts June, June 14th. It's coming right up, goes into July. I think it's five, maybe six 90 minute uh, workshops. It's online, uh, for both individuals and couples, uh, for both therapists and what I like to call normal people. We have a couple hundred people already uh, it, it's gonna be very exciting. We start with the map. How to really think relationally, how to get out of that mindset. We move into what I call shaking hands with your adaptive child, uh, really learning the particulars of your automatic responses. Getting to know that part of you befriend it and

contain it. And then finally, uh, moving into winning strategies. How to speak up with love, how to listen non defensively, how to be generous, uh, how to cherish, what to do uh, when your, essential survival skills about how to have a successful relationship and not just romantic, but with your kids, colleagues, with your pets, relational skills are relational.

**Ann:** Sounds very powerful. Sounds very powerful. Thank you so much for jumping on the show today, Terry. I really appreciate it. I know our listeners are gonna love it too.

**Terry:** Great. Thank you very much, Ann. All right. Thank you all for joining us. And if this podcast hits a note that you feel like is meaningful to you or to your clients or to other people, please send it on so that other people can gain from Terry's wisdom and take time to rate and review us. Thanks so much.

**Ann:** And we'll see you around the bend.