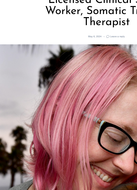

MENTAL HEALTH

Meet Shay DuBois | Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Somatic Trauma Therapist

May 6, 2021 | Comments Off

We had the good fortune of connecting with Shay DuBois and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Shay, what inspires you?
I am inspired by the thought that people CAN heal from trauma. I've had clients come to me, feeling so broken, unable to sleep, unable to be with others or to leave their home. They want change but haven't found anything that helps. I get to be with them as they discover healing. I get to be with them as they realize that the life they hadn't imagined would be possible. It is amazing! My clients inspire me by their courage to keep trying to move out of the trauma and back into life.

They inspire me to continue studying and trying to keep up with the cutting edge information and to be a compassionate listener.

Let's talk shop? Tell us more about your career, what can you share with our community?
I started my career as a therapist at a non profit. I worked with kids who were in foster care and their families. I saw how had the important connections from their life before came into play and how to keep natural connections active for those kids and possibly find placement for the kids. Nearly 1/3 of the kids I worked with found placement outside of foster care.

I also provided services to kids who needed therapy and were on Medi-Cal. My last position was helping to create a free trauma clinic for youth. I was allowed the creative freedom to be able to provide neurofeedback and somatic therapy to youth. I was so excited that this would be something completely new in our community.
When the clinical director decided she wasn't going to follow through with the plan, I decided to go out on my own and open a private practice. I wanted to do trauma therapy in the way that made sense to me.

There are a lot of challenges as a trauma therapist. I see families with the lack of resources and no way for me to find them. I see generational trauma, but only the child was getting therapy. I see that children aren't able to have lasting relationships because their parents don't understand attachment. I see so many other therapists getting burned out and I was starting to feel that way too.

Even before I had graduated with my Master's Degree I was taking extra training about trauma. I took EMDR Levels 1 &2. I then did Bessel van der Kolk's Trauma Center training and became a Trauma Sensitive Yoga Certification. That is where I also got NeuroFeedback Certification. Recently I have begun Brainspotting Certification. I will start Somatic Experiencing training this fall. There are lots of other trainings I have done focusing on the impact of trauma on the Body and brain.

What sets me apart is that when I work with clients I use a mind, body, and brain approach. I look at the beliefs they are holding onto that keep them stuck in pain. I look at what their body has endured, how that is showing up in the body now, and how we can allow the body to let go of that trauma. I look at how the brain was affected by trauma and can use brainwave neurofeedback to help the brain change.

I grew up with a parent who was chronically ill and depressed. My other parent had PTSD. I was anxious ALL THE TIME. I thought that was just how I was and I didn't know that there was a different way to be. I developed a strong sense of exhaustion and my caring self, I developed an overtrained disease. That is when I learned about Gabor Maté's work, Compassionate Inquiry. I am proud to say I am one of 36 people in the US who are Certified in this modality (if I ever get on the website).

Going through the Compassionate Inquiry Practitioner Training Program, (the first 1/3 of the program is doing your own work. Gabor says that we have to be able to deal with our own stuff before we can be there as we need to for our clients. After you have ugly cried in front of all your peers for several months, then you focus on working with clients.

It was about halfway through the year long program that my doctor and I started to notice an improvement in my bloodwork. I no longer had anemia. In the next days, I didn't have the dry eyes, dry mouth, and dry skin like before. I still have symptoms, but I have a much better quality of life than before.

I also want people to know that Trauma sucks, but therapy doesn't have to. I love to work with teens and adults. I have talked with people about why Batman is my favorite superhero. He had trauma, was his parents murdered, was raised by a non-relative caregiver, isn't super human but goes up against some really powerful people. He is flawed. He has anger. He could have been a villain, but he chose to use his power for good. What I relate to him. I appreciate that despite everything he chose to do good.

A client and I invented Swear Bear who is the Dark Side of Care Bears and is a protector from bad guys. I go where the client goes in their session. I know trauma and I try to bring in playfulness. I give each client permission to be creative and they have come up with really beautiful solutions.

Let's say your best friend was visiting the area and you wanted to show them the best time ever. Where would you take them? Give us a little itinerary – say it was a week long trip, where would you eat, drink, visit, hang out, etc.
Being a trauma therapist can be heavy, so I like to balance my life with lots of play.

I would take her to the fun and unique places like Lucha Libre taco shop, Mothership, or The Space Pad. The Pad is a masked Mexican wrestler themed taco shop, the last two are spaceship themed tiki bars/restaurants. I would definitely spend my last gear or my blue Tron cosplay.

I love the Meditation Gardens in Encinitas. It feels like stepping into a little oasis.

We would do a bike ride up the Coronado Strand and stop into the Trident coffee shop where they have gluten free donuts.

I am a HUGE Harry Potter fan. My dogs are named Luna and Dobby. We would probably go to Universal Studios to grab a butter beer, some exploding donuts, and ride the Hogwarts Express. We would also go to Harry Potter London.

Who else deserves some credit and recognition?
First, I want to give a shout out to Gabor Maté and Sat Dharam for their Compassionate Inquiry Training Program. Dedicating myself to that work over the past two years really changed who I am as a person and as a therapist.

The biggest gift from the program, other than the modality was my peer group I worked with, bonding with that group of clinicians and Sat Dharam was incredible.

I remember the first day of our training, I stated that I was hoping that this would be a safe place for me to be vulnerable and that I wouldn't go away feeling myself too long too much.

This group of skillful clinicians helped me learn to love myself and to know that I'm not too much, I was just anxious. They are the people that I trust most in this world. I'm not even sure when the last time was that I felt like I was too much.

One person in particular from my cohort is Dr. Leila Contractor. She was in my very first trial. We all were overwhelmed with the content. It was so powerful. Sometimes I would have to leave and get through the session because the pain with the overwhelm and know I can get through it. That was two years ago.

She is still an inspiration. We share the same integrative approach to helping people who have experienced trauma. I love working with her and trust even my most fragile clients to her care. I'm so grateful to you, Leila, and all you do for your clients and community.

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