**Healing in Community**  
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There’s a quote that I’ve repeated often and believe in strongly by one of my teachers, Peter Levine, saying “trauma isn’t what happens to us but what we hold inside us in the absence of an empathetic witness.” Meaning humans, as a species, are resilient. We can withstand incredibly significant things and bounce back.

Psychology has found ways to measure trauma in different ways. The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Assessment is a list of terrible things that can happen during childhood and may affect your ability to react to things as an adult. The most resilient, strongest, best people I know have a high ACE score, but they also scored highly when it came to factors of resilience. Fortunately, they had people in their corner cheering them on, and were able to find and access support to influence their ability to adapt and overcome.

In my work of embodied grief and chronic illness, I see this regularly. Individuals who come to me feeling stuck, victimized, or at the end of their rope, are oftentimes people who grieved alone. They were people who had their pain denied, endured terrifying situations by themselves, and didn’t think they had anyone to lean on. Maybe this perception was true for them, and maybe it wasn’t. What matters wasn’t whether this was a realistic perception of a situation but that it was a perception of *their* reality, and that felt sense became how they then navigated the world.

Often when we encounter pain, grief and difficult situations, we just want to know we’re not alone. We want to be seen, heard, witnessed, and validated. Many of the systems in our world are built on self-sufficiency, making one of the biggest fears we face losing the sense of belonging. This fear is so real it brings out the same survival response as if our very life was being threatened. In fact, just the *idea* of losing belonging will activate your nervous system’s fight or flight response because your brain senses this to be a danger to your well-being.

Research has shown that having an empathetic witness and belonging to a community can be the difference between “I went through this really hard thing and came out the other side,” and “I went through this really hard thing, and I feel stuck here.” These thought patterns demonstrate that how well we can heal and thrive is steeped in whether we believe we are supported and belong in community.

If you find yourself feeling unsupported, try making a list of who and what fuels you forward. This can be people you feel are in your corner, groups you belong to, pets, people you look up to, or places in nature. What’s on this list matters less than how the people, places and things on this list make you *feel*. What elicits that felt sense of belonging and connection? Our community network doesn’t have to be solely other humans, so this is a great opportunity to think outside the box. Once you identify who and what these things are, it can be helpful to ask what resources you can pull from them and list them for when you need connection.

If you find yourself coming up short of things that support you in this exercise, I encourage you to join us for an upcoming **cōpe coach** session. This peer-to-peer group setting will introduce you to others who share similar goals in health and wellness and our coaches are nothing but inspirational. With a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere our cōpe community can provide you the support when you need it most.