



MIND & LIFE
INSTITUTE

Mind & Life Connect Transcript
Dominique Malebranche
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Shankari Goldstein (00:05):

Welcome to our third session of Mind & Life Connect. We had just under a thousand people register for this event so the Mind & Life Connect community keeps growing. So hello to all of you that are joining us live as well as watching the recording. My name is Shankari Goldstein from Mind & Life. I'm one of the program managers here. It's a pleasure to be with you. My pronouns are she/her, and I'm co-facilitating this space alongside my thought partner, nisch neupane. And I'm joining from Charlottesville, Virginia and I'd love to acknowledge the profound history of this region, its connection to healing from trauma. As we shared in our last session, Charlottesville, Virginia is situated on the ancestral lands of the Monacan tribe and has been home to African peoples throughout history. And we recognize the deep significance of this land, which bears the imprints of both resilience and struggle, which is what we're going to be talking about today with Dominique.

(01:02):

Virginia's story encompasses a complex tapestry of slavery, displacement, and an ongoing pursuit of justice and equality, and our office is in close proximity to Monticello, the former residence of Thomas Jefferson, which further reminds us of the layers of history that shape this region. And we're going to put some links in the chat for you so that you can support different communities that have to do with these land acknowledgements, and I'm going to invite nisch to share where he's joining from too.

nischal neupane (01:32):

Awesome. Thank you, Shankari. Hi everybody. It's so good to share space with you again. I'm seeing a few community members, and I know a lot of folks are going to come to SRI pretty soon, so I'm excited to see you in person as well. My name is nisch. I'm the other program manager of Mind & Life. I'm joining you from Northampton, Massachusetts, which is Pocumtuc land and still the homelands of Norwottuck, Woronoco, Agawam, Nipmuc, and Abenaki peoples. And I will pass it back to Shankari to move forward.

Shankari Goldstein (02:05):

Thanks, nisch. So in this session we will delve into the profound topic of trauma and resilience. Our focus will be on exploring the influence of culture on trauma and healing, as well as the interplay between media, our ancestral heritage, and intergenerational trauma in shaping our

collective narratives. And throughout our discussion with Dominique, we will examine the ways in which movement and contemplative practices can facilitate the healing journey. So we're really excited to dive into a lot of embodiment practices with her today. And we're going to also explore the importance of cultural awareness and competence in our approaches to healing trauma.

Shankari Goldstein (02:40):

So I'd love to introduce Dominique Malebranche, who is our guest speaker. Dominique brings the expertise in integrative mind-body clinical research, interpersonal violence prevention, and mind-body interventions for individuals with complex psychological trauma exposure. Her insights will help us gain a deeper understanding of trauma and resilience, empowering us to support our own healing and that of others. And I want to thank Dominique because she's not only supporting your community here, but she also, when I first started at Mind & Life, was doing a lot of wonderful work with our staff here, consulting and helping us move through EDI goals, equity, diversity and inclusion goals here with the staff. And I just really appreciate you for showing up for our staff in that way and allowing us to heal our own trauma around that subject. So Dominique, I'd love to bring you up and maybe you can share a little bit about yourself with the audience and your recent work, what motivated you to explore this field and how it has shaped your perspective on healing and wellbeing.

Dominique Malebranche (03:45):

Sure. Yeah, thank you so much Shankari and the Mind & Life team. Such a blessing and a privilege to be here with all of you today. I'm noticing in the chat there are folks from all over the world, so good day, morning, afternoon. Pleased to be here. Some things I want to share about myself. Well, first and foremost, I'm a daughter. I'm a daughter of the creator, a daughter of the diaspora, a daughter of immigrant parents. So making me a second generation Haitian American black woman with Caribbean blood, fem. I use she and they pronouns. And I am deeply motivated by our natural connections to our humanity and by a love of practice. So specifically our humanity that's contextualized by and relationship to our individual, collective, and planetary body. And then practices that engage with these dimensions. I'm a contemplative, of course. A creative. A licensed psychologist. A social justice advocate. A scholar activist. Where my scholarship particularly and my practice is emergent from the needs of my communities and work to intersect the sociocultural context of trauma exposure, healing and liberation from systems of oppression.

(05:14):

So I'm a counseling psychologist by training with a specialty focus in multiculturalism and trauma psychology. And over the years I've really incorporated embodied inquiry and practice from a background in dance and contemplative training and eastern traditions of meditation as well as vinyasa and trauma-sensitive yoga to really deepen and enhance my work with individuals, communities, and organizational systems.

(05:41):

I currently teach as an assistant professor of psychology at Pepperdine University on the lands where Chumash and Tongva peoples are the traditional stewards. And over time, my work has

incorporated efforts in exploring prevention in sociocultural contexts of gender-based violence and prevention and exploitation, mind-body interventions for a complex trauma impact. And then recently, emphasizing community-based and participatory research and engagement with communities of color and trauma-exposed communities where I continue to explore the body—in its individual, collective, and planetary—as a site for trauma as well as for divine wisdom, healing, and transformation for cultural healing and integration.

Dominique Malebranche (06:25):

So maybe I could talk a little bit more about that later. But as I mentioned in my interest with human connection and embodied connections, trauma work has really exposed me to the nuance of embodiment and disconnection, which has really shaped and reshaped my perspective on what it means to have access to and build capacity for wellness. So something that I'm finding really energizing and inspiring these days is that the intersections of my trauma and contemplative work have highlighted the significance of the spiritual domain of wellness, which is rarely talked about in mental health and western mindfulness fields, but is critical in our various cultural traditions of healing.

Shankari Goldstein (07:12):

I love that, Dominique. Before we go into your research, maybe you can talk a little more about that embodiment healing for cultural trauma. I noticed in the chat that one of the participants said, "I joined this session to heal myself and my own traumas, to be a better father and to be an amazing husband to my amazing family," which I just thought was beautiful. And they also added, "To be the best coach that I can be to my clients." So in your work of embodied healing for cultural trauma, what are some of the ways that individuals can cultivate a contemplative approach to embody their own cultural heritage, which you just spoke about. You mentioned so many aspects of yourself, bringing in your cultural heritage and reconnecting with their true self in the healing journey through maybe that spiritual lens that you're looking at.

Dominique Malebranche (08:02):

Yeah. I will say that I learned a lot about cultural trauma and healing through my fellowship training in complex trauma at the trauma center in Boston, and taking that training and being in really close relationship to my own embodied, lived experiences as a racialized, gendered body of culture, navigating ongoingly oppressive environments. So kudos to anyone and everyone who's watching, listening, being with us, that recognizes that important intersection of our experiences because I think we have to come into relationship with that in order to really engage in a practice of embodiment and healing. And when I'm talking about oppressive environments here, I'm specifically referring to oppression as any condition that keeps me from embodying the fullest, most free expression of who I am. I think that that might go for any of us as we really think about that.

(09:01):

So you can imagine with our society in what ways this might show up, but for me this is a living practice with emerging insights. Thinking about contemplative approaches and our cultural being, I think awareness and insight practice, working with breath, prayer, movement, music, writing, compassion practices; these all help me create conditions that are necessary for me to

be able to be with the totality, the experience across the spectrum of grief, pain, beauty, joy—all of which that emerges in the practice of remembering and reconnecting, which is what this cultural embodied healing practice work is for me about remembering, reconnecting, returning to, and moving from an aligned place.

Dominique Malebranche (09:59):

So we often see these approaches and use them as tools to access a particular experience or work with what arises. So maybe mindfulness for presence, or compassion for empathy. But for me in this particular work, I think all of us can adapt to this in some way. We can also use contemplative approaches as the container for exploration. So the practice can be what holds us. So if we ask ourselves, who am I in this body, this individual body, in my collective body, in this planetary body? How can we use practice to create space for the wisdom to arise?

(10:41):

So let me give you an example. If we think about breath ... Let's play with breath for a moment. Even in this moment, just noticing, what is your breath doing in this moment? Where is your breath activated? Is it in your chest? Is it in your belly? Does it change when I ask you to notice it? Breath is a cool tool for us to play with. But with breath practices, we can be mindful of the awareness of our breath in the present moment as we might be in this moment, and we can connect our inhales and our exhales to the collective breath. This awareness that all of us in this moment are engaging in the practice of breath. And we can even connect our breath to the lived expression of the breath of our ancestors and the lived expression of the breath of our descendants and heirs to come. So here, breath evolves from just an anchor to a life force that connects us across time and community. And breath also connects us to nature or spirit as we talked about a moment ago. Have you ever sat by a tree and noticed after sitting there for some time, that the pace of your breath starts to match the movements of the leaves? Or gazed at a body of water and noticed that your breath starts to match the flow of the living water or the waves?

(12:23):

When we can become aware of that connection, what does that shift for us? What parts of our cultural heritage might be reawakened in the process of breathing with the earth? This is, for me, a true embodiment. And then of course, there's engaging in practice that reinforces our direct connection to heritage. So for me, that could be being in mindful practice with food. It could be mindfully dancing to the percussions of Kompa music or breathing to the poetic vocals of Jill Scott, or even writing near the sea. In my framework, "R to the fourth power", which we might talk about, I talk about contemplative practice as a lineage practice. So with intention, we can particularly situate our practice in a type of cultural reclamation and homecoming or a re-embodiment, a return, a coming home to oneself in context.

Shankari Goldstein (13:29):

You just mentioned a lot of beautiful insights and they just happen to start with the letter R: reconnection, reclamation. I would love for people to get a little bit of insight into the work that you do in the context of the R4 framework—I think our tech team is going to put what those four R's are in the chat for us. And you may have already touched on this a little bit—the specific

contemplative practices or techniques that you recommend for developing those inner resources and the resilience and the face of the cultural trauma—but maybe providing examples for our audience, or case studies as well, of individuals or communities that have successfully utilized that R4 framework that you created, and contemplative practices to heal from cultural trauma and promote social change. What examples can you share with our audience?

Dominique Malebranche (14:23):

Yeah. I could share a little bit about this work, and this is really interesting—I mentioned earlier that my scholarship is really emergent, and so I didn't set out to develop any conceptual framework for anything. But what I noticed in my practice with community specifically, as I started to bump up my practice during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, I started to engage in more practice within community, offering services, and started to notice some themes through my own practice as well as in the contemplative communities I was engaging with and then the work that I was providing. And so that's the compilation of what I'm presenting here in this framework. So it's definitely still in development.

(15:15):

The framework was conceptualized or designed to help us respond to cultural trauma. So the idea that the impact of experiencing multiple exposures to instances of trauma on our identity, on our collective, on our communities, on our cultural beings. So R to the fourth power, which is really how I conceptualize it, “to the fourth power”, centers the power of resource, the power of resilience, the power of resistance, in the power of relationship. All of these are the core elements that I feel need to be cultivated in the individual and collective body to experience a sense of coming home, a sense of embodied home.

(16:05):

The power of resource is expressed within the practice of our connection to the earth and the earth's elements—land, water, wind, the sun—being in practice with these elements and finding a sense of oneness, connection, returning to, through that relationship. And this power of resource is really important for establishing a sense of safety, a sense of groundedness. And this is really key in any trauma work that we do, in any capacity, clinical, non-clinical, is that we have frameworks for understanding and establishing practice for safety. So I propose that we do this in relationship with earth.

(16:51):

The power of resilience is expressed through practice of our connection to our ancestors. So for folks who might have joined session one with our beloved Juan Santoyo, where he practiced intergenerational practices, that's really what we're focusing in on here for building resilience. So we bring awareness to our conditioned responses, narratives, patterns, storying, and even find strength through the elicitation of being with oneself in relationship with our ancestors.

(17:29):

And trauma-informed care, particularly within the clinical context, often stops with resilience building, really acknowledging trauma and then building resources and tools to access resilience. But it's really important in a liberatory framework that we don't build resilience as the end goal, but we recognize that structural change and accountability in that system is often

necessary, and our ability to tolerate with some resourcing opens us up to the possibility to engage in compassionate action and resistance.

Dominique Malebranche (18:09):

So the power of resistance is that next R. And this is expressed through future building practices. So what do I mean by future building? Overcoming internalized oppression and practicing the types of being that we wish to exist within in the future, and bringing that to the now. So here I offer breath as a form of resistance, free movement as a practice, joy and rest as Tricia Hersey, the Nap Bishop talks about, rest as resistance. These are forms that we can access as practice for resistance.

(18:54):

And then finally, the power of relationship. So resource, resilience and resistance in relationship. So relationship becomes a holding practice for all of those other practices, and it's its own power and practice of connection and community. So the power of relationship is expressed through community and our collective stories. So the expression of each of these powers are the types of practices that we can engage in to respond to cultural trauma. And within the resource that will probably be shared with this community and is available to folks, I offer several different techniques to incorporate and emphasize these expressions and contemplative approaches.

Shankari Goldstein (19:42):

Great. Thank you Dominique. Yeah. That resource is in the chat. We'll make sure that gets up on the registration page as well. Just one last question before we move into some of these examples of practice with you, because you talked a lot about earth and feeling... Just like right now, I'm sitting out looking at my pond, I'm feeling that flow of the water. However, we live in this age of AI technology and media presence. So in your thoughts, how does media influence our understanding of trauma and what can be done to promote more accurate and nuanced portrayals of trauma and its effects? And what are some of the ways that you see media literacy being integrated into trauma-informed care, things that you're seeing in the pipeline?

Dominique Malebranche (20:26):

Yeah. Yeah. I think media is a tool that we also need to bring our practice to when we engage with it, what we're consuming and how we're consuming it. We have more access to media through the internet, through social media, and there's a lot of information that talks about trauma in this way that really heightens the experience. It's quite a key topic, a hot topic. A word that I'm hearing a lot of folks use now that weren't accessing or even using that terminology when I first started this work early in my graduate work. So it's definitely becoming more expansive where people are asking questions and inquiring about their own experience. But I think it's really important also that we recognize that although we can start to identify trauma incidences in our life, in our communities, in our spaces, that that doesn't necessarily mean that each of us will experience trauma.

(21:29):

That trauma is more of an internal experience of how we are impacted by a situation. So if my senses, if my mind, my brain becomes overwhelmed by this experience, then I can have some trauma responses. But if that same thing happens to my peer, they might not have that same

reaction. And so we have to be mindful that we're not over-utilizing a term because the media is saying, this will give you trauma and this will give you trauma. That we really use contemplative practice to inquire for ourselves, how am I impacted in this moment by what is happening? What's happening in the world, what's happening in my relationship, what's happening as I engage with some of the things that I'm bringing to light through my own practices? And I think that as we use practice, we can engage in a type of consuming that supports us. That gives us access to other communities that are identifying themselves as interested, able, and willing to acknowledge the harms and the pains that we are up against and want to be in practice with overcoming, healing through resisting and choosing a different path. And so I think in some ways, media can help us access those folks, those communities, those teachers to really be in practice with something that helps build on our restoration, provides more resource, more access. But also using practice to be able to find that space and that boundary when that's necessary.

Shankari Goldstein (23:12):

Thank you, Dominique. I love this. And I'd love to create some experiential moments for the participants so I'm going to hand it over to you for this time. I'll help you keep time on the backend and connect with you if we need to get to the breakout rooms. But let's explore what it means to cultivate this contemplative approach and allow people to reconnect with their true self and this healing journey.

Dominique Malebranche (23:39):

Yes. Okay. Lovely. Thank you. So how much time do we have in this moment for practice?

Shankari Goldstein (23:46):

Let's do about 10 minutes and then move into your writing exercise.

Dominique Malebranche (23:50):

Okay. Wonderful. All right, folks. So what I'm going to invite us into in this moment is an opportunity for us to ground a little bit. We'll start with resource. So we'll ground a little bit and be in practice around centering. So I invite you in this moment to just get comfortable where you are and check in with yourself in terms of, how do you want to be positioned? How do you want your body to be positioned in this practice? Would you like to be seated? Would you like to stand up? I think in this practice, I'm going to sit for the moment and I might shift to stand. But I invite you to bring your attention inward for this moment. Maybe you close your camera if that's helpful. Maybe you drop your gaze. Maybe you just close your eyes.

(24:49):

Just identifying where you're at in this process, finding your breath. Noticing where your breath is, how it's moving. Maybe connecting to breath as anchor or maybe breath as life force. And then deepening maybe with a cleansing breath, taking a deep inhale through your nose and out through your mouth. Maybe trying one more time. A deep inhale through the nose and out through your mouth. Rolling out the body. All right.

Dominique Malebranche (25:52):

I want to invite you wherever you are... I'm actually going to switch to a standing motion and model that for anyone who wants to be in more movement. So wherever you are, I want to invite you to start noticing the ground beneath you. So as we practice getting connected to ourselves and our bodies, our environments around us, we're also going to get connected to what we care about and we're going to start with just noticing ground. Dropping into this attention. Maybe bringing your arms to extend toward the ground, hands toward the ground, offering gratitude to the land that you're on. The earth underneath you. Maybe resting your arms now, down to your side and just feeling that sense of grounding down and rooting up through your body, through your midline, up through the structures in the center of your body toward the sky.

(27:22):

So coming into full length here. You might move forwards and backwards to get a real sense of what that full length feels like. Maybe you even reach your arms toward the sky to get a sense of what that full length could feel like. And here we're settling as we weight down, rooting in the ground, lifting up, remembering gratitude toward the earth. Here we're making space in our vertebra. Feeling ourselves out through the length of our bodies. You might move to do this. You might be still to do this. Feeling out the length of your body. Centering in length, we can also center in our sense of dignity and our ability to feel a sense of dignity.

(28:36):

When you're ready, maybe centering into your width, the width of your body. So from the right side of your body to the left. Maybe you actually start to shift from side to side so you can notice that you have width in your body. So centering, feeling out from your left side of your shoulder all the way to the right. Feeling out the sides of your waist, hips, your stance. Maybe even reaching your arms into the side of your space. Feeling your sense of center that comes through and expands out through the width. Many of us in this world, we live our lives curled up. We take up less space than we have available to us. So engage in taking whatever space you feel that you experience. And so exploring your sense of center through width, we can also explore our sense of social space. How we come into contact with others. Maybe you extend your arms out to the side, allowing your palms to extend forward, almost like you're bringing gratitude to others, other beings. Noticing the width of your body in this moment. When we come into contact with our width, we can also center our interdependence.

(30:46):

Taking a deep breath here, noticing what's arising and if and when you're ready, we'll move our centering awareness to the depth of our bodies. So this is your awareness of the front to the back of your body. Maybe you shift forward on your toes, back on your heels, or maybe you find a sense of stillness. Bringing your attention to the backs of your heels. Feeling the clothes on the back of your legs, your back. The back of your head. The back of your organs. And then noticing the sense of feeling from your back to your front. Feeling your heartbeat, what's happening in your stomach, sensations in your face, coming to the front body. So as you expand into depth here, you're allowing yourself to feel out a little bit more. Getting more present, noticing the movement of your breath in your body, how it opens the front and the back of your body. And in our depth being, we're invited to also connect to history. Our own skills and

competence. We can boldly ground right here, right now in the present. And I invite you to connect with your depth through the present experience backward into the past. Perhaps aware of benevolent ancestors who stand behind you, who have your back.

Dominique Malebranche (33:11):

They may be known to you or unknown. Relational or spiritual ancestors. Perhaps bringing this into more awareness and maybe even bringing in any strengths, qualities, characteristics from these individuals that have your back. Bringing forth any qualities that come, the body, come to presence, and bringing them into your present experience of this moment. And when you're ready, you're welcome to bring your awareness through toward the future. So from back behind you, through the present of your body, and forward in front into the future. Bringing forth what you care about most in the moment, to connect to those who will come after you. Your descendants, your heirs, those who will follow your generation. Bringing them in mind and spirit, moving through the back, the past, into the present center, and toward the front, the future.

(34:53):

Centering in depth, front to back, we're able to sense time, yeah? We can access a felt sense of depth that also helps us touch into vulnerability. And taking a breath here, noticing your length, your width, and your depth. We'll come to our last place, our last dimension of being, our center. I welcome you to find your center by bringing your thumb to your belly button and maybe just resting your hand right where it lies. The center of gravity in your body. Noticing whatever you notice here. I invite you to center what it is that you're committed to, what it is that you care about. Could be in the realm of your healing, your relationships, leadership, family, work.

(36:15):

You might have a word or phrase, a quote, a mantra. Something that connects you to your commitment. Or you can develop one right now. Maybe repeating to yourself, "I value" or "I'm committed to" and answering what matters to you. Breathing some nice deep breaths into your awareness of what you're bringing to center, allowing your center of what you care about to really fill you up here in our last moments. And breathing in this four dimensional embodiment of center, carrying with us what we value and what lives at our core, gently reentering collective. Maybe through some movement. Maybe through lifting. Fluttering the eyes open if they're closed. Maybe finding your seat. And reentering the room when you're ready.

Shankari Goldstein (37:46):

Thank you, Dominique. So we have just maybe about four to five minutes to do your writing and personal reflection activity. And I think we are going to put the prompts in the chat. I'm happy to read them. Or if you have it up, feel free to take over.

Dominique Malebranche (38:02):

Sure. All right, folks. So writing is a contemplative practice that I think we need to practice a little bit more. And sometimes it can be helpful to go inward to process before coming outward to share. So this is just an invitation to do that. So we'll put some prompts up. One prompt in reflection to the practice: what did you notice about how your experience with the practice relates to how you build resilience in your life? What did you notice about that? So maybe bringing a pad, a paper, your phone, digital notes, whatever you want, maybe jotting some notes

down if you wish. The second prompt that I'll offer is: where does your individual body experience a sense of resource and resilience? And how in this place, space, or felt sense, can you connect with a sense of safe home or cultural homecoming?

Dominique Malebranche (39:12):

And then the third prompt I'll offer is: how might the emergence of what's coming up for you in this encounter, how might this emergence support you in practicing social change, compassionate action, and/or resistance within the clinical and planetary body? So maybe one of these is standing out to you. Maybe none of these are standing out to you. I just invite you into a moment of writing whatever comes to mind or sitting with. Bringing your practice to your writing. What do you notice about your breath and your body as you engage with the mind a little bit?

(40:51):

Holding space for whatever arises or doesn't arise. Noticing if the mind starts to judge or analyze. Maybe noticing what your body might need as you engage in this practice. Do you need to move to help you think? Do you need to pause, take deeper breaths? Do you need to resource your physical body with a beverage? Just attuning to whatever emerges in your practice as you reflect on one or a couple of these prompts.

(42:18):

We might have just about a minute or so left. Just allowing inquiry to be emergent. This might be something you come back to reflect on more later. This might be something that you feel called to speak on, to share through your voice in our breakouts. Or it might be something that you hold with you. Wrapping up any thoughts you might have here because we'll be shifting in just a few moments.

nischal neupane (44:04):

Dominique, thank you so much. I know it's never enough time to do all these things, and I really hope you take these questions after the event and continue to explore them. Wow. I'm just a little bit in awe of everything that happened for the last half an hour, everything you've talked about and the practice, which is so powerful. So to move the program along, for the rest of the time, the plan is we're going to put all of you into breakout spaces so you get a chance to meet each other, process the event a little bit, process what's happening in your bodies, in your minds, and then think about what you're going to take away from the event. Our team is going to start setting up breakouts in the back. So you're going to have about 20 minutes. We tend to put five to six folks in one breakout room. There might be some folks that are going to drop off; we just need a little time to rearrange it, make sure everything's going well. So our team is working in the background to do that.

(45:03):

So these are breakout spaces so please be very mindful about how you're showing up. If you feel like you're speaking too much, maybe it's a chance to let other folks speak a bit. If you're somebody who listens a lot and doesn't speak right away, maybe this is a chance to put yourself out there and say a few things. Please be mindful, be respectful; this is your space, so you're allowed to create, co-create this as you feel fit. We're also going to put in a little prompt for you

to be able to structure this space a little bit, and we're going to put it in chat. But essentially the prompt is: what came up for you as you listened to Dominique speak or during the practice, and what do you think you are going to take away after the event? What are you taking away from the talk? So we're going to have 20 minutes for each breakout, and we'll have five to six folks in each breakout room. After breakouts, we're going to come back as a group and have a quick Q&A session with Dominique, depending on how much time we have. I'm guessing we'll have time for two to three questions, and we'll get to that. We'll get there.

nischal neupane (46:18):

So as we're waiting, Dominique, there was a question about implicit trauma, suffering a trauma that has no identifiable event or abuse. We'd love to hear from you really quickly before we invite people to go into rooms. Can you give us a quick minute there?

Dominique Malebranche (46:39):

A quick minute.

nischal neupane (46:39):

Yeah.

Dominique Malebranche (46:41):

Well, what comes to mind around that is the experience that is often connected to historical traumas and intergenerational traumas. That we can be impacted by things that we don't directly experience or we're not conscious of experiencing because our body and our brain holds that content, sometimes without our consciousness as a way to protect our organism, a way to protect our being. I think this is really important. I think this is why I believe so deeply in contemplative approaches for engaging with trauma, and somatic and body-based approaches, is it gives us a little bit of a window into accessing some of these things that might be happening at the subcortical levels of our brains and giving us some content that we can work with in what emerges in the moment.

[Cut for breakout rooms.]

nischal neupane (47:30):

I want to give Dominique the opportunity to elaborate on what we were talking about before going into breakouts about implicit trauma. Trauma that supposedly has no identifiable event. Dominique, do you want to elaborate on that please? Thank you.

Dominique Malebranche (47:47):

Sure. Yeah. So again, the response of trauma is about how something impacts us. So we might be able to identify an incident, we might not be able to identify the incident. But when we understand the experience of what trauma responses can look like, so this model of, an arousal model. The hyper-aroused experiences that we might identify as anxiety or anger, to the hypo-aroused experiences that we might identify as more depression or even dissociation, which is a very prevalent experience when we've experienced multiple experiences of trauma.

Dominique Malebranche (48:27):

When we can connect to the trauma responses themselves, then we have access to really engage with healing. We don't always have to know what the incident was, what the incident is. And so what I was mentioning before we went on our break was related to historical and intergenerational trauma, where sometimes we can experience the impact of anxiety, for instance, but we might not know what the actual experience of those earlier instances were, but the impact is still there. With implicit trauma and what I understand about implicit trauma is that the experience is often unrecognizable. What we might think about with microaggressions, like the subtlety of it. Did that really happen? Am I experiencing what I think I'm experiencing? We might put gas-lighting as a category in this or just feeling unheard or unseen in the moment, which could have the impact of one of those arousal responses. So I think the response itself is important and sometimes that's all we need and we don't always have to connect it to the incident itself.

Question: What are some strategies to deal with trauma that continues to remain in my body?

Dominique Malebranche (49:48):

Yeah. Great question. So the question around, what do we do when rationally we can process something but our body is unable to process or let that thing go? So what I would suggest is that we really engage with the somatic awareness. What is the experience in the body that is difficult to let go? Again, let's come back to that arousal model. We can think upward, hyper, we can think lower, hypo. Is it an experience that feels like a shutting down, closing, a constricting, or is it an experience that feels like it's too much, like it's opening, it's expansive or overwhelming? What the body is communicating to us could be a response to how you then respond to the body. So in some of my practices, we actually engage in movement. Shaking different parts of the body to move energy through the different places, different locations of the body, or we work with breath if that's a safe practice for you. Breath is a really profound practice and it can be triggering for some of us who have different types of trauma experiences. So I really invite you to be mindful of if that's a practice that you can engage with.

(51:04):

But breath, there are different types of pranayama or breath techniques that can be used to move energy relatively quickly when it's coming up in the moment. So responding to what the body is asking for. If there's some tightening and constricting, how do you open and move that? If there's already big energy, big movement, how do you come to a sense of groundedness? So really incorporating somatics into what you're already doing, I think might be a supportive practice and how we can all engage with the energy that's often caught, stuck, or trying to find its way through our bodies.

Shankari Goldstein (51:43):

Thank you. Thank you for your question. Thank you, Dominique. This was such a beautiful offering to round out this arc of stress and trauma and body. You just touched so much on body here at the end, which wasn't even a core part of your session. It's just so beautiful. So thank you so much.

Shankari Goldstein (52:02):

We are really excited to announce that our next session is going to be with Eve Ekman and you're going to see that it is being announced for August 3rd. However, right before this call, as life often does, schedule things came up so Eve might have a scheduling conflict. However, still register for the event because then you'll get the notification of the updates and change and you don't have to treasure hunt to figure out the new date and time. So really excited to host Eve Ekman, and she's going to be talking about burnout and the healthcare system and the field of emotion awareness and regulation. So we're super excited to have her.

(52:42):

And as always, we're going to have a survey at the end. Please fill it out if you can just briefly. It'll take you just a few moments to fill out and we do use it to enhance and change and elevate the program to fit what you guys are giving us as feedback. And there will be recordings that will be online in the next week or two, so feel free to keep checking and you'll also get an announcement of when that recording is available.

(53:10):

Great. So Dominique, I'm going to hand it back over to you so you can just close this out with a brief one to two minute meditation.

Dominique Malebranche (53:17):

Great. Thank you. I'd love for us to do a movement practice. We only have a few moments and we only need a few moments. So I just want to invite you to take a deep breath if you'd like, in through your nose. Maybe reach your arms up on that inhale and maybe exhale, dropping your arms. If you liked that movement, if that served you, you're welcome to try it again. Breathing in, stretching up, breathing out, dropping the arms. Maybe bringing some movement to your neck. Just stretching from the right to the left or front to back.

(54:05):

Maybe bring some movement into your shoulders. You can open up movements by actually making circular motions with your elbows if you rest your hands on your shoulders and then you can make smaller circles if you don't want that much movement. You have access to all these different types of space here. Hear my crackly bones. Breathing in one more time, stretching upward, reaching in, and any good energy from the sky, any gratitude from above. And maybe bringing that, exhale, palms together toward your chest resting maybe your palms at your chest, or you can open your palms and rest them on your heart. Just noticing your breath. Like my beloved yoga teacher used to do, you can make a little raspberry with your lips. If you can't do it she says it means you're taking yourself too seriously. Thank you folks for this time, for your presence, for your questions, for your participation, and for Mind & Life. Appreciating you. Lots of love. Blessed to you all. Thank you.