



Episode 1

Politics and Emotional Safety: Consent, Boundaries, and Small t Trauma with Marvie Corbett

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Katie: [00:00:00] You're listening to This Election, where we are committed to the inner work that is needed to do politics differently.

This is our very first episode.

I'm your host, Katie Cochran, and I'm so glad you are here. This podcast series offers a new way of looking at politics, one that focuses on how we engage with others rather than on our partisan identities or policy preferences.

It explores why politics is so triggering and offers spiritual practices that heal past wounds, ground us in our bodies, and connect us to that which transcends our differences. The guests on this series are women and men whose wisdom I discovered and relied on while running a homeless shelter during the pandemic. Their offerings invited me into practices that enabled me to work with hope in very dark times. I believe their wisdom also offers a way forward to those of us who yearn for a different type of politics.

If you are committed to active citizenship but feel worn down by a political culture of fear and anger, this podcast is for [00:01:00] you. If you have lost sleep over politics, or your temper, or a friend, know that you are not alone. Politics is hard, but it's something we can heal from, and it's something we can change. It won't be easy. It will take practice. But my hope is that the conversations here open us up individually and collectively to a new way of engaging.

This election, we will do politics differently.

Our guest today is Marvie Corbett. She is the Director of Psychotherapy and Educational Advocacy at Rebecca Resnick and Associates in Bethesda, Maryland. She's a licensed clinical social worker, certified clinical trauma professional, and a therapist that works with children, adolescents, and adults.

She has worked in a variety of settings, including psychiatric inpatient, residential, intensive outpatient, community based centers, and in schools. She is also a huge Harry Potter fan and my sister. My conversations with [00:02:00] her in the aftermath of the 2016 election are the seeds from which this project has grown.



Her insights about small t trauma and the connection between our beliefs and our sense of safety fundamentally transformed how I understood politics. I am so excited to share her wisdom with you all. Marvie, thank you so much for joining us today.

Marvie: Thanks for having me.

Katie: So I want to start off with one of the goals of this podcast which is to expand our definition of politics beyond our partisanship and our policy preferences to include the way in which we interact with each other the way we engage on political topics and in the political space. And so I was wondering if, thinking back to your childhood or youth, what your earliest political memory is and what that taught you about how to engage in politics.

Marvie: You've mentioned, I'm your sister. And it's interesting that you and I probably have really different experiences around that. Because what I remember is, we didn't [00:03:00] talk about it that much? I don't know what I was doing that I wasn't paying attention if our parents were talking about it. But the social issue of women's rights was always something that really was important to me. I didn't have, like, a global interest in politics or anything like that. If it did pique my interest, it was around that particular issue. .

Katie: And What do you think you learned from those experiences, whether that was the play with us or just how you kind of brought that desire for women's rights and women's empowerment into the way in which we engage to earn those rights to live into those rights?

Marvie: Yeah, I mean, I think it's a big a big piece of my curiosity understanding how did we get there? How were we in a position in which we were needing to be curious about those rights anyway? Or you know, the, the systemic dynamics how does the patriarchy play into this or that? What are the different cogs in the machine?

And so I think where I didn't maybe take it down a direct political route, I am vastly interested in like how do [00:04:00] all of the pieces work together

Katie: yeah, that makes sense. And I, I think one of the interesting things that comes out of that or that I hear from that is the importance of curiosity, right, is as we engage is like following those questions and wondering So really, really love that. So there is a ton of evidence that the current political environment is creating a lot of mental health challenges for a lot of people, there's the recent Gallup polls, and there's Brett Ford's work on the emotional impact of daily political engagement, and Kevin Smith's work on the physical effects that politics has, and then there's just our own experiences, right part of the reason why I'm launching this podcast is when I thought about engaging this particular election cycle my body had a stress reaction.



Like my heart began to race. I started feeling a little nauseous and I was like, this doesn't make sense. Like, why am I so triggered by this? And so I was wondering what your thoughts are on why politics is so triggering for so many people.

Marvie: Yeah, I mean, I think, politics is another word we use [00:05:00] to represent our core values. And so when people are deciding who to vote for or which topics they take vast interest in, there's usually a deep meaning around it, right?

Like if you think about climate change there's a deep concern about, what will happen to this planet, right? And that feels like a hugely important thing to welfare and to existence. So I think at the crux of a lot of political issues are these really important facets of who we are, who we exist in the world, what is our meaning, and how do we give meaning to this life.

It can obviously be diluted through the conversations around politics, but I think inherently people are trying to have a life that connects with a value system that makes sense to them, that lines up with their body, and their belief structure. I think politics ends up representing a lot of that in different ways. And sometimes it happens in ways we're not even, considering. Like, why do we care so much about that? Or why am I apathetic towards that? Maybe because there's not a core connection to a value [00:06:00] system for us. But that doesn't mean that for someone else, it doesn't represent a core value system.

Katie: Can you talk a little bit about how our values and our beliefs relate to our safety? Cause I think that has something to do with why entering into the political arena, which is inherently about how we adjudicate our differences feels so unsafe.

Marvie: Yeah, I mean, so, our values are the foundation in which we operate in this life, right? As humans, our brains love to make meaning out of things and love to find patterns. And that offers us such security. So when we find values that make sense to us and resonate with us, we're creating a foundation for our existence that feels really stabilizing. And without them, if our values are disorganized, it does feel really destabilizing.

You know, philosophers have been trying to figure this out for thousands of years, right? Who are we and why are we here? Articulating a value set [00:07:00] helps create stability by being like, I have an answer to that. It is really a dysregulating and upsetting thing to not have an answer to that.

Like if you recall adolescence, of being like, I don't know who I am that question is a really overwhelming experience. And it's also why when things happen that shakes that up, when the beliefs I held about the world are now no longer true, that is a really dysregulating and destabilizing experience because we, we need it.

Our brains really like there to be meaning and sense out of things.



Katie: So that's a great segue into to what I was going to talk about next, which is this, idea of trauma. Like politics, it's a super loaded word that means lots of different things to lots of different people. And there's I think some overuse of as well Can you give us your definition of trauma to kind of ground the rest of our conversation?

Marvie: Yeah, I was one of those people that really enjoyed grad school, and there were a couple of professors that said things that just like clung to my brain [00:08:00] forever. And one of them was talking about. That the way that he conceptualized trauma was one is on the spectrum. We think of big T traumas, that is what we're thinking of rape, physical harm, the witnessing of violence, the war. Those big things, right? Where actual physical harm is happening or my imminent death is about to happen. But there's also this other, side of the spectrum where I refer to it as small t traumas.

And that's essentially when there is a core belief about yourself or another person or the world that we once held that is now no longer true. When that core belief is shattered, we have to then give new meaning and figure out like, well, if that's not true, then what are all the implications of that?

And that could be, you know, my core belief was my parents loved each other and now they're getting a divorce. What does that mean about love? Or if best friends are always there for each other, and then they start bullying me, what does that then mean about friendship,

So, it could be a core belief that you, , hold about yourself . If you act [00:09:00] in a way that's outside of your value system, right? If you are someone that felt really strongly about not cheating and you felt stressed about an upcoming test and you ended up cheating, that then is like, well, then now who am I, if I engaged in this?

So. the small t traumas can exist in, any core belief that you once held about yourself, the world, or other people that is now no longer true and you have to then reorganize yourself, the world, or other people with, with this new evidence in mind, which can be very overwhelming.

Katie: I remember when you shared this insight with me as I was kind of grappling with everything and it was something that really resonated. For me, 2016, it felt like I had lost my conception of country and self. And when I tried to describe it to people, I often use the Inside Out movie and I'd be like, all of my islands of personality have just shattered.

And like, I don't know what to do. And so I just, it, It really resonated for me in the political space because I felt like the politics of that season did end up challenging some core beliefs of mine. And then I didn't know what to do with it. [00:10:00] But when you gave me this language around small t trauma, I felt like I could begin to move forward from that to say, okay, well then what are my new beliefs?



Marvie: And there's a grief period that goes along with it because it feels like we shouldn't have to, right? Like it should still be okay? Like why did that happen? And so there's this movement of grief as we reckon with our core beliefs that we then have to kind of reconfigure, but there is a real grief that is normal and to be expected and we need to be gentle with ourselves around it.

Katie: Thank you for that. And not just for me, but for, for our listeners who might also be kind of grappling with, with the grief stage and not quite ready to move into that next piece which is what I hope you talk about next. So tell me about recovery from small T trauma and what that process looks like and then how we might apply that to wounds that originate from the political realm.

Marvie: I mean, I think it goes back to giving meaning in a way that lines up with your values and and make sense of [00:11:00] things. I think because politics is so polarizing it can be easy to feel afraid of it.

If it's okay to give an example about the opposing sides of gun laws, right? Where the people that are anti gun are like, 'guns make our communities unsafe'. And the people that are for it tend to feel, well, actually, I need this in order to feel safe.

What is actually a shared value there is safety and this general feeling that I don't feel safe. And that's something that if we talk about like that piece of it versus, you know, getting into some of the other quagmire. That's a shared human need and desire. We can shift the conversation from my core belief, my value is that everyone deserves, dignity or safety.

The goal is to kind of reorganize and restate and give new meaning in a way that serves you.

This is where I think grief gets caught up in here because, we have our moments of anger and negotiation and disappointment and all of that. [00:12:00] And so you might, you might find yourself being like, well, screw it. Like, America's just bad now. Or people are just bad now.

And well, you might need to kind of hang out there for a second because that's part of grief of like the anger of it just feels unfair. It doesn't serve most people to hang out there. That leaves us angry. That leaves us not curious. That leaves us defended. Because if that's the case, like what coping mechanisms do I then have to have in place in order to exist in a world where I'm perpetually unsafe, which is a reality for some people. Coming up with a new belief has to actually feel true.

You can't just be like, yes, I'll just believe that everyone in the world is good or everyone has the best intentions or whatever, right? Like that's not viable. But to have a new belief



constructed of the past experience that broke the old belief and something that serves you so that you are not overwhelmed either physiologically or emotionally by the truth of it.

Healing has to come [00:13:00] down with organizing our thoughts and giving meaning. Part of why trauma is so destabilizing is because it is a very disorganizing event. Our brains really like to have meaning, really like to have organization around what happened.

And when things happen, that don't make sense, which is what trauma is it is working. drastically all of the time to try and make it make sense. But you, as the owner of your brain, can try and organize those thoughts in a way that makes sense to you. But if you don't do that, then you're ping-ponging around kind of feeling unsafe.

Katie: That makes a lot of sense to me. And even what you were talking about, this idea that sometimes we want to stay in this space where our beliefs now feel true because whatever got broken; the like, you know, politics is awful and our country just needs to get it together and, you know, we stay in that anger spot.

It feels to me that a lot of people are operating still in that spot but that it's coming from from grief and from [00:14:00] a lack of safety, They haven't moved to that next space of 'Okay, how do I incorporate what I've learned about the world , but also move forward with a belief that allows me to engage in a way that is consistent with my other values.'

Marvie: A lot of people don't like to feel angry, it makes them feel uncomfortable. But if given the option of like, anger or sadness. Most people feel more comfortably riding with anger because it feels like a more productive emotion, right? It's the call to action.

So, people posture like, that's what activism looks like, or that's what taking a stand looks like, but it doesn't actually have to. It's from a defended place. Like, we're all just trying to be okay.

Katie: We've talked a little bit about safety and beliefs and how that can be triggering, how the challenging of those can be triggering either because we just discover something that we believe is true to be untrue or we're just entering into an arena where people are challenging those beliefs and we have to kind of defend them, right? But I don't want to miss the fact that, that politics also engages [00:15:00] the material world and our physical and material safety in a very concrete way because politics affects policies, which then affect our well being. can you talk a little bit about how understanding that can help us understand the impact of politics on, on our mental health.

Maslow came up with this hierarchy of need, this pyramid that addresses what needs needs to be met before we can kind of go to more abstract understandings. Before I can talk about my self esteem, if I don't have dinner on the table, if I don't have shelter, if I don't have, a



safe home, like our brains just can't do that. It needs to have those basic needs met and there are millions of people who don't have that. We'll be arguing past each other if one person is talking about this abstract concept and what I'm worried about is my electricity getting cut off.

Marvie: So I think being cognizant of everyone is at a different level there and making sure the basic needs are being taken care of. But also being aware that not everyone might be positioned where I'm positioned [00:16:00] in terms of where I can worry.

Like if I'm worried about feeding my kids, I'm not going to be worried about making sure there are certain bathrooms that are available to everyone.

Katie: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. And, as we think about how to engage politically, that can show up in a couple different ways. So one would be just trying to be curious about the person you're engaging and thinking through where they might be in the hierarchy. And especially if what they're saying or what you know about them means they're at one of those lower levels of needs, really taking care and taking that into consideration. But then also being introspective and saying, where am I on this. We all have different things that, we really, really care about. Sometimes we actually have agreement about the topics, but we just disagree about how important they are. I think looking through that, through the lens of that hierarchy of need can really help us have more understanding of each other's priorities.

Marvie: That's what I was going to basically say. Like in my example of , if I [00:17:00] can't feed my kids, I'm not so worried about the bathroom designation. That doesn't mean I don't think that bathroom designation may be important. I just, if I'm triaging here, if, we're going to have a conversation to solve things, I want to make sure my children are fed first.

And depending on how we package that, that may sound like I don't care about bathrooms. I don't care about the rights that you're fighting for. But what it really is, is like this need of mine, this basic need, what feels like a foundational need. I can't address other things until this piece is addressed.

Katie: Okay. So we've been talking about how politics can be inherently triggering, how sometimes even just engaging politically can be traumatic, and how we kind of begin to recover from that. I want to pivot to thinking about how we create safer political spaces. And here I think the way you distinguish between consent and boundaries is really interesting, so can you talk a little bit about creating safety for others and also creating [00:18:00] safety for ourselves?

Marvie: Yeah. So the one thing that popped up in my head when you were talking about creating safety, was I do think that there is an anxiety that exists that I need to know everything about what I'm saying before I engage in a conversation. And that's really



overwhelming. And so if we're curious about creating a space that feels less stressful, can I have questions and not be met with an overwhelming amount of opinions or judgment. Not knowing everything needs to be an okay thing, also.

If I engage in a conversation with you, let's just find some information. Like, where do you stand on this? And where do you stand on that? And what do you think of these examples? Because people get very passionate about their belief systems and understanding certain topics, it creates an increase in temperature for people who aren't as comfortable in, like they haven't spent, however long [00:19:00] researching things or consuming lots of news or media or articles.

Let's be curious rather than like, here's these articles that I read or here's this and that. Like, you know, rather than a debate, an actual curiosity and inviting people that don't feel as confident into the conversation. Can we be curious without that feeling threatening to other people?

That other piece is that, not everyone is comfortable, for, reasonable reasons, engaging in political conversations. It's overwhelming; it's emotional. People assign character value, and it can change your opinion of how you feel about people. So, being conscious about when you invite someone in to conversation that you have their consent? If you're like, 'Hey, I was thinking maybe we could talk about this,' and them being able to say yes or no. Of being like, 'Oh, I'm not comfortable with that topic. Or there's a part of me that doesn't want to change how I feel about you and if I hear your opinion, I'm worried that [00:20:00] that might fundamentally change forever. And that is its own core belief that I would then have to reconcile. Like this person that I love holds this value that I, I really, really don't. For some people engaging in debates and political conversations is fun, like it's actually a pastime or it's riveting or it's compelling. For a lot of people it doesn't feel that way. So being conscious about what am I asking when I'm being curious about someone else's position. Is it because I want to convey mine? Is it because I want to have a debate? Is it because I really want to gain a better understanding of their perspective? Am I trying to convince them? Are they trying to convince me?

And so there's consent both ways. And I can be like, I'm not up for this conversation. So I think being thoughtful about who we enter into those conversations with, why we are entering into a conversation. If it's like, ah, there was this thing I heard and I can't quite organize my thoughts around [00:21:00] how I feel about it. Let's talk it through and see if someone's open of doing that. That then would be the consent piece, not just like pontificating and sharing, my opinions.

It's a bit of why, you know, social media and, posting, like, our, our stream of consciousness about these things can feel really overwhelming because, if I sign into a social media, I'm giving my consent that I guess I'll consume what's, on here.



But there is this notion of, like, this freedom that people feel to just share all of their opinions and beliefs. There's not a lot of consent around that .

Katie: You brought up a couple of points that I really want to highlight. One is, is this idea of, of curiosity and it being okay for both sides to be curious and to not know.,

I think on the consent piece, it is. I think it would really fundamentally transform how we have conversations if we just check in: to be like, hey, would you mind talking to me about this? Like, I don't understand this and, and I'd love to hear your opinion, especially for people from the other side. Entering [00:22:00] into discussions with people that agree with us is one thing. But if we're going to enter into conversations with people where we really are trying to learn ,I just think giving the chance to say, 'are you down for this' would be transformative.

Because if other people ask me, there's areas where I'm ready to learn and to listen and then there are some that, that I'm not. And them honoring that, it feels really affirming and I think just that question at the very beginning could change the tenor of a lot of our conversations with our neighbors and family.

Marvie: And then I hadn't thought about it in the social media context , but I do think it's hard because sometimes you'll, go on Facebook or you go on Insta to connect with your friends and find out how their family's doing. That's what you think you're signing up for. But then because of the way the feeds work and the algorithms, now you're consuming political information that you didn't want to consume. And sometimes it's hard to not finish reading it. But it's, just the way the feeds work make consent hard because why people post and why people are following each other may not be the same This is, I think the part of the thread of [00:23:00] you're talking about is, like, if something pops up on a feed or a comment that I don't agree with, while I can swipe or I can ignore it, there is a part that is like, well, what is that side saying? I kind of need to know what the other side is thinking so, there's a pull to get more information, even if that destabilizes.

I would encourage, if it doesn't feel good to you to just scroll past it. Like do that, right? But being aware if I have the desire to deep dive into the opposition's comments, why is that? How is that serving me? Does that stand to make me angry or does that stand to entrench my position? Does that increase my understanding of what they're doing? Because the emotionality will sometimes make us lean into something we don't actually want to.

Katie: So you talked about consent. How is consent different from boundaries?

Marvie: so a lot of people feel like boundaries are saying I won't let you talk to me that way, or I won't let you do this, but boundaries have nothing [00:24:00] to do with what, other people will do. Boundaries are saying, this is what I will do.



And so like, there are certain, you know, news platforms that my boundary is to not have those things on in my home . I can't control whether or not someone else has that on in their home.

The boundary is what I will be willing to do.

For example, if someone goes to a town hall and they, elect by going there to listen to whatever is happening, it's good to check in with ourselves to be like, what is my boundary going to be around? If they start swearing, if they start name calling or using biggoted language, my boundary is not, I will demand that they don't do that. My boundary will be that I then leave.

It's, how will I stay safe in a situation? And that can be leaving, that can be reminding myself of my core values, that could look like a number of ways.

But I think we often get confused with thinking that me having a boundary is me telling you how you should be treating me, but that's not a boundary. A boundary is this is what [00:25:00] I will do should X happen.

Katie: So I think your town hall meeting example is really pertinent. You're going into a space where there will be debate. To me the way you're using boundaries is, like coming up with a plan for what happens when things are triggered, when things begin to violate your values.

And I think the bigoted language is a good example there. Like what do I do if someone around me is using language that I think dehumanizes others. then here's my plan. My plan is to walk away. My plan is, to speak up and engage, even though that might feel a little bit scary. But you have to kind of decide what your plan is if something happens. And so you're identifying both your triggers but also your way of keeping yourself safe. Is that right?

Marvie: Yeah, and the boundary in that example would not be , I will stop that person from using the language. The boundary could be I don't let that go unnoticed? Like, I will reflect that language is not, you know, productive for us here. And maybe that person [00:26:00] continued to use that language, but you had your boundary of like, at least I've conveyed my value system here. Having a plan of what will I do should this particular line be crossed? It might be assert myself. It might be withdraw.

Katie: So we think about how trying to get others' consent as how we create safety for others. But we can think about boundaries as how we create safety for ourselves.

Marvie: Yeah, I think it's a good framework.



Katie: Okay. You, you mentioned this a little bit earlier and I want to dig in a little bit. One of the findings in some of the research you shared with me was that both regulation and dysregulation are contagious. Can you explain why that is and how that contagion might work in the political realm?

Marvie: Yeah, I mean, as humans, we relate nervous system to nervous system. For any of our listeners who are our parents, we know that, co regulation can be very powerful. If our toddler is really dysregulated and we join them by getting frustrated, that can, send itself into its own little [00:27:00] spiral.

Or if we're having a wonky day, our kids can kind of feel it. So we want to co regulate in a way that serves us. In the toddler example, what is helpful if my kid is spinning out is, to, calm my system down and talk with them one on one so that they can co regulate with me versus the other round.

When we're in a group together, there is a desire to be on the same regulated frequency. And so if I'm engaging, me staying regulated helps us to have a calm conversation, versus if I start getting amped up and dysregulated, the person that I'm talking with might start to assume, you know, wow, like this is very scary for her.

So being thoughtful around, why are we getting amped up before seeking out environments in which we're getting dysregulated around these issues. Why is that?

That kind of goes back to my point about anger feeling like this really productive feeling. Maybe we're going into those groups where there's lots of anger [00:28:00] and energy because it feels like a productive space, Where if I'm in a more calm state. I'm not in fight or flight, I'm a bit more vulnerable, which is why this idea of having these calm conversations can feel a little tricky. But being conscious about those pieces of it, we can invite someone to downregulate with us and have a calm conversation and be curious.

Katie: Mm hmm.

When I think about co regulation, I think about some of the stuff I learned when I was working at the shelter, which is that they will copy your body language. If your body language is tense, the person you're talking to's body language tense. If you cross your arms, they'll cross thier arms. But if you are calm, they'll begin to do that too. It's automatic in many ways, this, this kind of mirroring.

So just knowing what you're going into, so you're ready for it,



is this going to be a calm space or is this going to be a more passionate engaged, space that may begin to feel dysregulating knowing that's coming because biologically, I can't really do anything about the fact that, I will begin to co regulate.

But also the potential to. to [00:29:00] bring the other side down by remaining calm and by staying regulated, which could maybe change the tenor of the conversation.

Marvie: Well, it's kind of like the flight attendant, example on a plane, right? Where like, if I'm afraid to fly and my nervous system is already in a place where I'm in fight or flight, I feel scared.

But if the flight attendants are like going about their business, you know, serving the drinks and they're fine, they're not worried, then I don't need to be worried, right? I'm co regulating with them. Now, if they're freaking out and they're buckled in and holding on for dear life because the turbulence, that's my signal. Like, okay, maybe it makes sense to freak out. When people are really dysregulated around us, it's going to enter into our brain. Like, is that because I'm unsafe? Is there something bad happening here? Do I need to heighten my nervous system to prepare me to take care of something? Those questions come up when you are around other people who are either becoming dysregulated or are dysregulated.

Katie: I feel like I am the worst person to sit next to in the plane because I'm gripping [00:30:00] and sending signals that I'm not safe, even when it's totally fine, so don't co regulate with me on, the airplanes. but I also want to say in respect to politics dysregulation feels like a very clinical term and one people don't use a lot with respect to themselves necessarily to be like, I'm super dysregulated right now. Maybe, maybe some do who have, you know are either trained or have been to therapy and, and have this, this language around us.

But, for me in politics, the words that come up, are fear and anger. So if we enter an environment, I think what you said before about like, You're looking at something and you're seeing is the way the reason this person is acting is it because something unsafe is about to happen.

And so when we meet people who are angry or who are operating out of this sense of fear, which I think both parties are very engaged in fear based rhetoric and pretty drastic fear based rhetoric.

So I think part of applying this, psychological concept is saying, okay, [00:31:00] here's anger. Here's fear. When I see that, my body is automatically going to begin to scan because it knows that anger and fear come from a lack of safety.

Would you say that's right?



Marvie: Yeah. And our brains do this really fast.

Katie: Like we almost can't help it, right?

Marvie: Yes, it's automatic.

Katie: But like your flight attendant example, or sitting next to someone who is much calmer than you in the plane, if we enter the political space, even if there's anger and fear. If we come in emanating a sense of safety and like, it is okay to have this conversation. It is okay to be curious and to not know and to do all of those things that can begin to affect other people's sense of safety too, right?

Because they see us and they're like, that person doesn't feel unsafe. So maybe my environment is not as scary as I thought it was.

Marvie: Well, and like, a lot of people, will end up having these conversations with family and friends, and there is a piece that needs to be reassuring that, our relationship will be okay at the end of this conversation. So if someone's getting, you know, amped up, one of the thoughts of like, well, what happens to this relationship. I've never seen you [00:32:00] yell this way, or I've never seen you, speak in this manner, and that feels really disconcerting, and it's disorganizing. When someone's getting really upset, there is that fear of will this relationship recover from that?

Being aware of the relational impacts of having these conversations, we want to take good care in that way, too, of being, like, there's still a person behind these positions and beliefs.

Katie: Well, and, and I think then it goes back to that consent piece that you were talking about, as if we began those conversations with like, hey, is it okay that we talk about this? It then also opens the door for later, if it's starting to get triggering, to say, hey, it's starting to feel like it's a lot, like, do we want to walk away from this right now or do we want to keep on going?

And then that's a chance to reassure that the relationship's still safe. I still see us as okay, even as we're engaging on this. And it's also okay to begin to disengage because we're going to keep the relationship intact.

Right All right, so we've talked about politics [00:33:00] and trauma. We're now going to do the third big topic, which is spirituality. It's the third pillar of cultural change that This Election is trying to bring to the forefront.



I know your specialty is in trauma, but I was wondering, from that lens, from the clinical lens, what role you think spirituality plays in helping us recover from trauma and also in helping us to enter spaces that are potentially triggering.

Marvie: I think spirituality falls within that realm of like, it's really important to us as humans to make meaning out of things. And so for some people, that answer is through spirituality, for some people it's not right. We are all trying to make meaning of this world and our experience. And sometimes that will look spiritual.

Katie: Have you seen in the ways in which you've helped your clients recover from small T trauma, their own spirituality be helpful in that reorganizing process where you move from these broken beliefs to new ones?[00:34:00]

Marvie: Yeah. I mean, it goes back to that organizing thing I keep saying over and over again. Faith has a great organization to it and it lands and makes sense to a lot of people. It really resonates and feels meaningful and true. And that is the crux of healing from small T traumas, however, that works for you. What you come up with needs to feel real. Real and true and serve you in a way that allows you to engage in the world in a way that lines up with your values, that is integral to your core self.

The human desire to try and connect with that is, is really real.

Katie: It's interesting because I think, One of the, goals of this project is to offer spiritual practices that can help people heal and prepare themselves for political engagement. And I, I like this idea of spirituality as what we believe is true of the world. And then we can think about these spiritual practices as things that connect us to those [00:35:00] truths, right? And maybe there are things that help us find those truths, and that can look so many different ways, for many different faiths and many different people, and everybody's individual experience. But this idea of practicing as a way to both discover and root into those truths that that give our life meaning, especially when they're shifting.

Marvie: And that, and that's the task of life too, because there are a lot of things that will shift over the course of our lifetime, right? Our lived experiences impact our perspectives and our understandings. And so this task will likely be asked of us many, many times in our life.

And, you know, there are people that resist that task and they're like, nope, this just, is what it is. And they do that for safety purposes. For this thing to no longer be true is such an overwhelming idea that it just overwhelms their system.



But the reality is that there will be so many things that happen in our life that will, require us to do this.

Katie: I mean, and politics is only one small part [00:36:00] of that, right? There's a lot of other things that can bring this about.

Marvie: mmm. hmmm.

Katie: Well, in closing, I want to kind of go back to some of the goals of the This Election project, and one of those is to empower people to engage in politically healthy ways.

The research out there is really interesting that some of the mechanisms by which we regulate in the face of chronic stress or trauma, actually decreased political engagement. The goal of this project is not just to help us heal and feel better about our political system or about, about our political experiences, but also to go back in and engage.

Katie: Hopefully with more knowledge and with some of these practices, we can both be more wholehearted as ourselves, but we can also go out into the world and be active citizens. And so my question to end us off is how this conversation has changed the way you plan to engage politically this season.

Marvie: yeah, I mean I think I purposely don't ingest a lot of news [00:37:00] and politics. It feels overwhelming. As a young person, it maybe it felt too complicated .

I felt overwhelmed that I would need to know what my exact position is on a particular issue before engaging in a conversation. I want to be more open about being like: let me be curious, let me try to have the conversations and learn a bit more.

And, and even being one of those people that I don't need to have all the answers in order to engage thoughtfully. That also means I don't need to stay in conversations that I don't want to . I have my boundaries around it. Being more intentional about it which involves reducing my anxiety around it . Of being like, okay, what happens if I, read this or if I have to reconcile some new beliefs.

So it's the idea of, I'm willing to grow, I'm open to information that might make me rethink certain things. So I think in this, political cycle, that will be something I move forward with more intention about.

Katie: Well, I so appreciate that. And I think that will resonate with a lot of people. I know that I went [00:38:00] through a phase where I also very deliberately walked away from the news and from political conversations. And I in an earlier phase of life was one of those who really loved them. So that, that feels so true and I think will be, will be true for a lot of people.



I think one of the things that I will take from this conversation is where you began, which is the importance of, of curiosity and of following our curiosity and also creating space for ourselves and others to be curious in the political realm. That is a value and idea that I will try and bring with me when I read the news and when I chat with people about the election. And even as I begin to think about if I want to get involved in deeper ways. I think I'll just keep that embrace of curiosity front and center. So thank you for that.

All right. Well, that is it. So appreciate you taking your time to share your wisdom and your knowledge with us. I'm very grateful.

Marvie: Thank you for inviting me and allowing me to yap about this stuff. I think it's important.

Katie: [00:39:00] At this election, we see politics as practice, and each conversation is paired with a practice that you can take with you as you heal from and engage the political arena. Marvie has developed a workbook – a workbook that you can use to understand your triggers, unpack your small trauma, and create safer political spaces for yourself and others. That workbook can be found in the show notes and on our website at www.thiselection.org www.thiselection.org/spiritual_practices. That page includes the offerings from all of our guests, including [a free 30 day subscription to The Class's digital studio](#), which incorporates the practices we explore in Episode 3 with Jaycee Gossett. I hope Marvie's workbook and the practices from all of our guests connect you to the wisdom within and around you as you seek to be an active citizen this season.

You have been listening to this election where we explore the inner work that is needed to do politics differently.

Today we heard from Marvie Corbett. She practices at Rebecca Resnick and Associates and can be found at their website, [00:40:00] www.resnickpsychology.com. Our lovely theme music was written and performed by Ian Cochran.

I am your host, Katie Cochran, and I would love to hear how this landed for you. You can find me on Instagram @ katie.m.cochran, or you can send me an email at katie@thiselection.org.

If you've enjoyed this conversation, please subscribe, rate, and review the podcast on whatever platform you are listening through. This is the best way to help our vision of a different type of politics reach as many people as possible.

Thank you for spending this time with me, and for the work you're doing to heal our politics. I am so grateful.