

Alison Whitmire: ... everyone. Hi, I'm Alison with Learning in Action. I am really excited for the next hour today and our podinar on Narrative Coaching, bringing new stories to life with our special guest, David Drake. I'll be introducing him properly in just a moment. What are our intentions for today? We're going to be talking about what is the role that story plays in our lives? How does narrative coaching work with this natural organic process of stories? We're going to be giving you a coaching demo that gives you a look at what narrative coaching actually looks like in practice.

Alison Whitmire: We'll be talking about the experience of narrative coaching for the coach, which is very different. My own experience as narrative coaching as a coach is very different, and what the experience for the coachee is and you'll get to see that too. And then what the elements of narrative coaching are that can be most readily applied and one of the things I found when I went to the narrative coaching program is there are things really from the beginning I could pull out and use and we'll be talking about some of that today. That's kinda how we'll go.

Alison Whitmire: So, meet the team. We've got Kris Harty, our director of brand and community, and the brains and legs and everything behind the podinar. She puts her heart and soul in it and we so appreciate you, Kris. Thank you very much. Kris is going to be monitoring the chat today and the Q&A. Then we have Kristen Lindinger. Hi, Kristen.

Kristen Linding: Hello.

Alison Whitmire: Kristen's working in training with Cory and she's going to be behind the scenes. She'll help you with any technical issues you might be having... on any questions you have on anything behind the scenes, so they'll be there for you. For now, I'll see you two later.

Alison Whitmire: (laughing) So what the heck is a podinar? Something we made up. It's across between a podcast and a webinar. Hopefully, the best of both. It's interactive interview style like a podcast, so it's going to be a casual conversation between David and I and webinar style and interactive. So, you all get to ask your questions and adjust the course potentially of our conversation. Love that.

Alison Whitmire: So why are we doing these podinars? Honest to goodness, I and my team have an extraordinary passion for supporting the work all of you are doing. Supporting the work of transformative change, helping you thrive, doing what you've chosen to do in this world and we want to do that by bringing you thought leaders from a wide variety of spaces that contribute to what we do, and so that we hopefully inspire you and inform you to be doing whatever it is you're doing, even more fully expressed. So that's why we do what we do. We love it.

Alison Whitmire: So if you want to chat, and we hope you do, you'll use the chat box and if you want everyone to see your chat, you want to turn that from all panelists to all panelists and attendees and then everyone can see and you can be in community in your conversation. If you have a question you want to ask me or ask David, you can put that in the Q&A box and one of the things that we ask is that you synthesize your question down a bit, so that it's bite sized and pretty specific.

Alison Whitmire: What can be challenging is to get a question that can feel a little bit like oil in the ocean and do a good job of chunking it down, so the more you can do that, the better we'll be able to answer your questions. Finally, how do you participate in a poll? You're going to find out how, because we're going to launch a poll right now. How familiar are you with narrative coaching? And if you'll just participate in that poll, I'll move on to interview ... or introducing David.

Alison Whitmire: So, David.

David Drake: Yes.

Alison Whitmire: It is awesome to be with you.

David Drake: Thank you.

Alison Whitmire: So David is the founder and creator of this field he invented, which ... I think it's so amazing ... called Narrative Coaching and it's offered through WBECS. We'll give you the information specifically on how you can find out more about that at the end of the podinar. He's a master coach and a thought leader for the institute of coaching. He's editor of the philosophy and practice of coaching. He's PhD, hence the doctor part, of Human and Organizational Development and he's author of the amazingly brilliant ... I can say it because I read and experienced it ... "Narrative Coaching: Bringing New Stories to Life."

Alison Whitmire: I'm going to come back and look at the end of our poll. Okay, so let's look at the results. Can you see the results to the poll, David?

David Drake: I can.

Alison Whitmire: Okay, so we've got 14% have attended training. One, I'm fairly familiar, somewhat familiar, and yeah so barely and not. So, over 50%. So, new audience for us.

David Drake: Great.

Alison Whitmire: Yay. I just want to start by just telling you how genuinely grateful I am for you and for this work. There is a long time when I felt like there was something wrong with me and my coaching.

David Drake: Hmm.

Alison Whitmire: And I bought into this idea that you had to have a contract, you had to have an agreement. And if you can't get an agreement, and then the coaching session we get a contract that there's something wrong. I could never get over this feeling that I was pursuing my own agenda.

David Drake: Hmm.

Alison Whitmire: And so there's just ... Anyway, I could go on and on, but I won't. I have just been relieved by just how organic and how natural coaching can feel and I don't feel so wrong anymore for what felt so natural, right? I was fighting my instinct, so thank you.

David Drake: You're welcome.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, so where did narrative coaching come from?

David Drake: So, is it a rhetorical question? [crosstalk 00:07:20]

Alison Whitmire: No, I'm curious about what the origin story is.

David Drake: Yeah. Sort of like you, I found my way accidentally into coaching almost 25 years ago maybe now and I was intrigued by coaching, but I wasn't very attracted to some of the early coaches I met and it all seemed a bit not like me. So I thought, "I can't really fit into this field." And then I had an opportunity to create a capstone program for a management certificate for a client that I was working with through the university and I discovered that they had never done anything like this before. I was the first cohort. So I thought, "I'll make up a coaching program for them." And there were no coaching books really or ... there was nothing and I thought, "I'll just make up something." And it was extraordinarily well received and I thought, "Oh, I like coaching, but I'm just going to do it this way," and not the way I was observing at that point in coaching's evolution.

David Drake: And so then I finished my PhD around coaching, built the narrative coaching model from that, and two things stand out about it for me. So one was making a space for all the people who would like to coach a different way by spending the last 20 years [inaudible 00:08:45] academic digging, writing, thinking, arguing, debating ... to make space that many others now have filled enormously with somatic based coaching and various forms of evidence. So I felt like I created a safe space to continue to reimagine what coaching could become so people like you and I could be at our best. And the second thing that was really important in those early days ... almost 20 years ago now ... when I was challenging one of my own narratives about myself. I have a long history in my family of the ultimate value is modesty. One shall not stand out at all costs. And it's why I did so well in Australia because it's a land of, "Don't be a tall poppy." It's like, "Cool. These are my people." (laughing)

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing)

David Drake: And my Dad had passed away right before I finished my PhD so he never got to see me graduate which was really a tragedy for me at the time. He was the one person in my family who could really appreciate what a PhD meant, so I decided to dedicate the PhD to him. And then I thought of how much he had held himself back, even though he had a very successful career, but never really believed in himself in a way that I saw him. And I realized that he too was this sort of [inaudible 00:10:05] of "One should never stand out and really get credit for what one has done." So I said, "Enough of that. I'm done with that." And I just had my daughter at that point and I said, "I'm not going to pass that on to her." And so I said, "I'm going to go and make something out of what I've created."

David Drake: So one day at my desk, I said, "I'm going to start narrative coaching today." And I did.

Alison Whitmire: Oh my gosh!

David Drake: And then I thought, "Oh, there's some kind of committee I have to go get permission from." I thought, "No, no. [inaudible 00:10:38] I'm just going to make this up." And then I thought ... I reviewed in mind all the great psychologists I'd studied for years and years and years and I thought, "They didn't wait for permission." As a matter of fact, they actually fought to create the space for their idea. And so I thought, "I want to join the ranks of those people." Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah. I love that. That's inspiring. So, what's the role that story plays in our lives?

David Drake: Yeah ... So story ... It's really at the heart of our identity, so our identity is in large part a mashup of narratives. Many were born into it because of our gender, our sexual identity, our culture, our location, our time in history. Some things like what is it mean to be a man or a woman. What is an American? What is a good American? How does one be a proper neighbor? And so all these things that really shape who we are early in life in ways we often don't understand. And so stories help us articulate these narrative patterns and threads that form who we are.

David Drake: And so one of the things we do in narrative coaching is that before we try to embark on a change process with anyone, we want them to be at a higher level of awareness and peace. What is the story you are telling yourself now? And what we find is that that's actually a significant portion of the transformative process. It's not some gigantic breakthrough, or some big thing they've got to go chase off in the future. It's like, "What if I just sat still and said," ... like I did to myself ... "I'm really tired of this family story about my family and myself. I've held myself back for too long. I'm not going to do that anymore."

David Drake: So what story do you want ... What am I going to tell myself? [inaudible 00:12:33] who really celebrates what he's worked his ass off to go do, and I want to bring this to the world. And so then when you form a new story for yourself, you start to talk differently. You stand differently. You start meeting different kinds of people. I found my early tribe in the academic story space before I even tried it in coaching. And so stories are just the vernacular ... it's the medium by which we evolve our identity, we connect to each other, we find our place in history, we build sense of meaning, and it's just the most natural and ancient of human forms of being in the human community.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, Yeah. So, if you would, talk through how story is used in narrative coaching and the model of narrative coaching.

David Drake: Yeah, so one of our core ... our number one principle is that everything you need is right in front of you. Everything. And so what we're trying to do is help coaches recognize there's massive science behind all this but it really, it's the art that makes it so wonderful. And to help us realize that when somebody is telling us a story in coaching, they're trying to make sense of something or get to meaning of something and they don't really know what that's about, which is why, as you know, we don't tend to set goals in coaching because I don't find those very useful for most people. Certainly in the beginning of coaching, I have absolutely no interest. I've been coaching for over 20 years. It's rare that we ever come close to ending a conversation anywhere near where we began. (laughing) And so most of us don't know why we're really in coaching. We have usually a rationale or an incident or something, but it's really what we're really there to do gets revealed to us.

David Drake: And the stories are basically the doors into those rooms. And so we really support our coaches [inaudible 00:14:47] People can transform without crying, for example. You don't have to have the big breakthrough

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing)

David Drake: or the big life changing stories. Many of my most powerful sessions were around very simple anecdotes or stories. But then really getting them to drop into the experience of where that came from and how that feels. And I know that retreat you went to and watching the very brief encounter that that man had with his three chairs. And we really didn't have much context of anything because we don't need lots of information. The story is doing its work through him and he himself was shocked within three or four minutes. He's like ... He was so moved by something that we had no idea what had happened for him.

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing) It's so true.

David Drake: (Laughing)

Alison Whitmire: I was like, "What just happened?"

David Drake: And it's because ... And part of it is that the story's on a mission for the person.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: The story's trying to draw the person's attention to something they're not seeing or are afraid to see or excited to see but can't and so the story ... it starts coming out and their posture or the changes in their gestures or their face. And all we're doing ... well not all ... but what we are doing is just witnessing what the story is trying to bring out into the room. And helping almost midwife that so that it can show up. Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: And then stand there and witness with the client what they just did.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. Yeah, and what you just said that so resonated with me is just the story is on a mission and I think at some level before narrative coaching I got maybe conceptually this idea that we are every character in the stories we tell. I kind of got that, but it wasn't until I started understanding how to bring those characters into the coaching itself and have the characters coach the client, that I finally got it.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: That I really, yeah ... We're the story. The way I think about it is I'm the sherpa of the story.

David Drake: Yeah, yeah. (laughing)

Alison Whitmire: Right? Like okay story, do your work. You're wanting to do that work anyway.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. How do we get out of the way or facilitate it or guide it.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah. So as you know, a lot of coaches will have a question about like, "Gee, how do you sell coaching into an organization when there's no coaching agreements and no goals?"

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Can you speak to how you deal with that?

David Drake: Yeah, it's tricky and just as a practical tip, what I've done well for myself is I just demonstrate what I do in the interview. I coach the person interviewing me. And they go, "Oh, we'd like some of that."

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing)

David Drake: (Laughing) I'll have what he's having.

Alison Whitmire: I'll have what he's having. That's right. Yeah. Absolutely.

David Drake: Because often you're interviewing either a business leader who doesn't really understand coaching or an HR person who's got a thousand things to do that day and trying to just ... it becomes too mechanical sometimes and we just try to demonstrate it. We try to talk to them about adult development and how that really happens. And one of the things that's really appealing to narrative coaching is we can actually ... which I demonstrate to them consistently in these interviews ... I can help your clients get to what really matters to them in much less time 'cause we're not going to be chasing goals or building plans or ... We're trying to figure out what's the narrative that's getting in their way. And there could be skills or resources they need to go access, but fundamentally it comes down to, for most people, if you've been around leadership long enough, you've been to plenty of trainings. You've read plenty of books. You've gone to plenty of whatevers. And it's really about something within yourself that's making that hard to access and operationalize in your current work context.

David Drake: And so we just tell them ... What we want to understand from the stakeholders, what matters most to you in terms of what success would look like for you. We do some expectation management about what's really possible in coaching. We have no special wands that we are given in coaching school, right?

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing)

David Drake: We're trying to change an adult's behavior which is really difficult and so we try to just help and just [inaudible 00:19:44] and I said when we end up with specific objectives ... which we get to, but not at the beginning ... the appropriate people know and get their acceptance and buy-in and we also developed some tools to help challenge the other stakeholders in terms of supporting the client to be successful. So we got some really interesting feedback tools which get to the systemic nature of the narratives in which our clients live and the realization that many of our suboptimal behaviors are co-constructed with the people in that situation who often benefit from perpetuating the very thing they're complaining about.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. I'm going to attempt to do a blog on my use of the 720. So for those of you ... I have been blogging on narrative coaching for a while and I imagine everyone who's listening is familiar with the 360 tool ... going in and doing 360 ... and what David introduced in narrative coaching was this idea of a 720 where

you're working with the interaction between the leader and the team because the leader has a story about themselves and they can change that story about themselves, but if their team is still locked in the prior story, they're going to encourage those prior characters to come out.

David Drake: And then the gears just grind and the whole thing just sort of comes to a halt.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, so anyway, hopefully, if I can carve out the time ... It was, yeah, it's a story. My 720 that we did is a story in itself.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Whitmire: Okay, so we're going to be coming chat. Think about your questions. We're going to be going to the audience in just a moment. And before we do, one last question for you, David.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: So one of the things that I love that you set up... at least either I said or made up that you said it ... (laughing) is ... I think you said something like, "I know what happens when you give your coachees homework after a session.

David Drake: Yep.

Alison Whitmire: They don't do it. I'm like, "Oh my God, thank you so much! It's not me!" Because my clients don't do their homework.

David Drake: No.

Alison Whitmire: They don't. They never have and I thought, "You know, it's just me. I'm not designing the actions clearly enough. I'm not defining them right enough. I'm not getting enough at stake. I'm not anchoring them in what's important [inaudible 00:22:26] right?" And then I just ... I'm like, "Okay. It's actually not me." (laughing)

David Drake: No, it's not.

Alison Whitmire: So can you talk about how narrative coaching works with that dynamic?

David Drake: Yeah, so one of the underpinning principals, authors I guess, of narrative coaching is Paulo Freire who wrote a lot in the '70s and '80s about pedagogies and from that, I take that his whole thing was that we think of, in terms of school, that the experts give you stuff and you just empty it into your head and then you spit it out on a test. And he wanted to reverse that and put people in charge of their own learning and be aware of their own stories and have agency to transform their own stories.

David Drake: And what that means for this is we engage a lot in narrative coaching, what we call serious play. We play with serious issues and what we find is that it really opens people up. We don't take it light-heartedly where we don't make fun of serious issues, but we realize that they have, often, a very rigid or contained view of how ... "Oh, this is so hard" or "I can't ever do this" or "I've always been told that's true about me, but I don't know what to do about that". And it all begins so much and who would want to start on that journey, right? You're stuffed before you even start, so we said, "Well, let's just put that over there and work with that in a way that's appropriate for you, but in kind of a playful way."

David Drake: (coughing) Excuse me.

David Drake: And I don't have any faith in my clients acting on what we're going to do from the session.

Alison Whitmire: Thank you!

David Drake: Yeah. And some do, but I don't want to have that be the weak link in my coaching. I don't want to have had an amazing hour with a client and then have this prayer that somehow they're gonna go magically transform because they're gonna run into all kinds of headwinds of competing narratives and demands and distractions. And so I thought ... And I remember I had a breakthrough years ago with a client who consistently had not done what he said he was going to do. And I went through the whole scolding and, "Oh what did I do wrong?" and ... This is ridiculous. He's a bright guy. He doesn't want to do these things. If it mattered to him, really, he would do them. So I thought, "Okay, we need to change this." And so I just said to him sort of flippantly, "Well then I'm going to make you do it right now." (laughing)

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing)

David Drake: And he goes, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, because for this hour, there's nobody on the planet who cares about you more than I do, who is more supportive of you, knows more about how to help you, and if you can't do it with me right now, you're never going to do it on your own." I mean, I don't, right? (laughing) So we do a lot of work in narrative coaching, giving people new experiences they've never had before, as a way to open up new access to themselves, new awarenesses of themselves, new freedoms to go be somebody else.

David Drake: And then we say, "So what would that look like if you actually did that in your life? What conversation would most benefit if you could show up that way?" And we want to give people the taste of being successful. So for example, when I used to do a lot of coaching in a Big Four firm. A lot of these men, in particular, really struggled around team development, team vulnerability, all that coaching and so I said, "There's too much pressure for them to practice at

work first." So I said, "Let's practice now. Talk to me." What was the hardest day of your life? Or we talk about our dads or ... I want to give them, "I can do this." And then, who else in your life would you like to go talk to? "I like to talk to my son. I've just lost touch with my son because he's in sports at school and I'm busy and I just don't see him anymore and I miss the times we used to have when he was younger."

David Drake: And so we want to give people chances to experiment. Get immediate feedback, immediate support, immediate scaffolding ... Where could you take this next? And so as we do throughout narrative coaching, we're walking alongside them on the journey that they're on, asking ourselves, "What do they need most from me right now?" That's it. Right now.

Alison Whitmire: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

David Drake: And then we sort of help them every now and then, just kind of pull out, look at the segment of the journey they just finished. Celebrate that and anchor that and say, "Now what? What's next for you?" Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. Cool. Okay, Kris, what are you seeing in the chat box?

Kris Harty: Yeah, we've had about three or four questions and

David Drake: Great!

Kris Harty: The first one here, which is from [inaudible 00:27:19]

David Drake: Mm

Kris Harty: Asks, "How does our story relate to our purpose?"

David Drake: Well, in many ways, our stories live in our whole body, not in our mind as we often think and so it really animates our soul, our whole soma is really a reflection of the stories we've accumulated over our life and we've made central to us, and that's one piece. But I think, more importantly right now, if I think about how life felt as a child like when I was my daughter's age. You had a story about career paths that were open to you or not and you had a sense of a future. The world was growing over the second World War and so your purpose, for many of us ... obviously it's different depending on a lot of different factors, but you had a sense of direction or possibility in whatever size of scope that was. And so your story ... you were part of something, right? In the '60s and '70s, you were in different protest movements or different changes, bringing women to the church or doing all kinds of things.

David Drake: And I think now, we're swirling a gajillion stories constantly. We're bombarded with news and information and music and sound and I observe in a lot of my clients that their stories just don't add up anymore. They don't seem to serve a

bigger purpose. What is all this for? What is this job? "I'm pushing papers around" or "What am I doing?" And so I think we live in a ... With climate change and some of the challenges we face as a planet, I think people are really hungry.

David Drake: You see just a lot of younger people, the millennial types, you see this and they're really driven by purpose. Is what I'm doing making a difference to somebody somehow?

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: So a lot of what we're doing, in terms of using the art of coaching in careers or even in people at stages at life are trying to make big changes, is finding the story that's bubbling, that's coming out of them and not worrying about form yet, but really naming that and then seeing if they can tie that to some bigger narratives that mean a lot to them and gives them a sense of purpose 'cause now my story links up to something that's bigger than me.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, beautiful. Thank you.

David Drake: Thanks, Kris.

Alison Whitmire: Kris, do you have another question for us?

Kris Harty: Yeah, I do. And I think this one maybe relates a little bit to where we're heading with this. From Erica Hoffman. Erica asks, "Are there specific challenges or opportunities where you find narrative coaching to be particularly helpful and conversely, are there any situations where you found the approach not helpful?"

David Drake: It's rare that it's not helpful, but there are situations in which it's harder for people to access narrative coaching. So for a lot of obscure reasons, I've done a lot of work with IT companies and tech companies and finance companies and all kind of things and for people that don't easily access their own inner experience, that don't easily traffic in metaphors, that live in or work in jobs that are very structured or rigid because of the nature of the job, so it's good that they're that way. Sometimes this can be difficult. They're more used to goal setting and action planning and things having steps and one thing to do and so for them, it can be a bit of a stretch, but they're also just human. So we find a way to find the humanity in them and for many of them, it's quite liberating to realize, "Oh, I don't have to be that way all the time."

David Drake: So sometimes there's not a match in how people are psychologically structured. It's harder for them to access narrative coaching in its fullest potential, but there's still wonderful things you can do for them. And I've done that for years. I suppose the other challenge, and it's also an opportunity. We live in a time of extraordinary diversity. And so one of the things we really challenge our coaches is to be aware of your own formulative habits. What are the stories you tell yourself unconsciously often about women or about people from a certain racial background or white men on top of organizations and all kinds of stories we make up. And so I think learning to develop more sensitivity about our own blind spots, our own biases, but also to realize that there are a lot of different forms of stories, a lot of different endings of stories, and so that we can be more sensitive to the diversity of the populations that we often work with.

David Drake: And I remember... this is quick anecdote of that... I was doing a leadership program for a federal low income program. I had done this for years all over the west coast and we had like a hundred emerging leaders from all of [inaudible 00:32:32] states or something and were doing this program and I was teaching an MBA program at the time, so I had this brilliant curriculum I had made and this three day program and I had tested it out and, "Oh, this is going to be fabulous" and I got up front and then about two hours in I thought ... I'm very good at sensing energies in rooms ... I thought, "Why ... this is not going well. This is dying, here. Why is this dying? It's so good. Why are they not appreciating how good this is?" And I had to step back, 'cause you're like doing this in real time as you're doing the program, right? And so then I thought, "Okay, I just need to call a time out."

David Drake: So I just put my teaching notes or whatever down and just looked at the group. And the first thing that hit me, I thought ... Well, the obvious thing. There's a hundred people in this room. There's two men and 98 women. Of the 98 women ... which was not surprising for that agency ... of the 98 women, probably 50 to 60 of them were Hispanic or African American. I would make in a year, many multiples of what many of them make. Many of them came through this program themselves, that's one of the beauties of that program is it really brings people in and it trains them to actually lead programs, so it's really quite wonderful. I said ... But these women come from lives and places that are very different than mine which I sort of knew intellectually but I then really had to digger deeper and say, "This is the wrong program for them."

David Drake: So I took my binder ... my version of the binder they had ... opened up the rings and just dumped all my pages on the ...

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing) That's called trust right there.

David Drake: Yeah, and I said, "Here we go." And so I explained to them why I was doing that and I said, "This is the lesson." It was the last leadership program I ever did that way. And I said, "Because this is all material written by privileged white guys and so ... not that they don't have a lot of value ... but they're not relevant to you

right now." So to bide myself a little bit of time to plan the rest of my three days (laughing) I said, "Well, I'd like you to break into small groups and introduce yourself to your neighbor and tell them where you were born and tell us some things about why you liked where you were born ... what was good about that. And I want you to tell us about the most powerful person in your area. What gave them power? How did they get to be powerful? How did they use their power? And so we're basically going to identify a frames for leadership. And of course, the whole room erupted and they all clapped and two hours, they were still talking.

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing)

David Drake: It was fantastic.

Alison Whitmire: Oh, that's great.

David Drake: And so then we took those principles and we built the curriculum together for the other two and a half days. But the whole point of this, of course, this question is about using narrative coaching and diversity is a really important frame, more and more, to really seriously think about and it works well when you have people that are all in themselves and don't want to do coaching as window dressing, but that's the real deal. And we both have had many people who were quite skeptical of narrative coaching at the beginning who have been our biggest converts and fans. 'Cause once they realized, "Oh, I'm kind of hiding out as the skeptic here. But if I just stick my toe in this water, this could actually be quite helpful for me." And so they became huge converts in the end. So if that answers the person's question.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. So I'm going to suggest that we go into our coaching demo to make sure we have plenty of time.

David Drake: Sure.

Alison Whitmire: Does that work for you?

David Drake: It does.

Alison Whitmire: Okay. Where shall we start?

David Drake: You're going to tell me something about what triggered you?

Alison Whitmire: Yes. I don't want to though. Actually I do, but

David Drake: You sound like one of clients.

Alison Whitmire: I wish I hadn't suggested it, right? But (sigh)

David Drake: You're just modeling our clients.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: They want to change, but they don't want to change.

Alison Whitmire: I know. Okay. So, I had an event that triggered me and I get that because I'm triggered and stuff initially about me, so I get that it's not about anyone but me. And there's something, generally, when I'm triggered, I can kind of go, "Yeah, that's familiar." There's something about this particular one that I'm not ... I think it's a convergence of things. So, should I tell you the story of what happened? Or ..

David Drake: No.

Alison Whitmire: Okay.

David Drake: Well, you could. Does that feel important to you?

Alison Whitmire: Not really. 'Cause it wasn't about what happened. Ha.

David Drake: No, it never is.

Alison Whitmire: No, it never is!

David Drake: So maybe, as you think of it, maybe scan the story as it progressed in your mind and think, as you notice ... Where is the moment I started to notice, maybe even in hindsight, you notice that you were being triggered. What was happening then?

Alison Whitmire: So, I was asked the question that my reaction was to feel judged by.

David Drake: Uh huh. I see.

Alison Whitmire: That was the beginning.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: So you felt like there was an implicit judgment in what you were experiencing?

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. And I'm feeling really right about it being a judgment. (laughing)

David Drake: I see.

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing) Yeah.

David Drake: So what do you make of that?

Alison Whitmire: Well, [inaudible 00:38:32] I'm obviously judging back, so maybe that's like me, yeah. I felt judged and so I judge back and it's like dueling judges.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And if you were to frame that as a story, so what were you telling yourself that would cause you to be bothered by this?

Alison Whitmire: Oh, oh, that's a good question. Okay, I don't have all of it, but I have the thread of it. Not that it matters for the question. The question she asked was, "Are you ..." ... it's out of context, but the question is, "Are you a therapist?" And where I went with that was somewhere in the direction of ... like I should be ... or like I'm not ... or I don't know enough. That sounds right. I don't know enough. I should know more. I'm not qualified to be doing what I'm doing.

David Drake: There you go.

Alison Whitmire: That sounds right.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah. I'm not qualified to be doing what I'm doing.

David Drake: Right. And so what kind of person does work that they're not qualified to do?

Alison Whitmire: People ... I can't even come up with the word. Frauds, imposters

David Drake: Imposters, yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, just dishonest people.

David Drake: Yep.

Alison Whitmire: But also, there's another piece of ... like people who know a thimble of something, but they [inaudible 00:40:38] as if they know they have the ocean.

David Drake: Right.

Alison Whitmire: I don't know what that means, but ... Yes, those two things.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay. So when that story became active in you

Alison Whitmire: Uh huh

David Drake: How did you respond in this moment?

Alison Whitmire: Ha! Well, when I first got the question, I'm like, "No (laughing) ... I'm not a therapist." Because she interrupted me with the question.

David Drake: Oh.

Alison Whitmire: Which I was also a little irritated because we'd spent literally 30 minutes listening to her talk nonstop, uninterrupted, so I think there was also a little thing of like, quid pro quo, like we listened to you, so there was part of that, like it felt disrespectful. And what I'm fairly sure of is that there was some kind of shadow thing going on there for me because she was really inhabiting her selfness.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Whitmire: And, "No this is me, this is what I'm doing and it's awesome and it's great and there's nothing wrong in my entire life." And, yeah.

David Drake: And what are some words for those people? Or people in that space?

Alison Whitmire: I don't know. Gosh. The first word that comes up for me is braggart, but that doesn't quite fit it. Chest thumpers. That's what it is to me.

David Drake: Okay. So you now have these two stories. I'm a fraud and I'm a chest thumper.

Alison Whitmire: Or I would want to be. See, I'm not actually ... that's the shadow piece. You see, I'm so not that, but

David Drake: Yeah, so the fraud was the thing that was triggered in you.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah.

David Drake: The judgment you felt and the chest thumper was the shadow in you that was activated.

Alison Whitmire: Yes. Yeah.

David Drake: And so what happened as a result of this? What was the outcome of that interaction?

Alison Whitmire: So there was third piece which was ... I had shown up as I typically do, kind of warts and all. I say these are things that are good and I also say, "You know, and everything's not amazing." And so, I felt like I gave a balanced picture because that was, to a certain extent, the purpose of what we were doing was to see if we could ... to get help.[inaudible 00:43:24]

David Drake: Yep.

Alison Whitmire: And what happened was, I did present some things that were issues or challenges and then what she did, this same person, was instead of giving me support or help or affirmation or ideas or ... she just kind of kept ... she just repeated back to me the issues I'd said I'd had.

David Drake: (Laughing)

Alison Whitmire: So yeah (laughing) thank you.

David Drake: Thank you very much.

Alison Whitmire: And so it felt like salt on the wound. It really did. It felt like salt in the wound. Yeah.

David Drake: Okay.

Alison Whitmire: [inaudible 00:44:06]

David Drake: And what would you have liked to have done to get a different outcome?

Alison Whitmire: Well, I would like to have not have been triggered. And not that anything terrible happened, but I was checked out. It did check me out.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Whitmire: And I left feeling hurt and raw. And raw. Which didn't feel good.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: I totally get I can embody more of that chest thumper.

David Drake: Okay, so that's more alive for you right now.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, I meant that's ... I totally could be more of that and maybe if I was more of that, that that would ... that's part of it. And, yeah, it's part of me coming to grips like everything I'm doing is already enough.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: So how does that sound?

Alison Whitmire: That sounds fraudulent. (Laughing) Yeah, I can work on that.

David Drake: Of course it does. All your defenses are well-armored to protect you from that one.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah.

David Drake: So you can imagine that as the beginning of a story you could tell yourself in those moments when you feel triggered.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Like I'm not ... What would it be to be enough? How would being enough be in this ... yeah.

David Drake: Right. Let's imagine you were to summon up ... where does this story most live in you?

Alison Whitmire: Hmm...

David Drake: Even as you were telling it in this period.

Alison Whitmire: You know...

David Drake: Where do you feel the tension? Where do those stories reside?

Alison Whitmire: You know, what first comes up for me is ... and I've never heard anyone say this before, but it's like, in my skin. Things like that leave me feeling literally like ... raw, like yeah.

David Drake: Hmm... And if you were coaching somebody with raw skin, what would you wish for them or what would be helpful to them?

Alison Whitmire: Ah ... a container.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, I'd wish for a container.

David Drake: Yeah. And if you could create one of those for yourself in those moments, what would that look like and feel like?

Alison Whitmire: Yeah ... yeah, even as I think about it, it feels good.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah, that feels right. Yeah, containment is something that I've been working on. I didn't recognize it at the time that containment was what I was wanting or needing.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative) So when you get triggered by comments like you got in the very beginning, what would you tell yourself to remind yourself of the container?

Alison Whitmire: Hmm. There's ... that I'm separate from them. I mean, that's like ... yeah. That ... yeah. Like that's what they think that doesn't .. okay, that[inaudible 00:48:01].

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: (Laughing) But they're separate from me and yeah, that's just what comes up.

David Drake: Yeah. You know, when my daughter was young, she went to a really wonderful school and they had a child psychologist who did some things for the school. And one of the things he had was these 12 tools for young kids. She was like, six or seven at the time. And one of the tools...it's called... that every child was encouraged to go create was a quiet, safe place.

Alison Whitmire: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

David Drake: So even now at 17, she still creates this for herself in her room. And in the early days, it was blankets and stuffies and those kind of things, but now it's other ... but he said, "You need some place you can go that's not your parents, where you feel safe and happy. And if it's very clear for you, then you can also summon that up if you're outside on the playground or away and you're not in your safe space, you can just imagine it and you can feel it and it would be as real for you as if you were there." And she's carried that with her for over a decade now. That idea ... and she always makes sure that she has someplace like that for her. And wouldn't that be great to offer that for our clients and for ourselves?

Alison Whitmire: Uh huh. Uh huh.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, so there's a meditation that I have been doing, that I can be doing more intentionally around containership.

David Drake: Yeah. And I would [crosstalk 00:49:37] Go ahead.

Alison Whitmire: No, I just hadn't thought of applying it in that situation, but it's so exactly what I needed.

David Drake: Yeah. And I would make it as specific as possible. What color is it? What's it made out of it? How big is it? What's the door like? Who has the key?

Alison Whitmire: Mm. Mm-hmm (affirmative)

David Drake: Yeah and ... yeah. So is there anything else you'd like to explore or share about this for right now?

Alison Whitmire: No, I'd just say, I feel, gosh, I feel so much more grounded. It literally ... I feel more contained.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Literally, my skin feels tighter, like in a good way.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Whitmire: Like, in a holding me in way.

David Drake: Yeah, yeah. Right, yeah.

Alison Whitmire: (Sigh)

David Drake: And one of the things ... just as a last little, sort of, anchor for you ... sometimes if you're in a meeting ... like maybe it's an interview for a gig or a debrief for a significant person and that energy starts to come up in the room. Part of it you can visualize it in your ... you do a whole body piece ... but also sometimes... like I do this even for myself ... I'll just put my hand on top of the other hand and just touch skin to skin and just say, "I'll create the boundaries for myself."

Alison Whitmire: Mmmm.

David Drake: I don't feel safe right now so I need to pay attention and care for myself and just that skin to skin contact just grounds me.

Alison Whitmire: Mmmm.

David Drake: And reminds me about my own container, if you will.

Alison Whitmire: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Mm-hmm (affirmative)

David Drake: And which helps in a moment where you can just say, "I'm not going to meditate for five minutes"

Alison Whitmire: Right! (Laughing) Exactly.

David Drake: You can activate through some other somatic cue.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah.

David Drake: Good.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, good.

David Drake: All right, thanks. I appreciate you being willing to share all that.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, well thank you for the containment. (Laughing) Okay, so how about we go ... Kris, why don't you let us know what's going on in the chat, if there's anything David and I need to respond to here before we wrap up.

Kris Harty: Yeah, we've had a lot of really nice appreciative comments for both of you and from Ann Hirshel she says, "Since we could all use some safe space, it would be lovely to hear Alison's meditation."

Alison Whitmire: Oh You know, I'll tell you about it and it's recorded and I'll tell you I'm working with a shaman right now and the shaman recorded it for me and it is in essence, because it's not mine, and it's not perfect, but in essence, it takes energy from the sky and it takes energy from below

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alison Whitmire: And it takes that energy and just literally wraps it almost like a bubble around me, where there's energy coming down through me and coming back up from the sky and the same thing from below. It's ... I think it's called like golden, I dunno ... like golden containment.

David Drake: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yeah.

Alison Whitmire: I can't remember what it's called, but anyway, so that's ... yeah ... so bringing that up back in my mind of this connected, yet contained ... yeah, so sorry I can't be more specific. I don't know David, what comes up for you?

David Drake: No, but I was just going to add to that because I've studied a lot of that as well, and so one of the practices I use a lot because there's a belief system in a lot of those traditions that the earth is more feminine in a way and it's very grounding for us, which we often are not anymore in our current ... we live in our phone. And that ability to move heavy energy from the room or a conversation into the ground again and because as coaches, we often encounter people in distress and difficult situations and so there's a lot of heaviness sometimes with some of our client conversations. And so, for me, the being able to move that out of the system so that it doesn't contaminate or overwhelm our space, our coaching space, is really important and then [inaudible 00:54:10] we can bring in some more light from above and it's really, in the narrative coaching we talk a lot about the field that we're working in. It's three dimensional. There's all kinds of things happening in the conversation and we're just trying to figure out what

needs to happen in this space that would be healing or enlightening or resolving or whatever the client needs at that point in time.

Alison Whitmire: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative). Okay, well, we're wrapping it up here in the last few minutes, [inaudible 00:54:40] the home stretch, so, by the way, we love your feedback and I'm going to give you more information on connecting with David and everything ... [inaudible 00:54:54] Did I share the results? Yep, I did. Let me go to another poll. Hey, Kris, can you launch the other poll?

Kris Harty: Yes, coming up.

Alison Whitmire: Okay, thank you ma'am. So we'd love your feedback on today, so if you could take the poll, that would be awesome. Just to let you know, this podinar is brought to you by Learning in Action. What Learning in Action does is specializes in emotional and relational intelligence. We look at patterns of thinking, feeling and doing that show up in conflict and we train coaches and people in leadership development to bring awareness to those patterns and allow awareness to be the digestive enzyme that begins to dissolve those patterns to create more choice for clients, so if you're interested in that, you can learn more about that here and Kris will put the link in the chat box.

Alison Whitmire: If you want to connect with David, here's David's Linked In and Twitter and his email address, his, you can see his website. He has a newsletter, new story, new story, new story ...

David Drake: Yep, so just to alert people, if they go to that website, it's dot org, not dot com. If you go to that one, you'll get an events company in Norway or something, I think.

Alison Whitmire: So yeah, momentinstitute.org

David Drake: Yeah. [inaudible 00:56:29] Wow.

Alison Whitmire: Cool. And if you want to buy David's book, it's right there and then Kris is going to put the link for David's upcoming launch of the second round, right, of narrative coaching on WBECS is coming up. Kris is going to put that link to all the information on David's WBECS program in the chat box. It's also right here if you want it. I went through it. It was such a great experience for me. I feel freer, I feel easier, I feel lighter as a coach. I feel more invigorated. It just feels like my work is more organic and so I strongly recommend it. If you want to keep track with me, you can find me on Linked In and Twitter and there's my email address and all of our information. I do a lot of blogs on narrative coaching. You can find that at learninginaction.com as well. And for our next guest, next month on February 22nd, Alexander Caillet is gonna be with us on team coaching and transforming teams and organizational leadership, so super excited about that.

Alison Whitmire: So David, thank you so much.

David Drake: You're most welcome.

Alison Whitmire: I so appreciate you.

David Drake: Yeah, thank you.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah.

David Drake: And it's a pleasure to meet some folks from your community and have a chance to share about this work.

Alison Whitmire: Yeah, yeah. Me too. It's a gift to all of us. Thank you.

David Drake: Thank you. Until next time.

Alison Whitmire: Until next time. Thanks everybody! Hope to see you next month. Bye now!

David Drake: Bye.