

Guilty Greenie: Bonus Episode

Greenpathy: Feeling Our Way To A Better Future

Cait: Hello and welcome to Guilty Greenie. I am your imperfect host, Cait Bagby. And I say I this week because Sarah has decided she would rather enjoy some sun and sand than record an episode. I don't think any of us can blame her to be quite frank. But this week I am joined by a very dear friend, Troy Jackson.

Who is a licensed social worker and therapist. Troy, welcome to Guilty Greenie.

Troy: Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. And thank you Sarah for not being here. So giving me this opportunity, so I'm happy about that.

Cait: I know Sarah might be replaced by the time she gets back. She might not have a job anymore.

Troy: See what happens, right?

Cait: Yeah. Troy, tell to be here, tell the audience a little bit about yourself, what you do for work, but also who you are.

Troy: Basically I'm a therapist. I work with a lot of clients that cope with issues or trying to cope with issues around depression, anxiety, addiction. Also I do a lot of around emerging adults.

For me personally, I'm really interested in sustainability, planetary health, animal advocacy, soil health, anything that's gonna make the planet a better place. I'm all about it.

Cait: I would say you and I have had some very interesting conversations over the years, and the one thing we consistently come back to is our mutual love for dogs, because I know

Troy: Yes,

Cait: you have two. I have five, six. Wow.

Troy: Yeah.

Cait: But yeah, it's, it's interesting because I think when we first met on a audio platform

Troy: mm-hmm.

Cait: uh, completely randomly, We've said to each other over the years that when we first started hearing each other talk, when we were starting to get to know each other, neither one of us thought we would end up becoming like such. ..You explain this, story cuz you're better at it than I am. .

Troy: No, it, it was interesting on that one platform that we're on, um, because some of our views are similar, some of our views are quite different, which is okay. And when we talk about one of the subjects today, empathy, you know Cait, you were annoying to me.

I have to be honest, right? Basically I wasn't really looking at who you were. I wasn't even looking at your point of view. I was looking at my point of view, right?

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: very close minded about it, but you have very good, valid points to say about what your belief system, whether it was philosophical point of view, or it was a factual point of view.

And what it taught me was, uh, you know what? Let me give this Cait person a chance and see what she has to say. And it really changed my mind about who you were as a person.

Cait: The feeling is mutual .

Troy: Yeah. Like definitely I have really strong views on veganism and planetary health and things of that. You have strong views on that and I think we have to keep an open mind about our views and realize that maybe we're not right all the time.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: You know, so I thank you for teaching me that and opening me up to looking at other things from a different angle. Not always the angle that I think is the correct angle.

Cait: And I appreciate one that you hung in there. Uh, . .

Troy: It was rough. It was definitely rough, right?

Cait: It's been a rough still going. Oh. And two, you've taught me a lot as well in, in terms of looking at things from different perspectives and really prodding me in my thought process, which has been invaluable.

And I think too often we get stuck sometimes.

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Cait: with maybe not our experience, but just a certain thought pattern. Yes. And that can be really, really difficult to interrupt.

Troy: It's interesting, something you just mentioned too about our perspectives. A lot of times our perspectives are bolstered by the people we're around and the people we talk to.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Definitely can be an asset or a downfall for a lot of us. We have these, I guess say coaches or, uh, audience or crowd, that makes us think that our view is always right, and the whole group might be somewhat wrong in their perspective, but you know, that's a whole other issue, right?

Cait: Well, is it wrong or is it just you get stuck?

Troy: I guess you're right. I guess you could form it that way. Stuck. Yeah. Stucks a better way of, of looking at it. Or, not open-minded.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Not empathetic or compassionate. Right, you know.

Cait: Yeah. Let's dive into that because that is what we're gonna be talking about today is empathy and I know on the surface some people might be hearing that and say, hold on, Guilty Greenie is about sustainable living. Where does empathy and compassion play into this? And your work as a therapist I'm sure you've seen that empathy underpins everything, and that includes

Troy: mm-hmm

Cait: how we relate and how we go about creating a better future, creating sustainable habits. So let's start off and talk about what is the difference between empathy and compassion?

Troy: Okay. I think, how do I say this from my point of view? Empathy is basically relating someone's feelings and placing them within your own feeling set or emotional set and saying, how does this relate to me? What do I feel from what this, I guess you could say, experience that I'm observing or taking part in, from another human being or whatever being you can think of, or a place or thing.

And just really looking at it from the perspective or feeling it from the perspective of I feel something here and I like it or I don't like it. Cuz sometimes empathetic feelings can be good and sometimes they can be bad.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: right? None of them are wrong. It's the fact that we do have this mutual emotional bond, which I would call empathy. And I guess the easiest way to say it is can I relate to someone's suffering? Or their emotional state. But then also I think compassion is almost, from my perspective again, is I feel this empathy, I feel these feelings that someone else is holding or presenting and how do I help that person? Right? You know, I think compassion comes down to action. I think compassion isn't just like a feeling state. I think empathy isn't just a feeling state. I think when we think of word empathy, we think about feeling, but empathy is about affirming someone.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Empathy is about acknowledging. Empathy is about assuring someone, you know, letting them know that I got your back. I'm here for you. Or, I can acknowledge what you're saying.

Cait: It almost sounds like compassion is more I see you, I understand you, but we're separated. I can't...

Troy: yes.

Cait: Quite understand what you're going through, good or bad. Whereas empathy, it sounds a bit more that it's emotional, but also cognitive in that I'm almost internalizing, I'm, I'm understanding.

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Cait: I'm placing myself in your shoes. Is that correct?

Troy: Yes. And yeah, and I think, I think there's a continuum with both of those.

I think one can be strong than the other. Depends on the circumstances that are presented for that person or people or beings involved. Does my actions relieve the suffering of the animal or the being or the person? Right. Can I do empathy, relate to the suffering that they're going through at that current time? Or to relate to your own emotion. Something that might be similar to the experience that you're witnessing, could be something that could build empathy, which can lead to an action of compassion.

Cait: It sounds like that continuum that you were talking about. It's, it's not black and white.

Troy: It's not. Well, you know, I'll go on a limb here and I'll say from a philosophical point of view, I think this conversation is very important for a lot of reasons, because we need more empathy and compassion in the world. We need more kindness and the more we talk about it, the more we realize that it's all connected in one way. It's not about wrong or right, but it's like, is this experience helping the experience of all beings?

Cait: Yes.

Troy: Can we talk about this to decrease suffering, right? And it's interesting, as soon as you mention the word suffering, a lot of people mindset go straight to Buddhism. And I'm just talking on a very secular way about just like someone's in pain how do I help them get out of that pain?

Cait: also. I love that you went on a little bit of a tangent cuz we love tangents on Guilty Greenie. We do it quite frequently.

Troy: Uh huh.

Cait: We talk about in sustainability how everything is connected. There's an action and a reaction and we can't separate ourselves from the entirety of it. But that's enormous to try to consider and to try to place ourselves in. Especially, in a society where we have been taught that we are separate from nature, we are separate from animals.

And when you and I first started talking about empathy and the empathy sustainability hypothesis, I was having a really hard time with this because I thought, okay, I understand empathy towards individuals. I can understand empathy towards animals, but empathy towards rivers, towards mountains. I am still having a hard time wrapping my head around that, and my question for you would be is how do we start building empathy? Whether that is towards people, animals, the earth

Troy: I think one of the first things most of us should do is self-reflect, self-knowledge. Assuring yourself of am I emotionally intelligent?

Cait: How do you evaluate that? I mean how would you know? Because I would imagine it's.

Troy: That's an interesting question. Cause you know, when you talk about emotional intelligence when you go there with that conversation, people think you're being judgmental.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: But, are my emotional responses or actions appropriate with what's presented at that given time? I like to keep things, I guess you say clearly and understandable. Not make it too complicated, but am I responding or reacting in a way that is appropriate to the experience that is in front of me, with my emotions.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Furthermore, can I regulate my emotions properly? That's emotional intelligence. So I think the greater our emotional intelligence the higher degree of empathy we could possibly have.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: ,right. Once I know myself, it's easier for me to know others. Now, when you speak about rivers, mountains, nature, I think you said a key word, what we are taught. I think there's a major disconnect in our society, at least the one that me and you live in with nature in itself.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: How we experience it. How it's involved in our life. How it's distanced from us by where we may live. How we might live. So I think that disconnect tends to make us forget. And we don't really connect with nature until there's a major snowstorm. Until there's a heat wave.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Until it, it pops the bubble, right. The artificial bubble that we've formed and that's a good thing, to keep us alive as humans on this planet. But I think there's a disconnect and I think we're taught that disconnect.

Cait: You mentioned Snowstorm and New York right now, I think upstate New York, is going through a massive snowstorm and I'm seeing all these TikTok videos of the snow and what people are doing, and as you're saying that, all I can think is yeah, that connection comes, but it almost sounds like it comes in a form of like, how do I deal with this? Not how do I interact, not how do I relate, how do I manage and deal?

Troy: And Cait, you hit the nail right there in the head. It's almost like I don't blame the planet. I don't blame nature. I blame the weather, man. I blame the city for not having enough like, snow trucks, salt on the road. You're right. It becomes this whole thing, which is appropriate to some degree, but like, where did that storm originate? Where did that storm come from?

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: How did that storm get to be a super storm?

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: We don't have to be meteorologist to know that, but there's a disconnect with the world that we live in from a nature point of view.

Cait: How do you emotionally connect? Cause I'm still a little bit stuck on this, like how do I emotionally connect with a river?

Troy: How much fun have you ever had on a river? Think of all the fun, emotional experiences you've had by water.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: In your lifetime. I mean, how many little kids you see out playing in mud? That's nature.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Right. Yeah. You know, like that's one of the first things we do when we're children.

Cait: One of my strongest memories is, and I still do this as an adult depending on the shoes I have on, is you see a puddle and you just jump in the puddle cause you're like, it's so much fun just to splash around.

Troy: Mm-hmm. accepting that this is nature. Our guardians at the time let us explore nature in that way, even though it's a puddle.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Now it's like frowned upon to do something like that if you were an adult, but really should it be. I'm enjoying nature. Hey, it's rain. I need rain, right? I want to eat. Yeah. I want the crops to grow.

Cait: Yeah. When did we start seeing nature separating ourselves from it, but also taking the fun out of it. And I'm asking that question because I just posted an Instagram story that said I don't wanna hike for exercise. I don't wanna see how fast I can get to the top of the mountain.

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Cait: I wanna go hiking with Mycologist and Herbologists and anybody else who just is interested in stopping and looking around and exploring. When did we shift from let's just explore and enjoy to how fast can I get to the top of that mountain?

Troy: I think, just my perspective on that one is I think it depends on to where you grow up at.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: I think if you take a rural environment, agricultural area, where there's farming or there's animal agriculture or whatever, I think they're taught a little bit more about nature because it's a livelihood.

Cait: Mm. . Mm-hmm.

Troy: I think in certain areas where that's not the dominant factor of how to survive, it's not really taught in our schools. Right. I mean, we have science projects and we do certain things growing up. So when you mentioned the word taught well, I think there's a lot of unlearning we have to do too, based on what we're taught early on. We're just not exposed to nature as much as we should at an early age. And I'm not trying to malign the school systems anywhere in this country.

Cait: That, oh, I have several times over several episodes, so you're free to do it if you want

Troy: But, but I think like the things that we're taught aren't really applicable to real life sometimes. It's taught to get a job.

Cait: Yes.

Troy: Right? I mean, that's cool cause we have to eat and make money and all that stuff. But I think to take us from being these childlike beings and being one with nature, playing with animals or liking animals and liking being outside. Kids love being outside. Yeah. Love it. And why don't we spend more time outside?

Cait: what, What was your earliest memory of connecting with nature or feeling empathy for nature or joy? Whatever the feeling was, what was your earliest memory?

Troy: Well, probably climbing trees. Yeah. Playing in water, climbing. Like, I'd love to climb. I love to play like streams or creeks near where I grew up at. I grew up in an urban environment, but there was like a park near my house and it wasn't really a stream or a creek.

I found out later on it was a drainage stream.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Or a stream that was drainage from down... I guess it would, it got smaller over the years, but it started somewhere further up. I guess it was like a small creek but it led to a river. There were like crayfish in it and things like that and salamanders. And that was really fun. I would go and play in a park with this creek or whatever it was all day long.

Then I had a very lucky thing that I grew up near this one park. It was a very small park in an urban city and there were apple trees there. So, we would go pick apples. Mulberries.

But all this was right next to the train tracks of the commuter line. Right. You know what I mean? like, like, you know, I'm, I'm climbing a tree and the apple and the commuter train's going by at the same time.

Cait: So that's how you know you're really good at climbing trees cuz when it shakes and you're still holding on,

Troy: right. You know, so me, it was just a really diverse thing, but I think that was one of my fondest.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: And I think too, we talked about being taught. I think my parents will ever , I laugh whenever, I'd say to my mom and dad, I'm bored. They'd go, go play in the park.

It was either go read a book or go play in the park.

Cait: I grew up very similarly. In the summer, it was, first off, if you said you were bored, you got a chore

Troy: Yeah.

Cait: To do. But it was, you're out the door right after breakfast. We'll see you at lunchtime. You're back outside. We'll see you at dinner time.

Troy: Mm.

Cait: There you go. Yeah. And if it's raining, you can still go outside. If the weather's really bad, here's a book.

Troy: Yeah. Yeah. And so I think that was my first experience, like playing in the park near my house. I was really, really, lucky to have that experience.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Because I think I got away from that nature or that, that natural experience as I grew older, as I moved away from that neighborhood and moved into a more urban environment. And then you get busy with work and, you just can't take it easy like you used. You grow up. You become an adult.

Cait: It goes back to at what point in our lives, did this notion of having fun with nature stop? Was it because you kind of get caught up as a cog in the, you know, the job or whatever it is. When did we stop looking at clouds and being silly and saying, that one looks like a duck or that one looks like a foot. In your opinion, as a therapist, because I'm sure you've dealt with people of all age ranges, have you ever noticed a kind of turning point for people where they lose that?

Troy: You know, it's, that's a really good question. I'll tell you something that I noticed. I worked a lot with emergent adults. I would say anywhere from like the age of 18 to 30, 35, something between there. Right. You know, when I tend to see clients that I've had for a period of time start to get more serious?

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: When they're either graduating from college, when they're either going into the military, when they're either graduating from a trade school or something of that nature.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: And they have to work. So really what it comes down to, not that work is bad and capitalism is bad, what it comes down to, lack of time. There's a time crunch that's connected with graduating from college, graduating from a trade school, going into the military. Your time is not your own anymore.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: So people look at it like, okay, why am I changing? Well, it's not really that you're changing. You're having lack of time to enjoy yourself. Or you're not prioritizing time to enjoy yourself. It's interesting working as a therapist, one of the things that I do a lot of in talking to people with anxiety or depression is where are your priorities around self-care? Are you taking walks? Are you going on hikes? Are you sitting outside? I do a group a couple times a week, and I tell people point blank after group wherever you live, walk outside, take a breath of fresh air and stretch.

Cait: Something that small.

Troy: That's simple. Just reach out and enjoy breath of fresh air. The planet you like stretch out outside. I'd say outside.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Especially during the pandemic when I was doing a lot of virtual work. I would say get up, go outside and stretch out. They're like, it's raining. I'm like, I don't care. Go outside. To change it up. To remember that you're not in this box all the time.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: You mentioned dogs, right? I don't live in a large spatial area where dogs can roam free like on a farm so I have to walk them cause I'm in an urban environment. We walk our dogs about four times a day and like, man, does that connect me with nature. It's insane. So I think making actual time to enjoy yourself.

Cait: I would assume that can also be done through things like books about nature, even if it's fiction or art installations or plays or movies, whatever it is. You know, instead of sitting there and binge watching the latest whatever Netflix show is out. Actively seeking out those small things that bring nature to you.

Troy: Mm-hmm. Reading I think that's a brilliant idea too. It's interesting know when you look at some more modern buildings, how they're starting to incorporate nature.

Cait: Yes.

Troy: Outdoor seating spaces. Open air courtyards and things of that nature. Um, removable walls, right? Yes. It's like finally we're starting to wake up

Cait: or some, yeah, they're putting rooftop gardens garden. And that's rooftops. That is something I miss about living in Italy is every apartment building had, not every, but the majority of 'em had rooftop gardens and people grew. Maybe it was just a tomato plant and then someone else grew basil and I am happy to see it slowly shifting here, but it's like what went wrong in urban planning where this didn't happen.

Troy: And you talking about, the old school victory gardens and things of that nature and people growing their own produce and stuff like that. Now we just have sidewalks for greenery.

And that's okay too but I think there's a lot of things that we have been taught and we just don't, don't know any better.

Cait: Yeah. I think going back to something you said early on too, it is not just who you're surrounded by, but what you're surrounded by that can often get you kind of stuck and

Troy: mm-hmm.

Cait: stuck in thought patterns. But also you don't know what you don't know. We actually have an episode, coming out in season two, about how connecting with Nature has incredibly powerful mental and physical benefits. But we do in that episode talk quite a bit about privilege because of how, the United States in particular was designed, in inner cities, the lack of green space, the lack of blue space is evident and actually plays out in test scores and poor health outcomes.

And find it interesting that sometimes when we have these conversations, there is an assumption that anybody should know how to go about connecting with nature when oftentimes, or sometimes people have never had any kind of experience.

Troy: Yeah. And I think programs like Outward Bound and Audubon Societies, different programs that try to bring the natural experience to the urban environments. There's a gentleman in the Midwest, I can't remember his name, but he was talking about building snowboard ramps and parks and to inner cities and things of that nature. Right. Trying, trying to bring, um, outdoor sporting activities into the inner city.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Um, and I, again, I think it's back to stakeholders, politicians, teachers, leaders, to push us to unlearn that distance we have with nature.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: So we can create that empathy or that more feeling. That's why when we were talking about, you know, like connecting with the river, I, I would always say start with something in an experience in nature that you had fun. You had an

enjoyable experience with and realizing the importance of that river, that lake, that hillside that you're sitting on, that breeze that you're feeling. The experience that it has given me. It's should I acknowledge its existence and should I acknowledge it's worth. And hey, this made me feel good. I don't wanna lose it. And if it made me feel good, it probably made someone else feel good.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: It brought about a positive experience.

Cait: Even if you're going out for a walk in the summer and it's really hot out and all of a sudden a breeze comes in, it's just taking that moment to say, ahh, I'm being cooled down by this and this is wonderful. I want this for my children and future generations. I want them to feel that same kind of connection.

Troy: And that's a whole other tangent there too. When you think about where we as a species globally on how we take care of the planet for those humans coming after us.

Cait: Talk about how you build long-term empathy for something that doesn't exist yet. Those future generations do not exist yet. So how do you build empathy for something that is not there?

Troy: How do I build empathy for something that doesn't exist? I don't know Cait. You got me stumped on that one. I gotta be really honest because my first reaction is my imagination. Why shouldn't I? There's always gonna be people on the planet. There's gonna be people after me on the planet. The facts remain that life's gonna go on with or without me. So why wouldn't I want to leave, the planet better or the same as when I came on it and just be a steward?

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Put it this way, if someone has children, a nephew or niece, or your guardian of someone, a little kid in your neighborhood, if you look at them and you say, well, they're going to live on a planet, maybe different than what I grew up on..

And if I can relate to my experiences as a kid, as a child, wouldn't I want, another child, whether my own, to have those same experiences, right? When I talk about acknowledgement I think that we don't really realize how there's an interconnectedness to anything and everything we do to the planet. As they say, the planet doesn't need us. But we need to take care of it if we're gonna survive.

The good thing I think about having this conversation with you, I would hope that it would just make people think whether they agree or disagree with what we're talking about.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: At the end of the day how can we just invoke a thought around are you empathetic to the planet.

Cait: It almost sounds like exposure therapy. The best way to understand something or empathize with it, is to put yourself out there.

Troy: Yes. Of course. Put yourself out there with others. Not isolate. Take some chances with your emotions and your feelings. Ask questions. How did that make you feel when we went on that hike? What did you notice about the hike? Was it a good experience? You don't have to be an herbologist to have a good time on a hike.

Cait: You don't have to be an expert.

Troy: And I think, something that I just wanna throw out there is that, it's really strange that when we as humans want to relax or decompress, where do we go?

Cait: TV. I do feel like, no, no. I do feel like that. I feel like when people unwind at the end of the day, what do they do? They turn on the TV or they scroll their phone or...

Troy: okay. How about long term?

Cait: Apparently Sarah goes to New Zealand, so...

Troy: Exactly. . Yeah. We go somewhere nature centered. Like we might go to Vegas or somewhere like that, or Paris, but like a lot of us, we go to a national park. We go to a beach. We go to the Caribbean, right? Yeah. You know the Caribbean's Nature. We go to Hawaii. Hawaii's one of the most incredible expressions of nature on the planet.

Cait: I think I read that once... I don't wanna say Covid ended cuz it clearly hasn't. But once things calmed down a little bit, I believe I read a article that said visits to the National Park were higher than ever. That's where people wanted to go after being in their home for a year or two years. They wanted to get back out in nature.

Troy: Yeah, if you think about it, people go to mountain cabins. Nature. People go to the beach during the summer. Nature. It's not just to cool off and get away from a hot temperatures. It's the ocean. It's nature.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: I think one of the ways of creating that empathy for the natural environment is feeling What it does for me. How it makes me feel.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Then it starts to lead towards, maybe not even empathy for it, but more compassion for it.

Cait: Hmm. You're seeing it, you're noticing it. It's not just background noise. It's not just what can it do for me? Well, it is in a way, it's what can it do for me? But it's understanding the beneficial role. So yes, the water's cooling me down, therefore I'm not gonna leave my trash in it.

Troy: There you go. Two thumbs up. I like that. And it goes back to emotional intelligence, like trying not to be harmful. Just being really clear like, am I living the right way with what and how I'm feeling in the present moment? I think also an overarching issue that's a whole separate topic is; people aren't really adept at taking care of themselves.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Practicing self care. I'm not saying everyone, I'm not saying everyone, but doing it in a healthy way, a low impact way. A way that doesn't involve a lot of money.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: We talked about privilege. And it's funny I'm walking the dogs this morning. I'm looking up in the sky with the planes going by. I'm like enjoying it. When I walk at night, I'm looking at the stars. I'm just lucky in that way that sometimes I can tune into that, not all the time but sometimes. And I think something that is overlooked too, it's just my opinion, I think we've lost that childlike nature. Being childlike does not mean you have to do immature things.

Cait: That's curiosity.

Troy: It's cur. Wow. There you go. I was about to say, I was about to say the word wonder.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: It's curiosity. See, this is one of these moments, Cait, when I started liking you . Right. You know, I mean, I was like, Hey, she thinks a little bit like me. Okay. What? Like, hey, minute, a minute. She almost used the same words as me. I was like, alright, maybe I'm gonna give Cait a chance here. Right. You know, maybe I'll give her a chance.

Cait: Well, when you were, when you were saying walking the dogs, I was just thinking about stress of, of being an adult and all that responsibility and work and home and, and I can easily see how that, when people, let's take dog walking, take their dogs out for a walk, in the morning, they're already thinking, you know, oh, I've gotta do this today and this is gonna happen. I can't believe that's going on. And yada yada, y. Either way, the dogs have to be walked and it sounds like you can either choose to be stressed out or you can choose to take a moment to look at the clouds. Wow. To feel the breeze.

Troy: Wow. Exactly. Okay, so there, right there is a perfect example of emotional intelligence, what you just said.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: I gotta take the dogs out anyway. I can either enjoy it or I can be upset about it, right? What's the emotionally mature and intelligent thing to do? Just enjoy it. Just enjoy it, right? I shouldn't get mad because I have to walk the dogs. Be accountable.

Cait: I mean, to be fair, we all have those days that we're like, come on.

Troy: We all have those days of like, you know, dichotomous thinking about things. We all have those days. Yeah, but that's a perfect example of what we were talking about earlier.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Right. I gotta do it anyway, so I might as well enjoy it. Why make the problem a bigger problem? I always say, I say make the solution the problem, not the problem, the problem.

Cait: Hmm. I like that. I think that brings up a really good question because a lot of people in the face of climate change feel very hopeless and helpless. Do you think a lot of people are sitting in the problem because they feel that they can't do anything?

Troy: I think a lot of people think that it's hopeless. I think that a lot of people think that they can't do anything. I think connecting with others by modeling their way of dealing with the stressors that you might be dealing with the same way and how they, cope with climate change, I guess you could say stress or however you wanna frame it. You know, yeah. I'm coming from with it, but modeling how they cope with this. How do they manage this experience.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: And you can create empathy for yourself and create empathy for others and for the planet around that.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: I think this is a conversation that needs to be explored and talked about. I'll tell you something that was really scary though, for me, when I was working with much younger adults under the age of 18, at one period of time I was doing therapeutic groups. And most of these kids were somewhat affluent. So like, you know, they weren't missing the meals, they were probably gonna away to college. Their parents were highly functioning and sometimes would I ask them, where did they see the planet 20, 30 years from now? I was very shocked, Cait, that almost like if it was a group of 10 young men or, and women, nine of them would go I don't see it being here.

Cait: Interesting.

Troy: Interesting. And I did this small sample size group. Yeah. Question with different groups over the years, at different points in time when I was working with young adults and their viewpoint of where the planet was gonna be was very nihilistic, very dark.

Cait: Now, do you think affluency had a role in that in terms of there was no concern over where the next meal was coming from. There was no concern of am I gonna have electricity when I get home where...

Troy: mm-hmm.

Cait: that individual had the time to sit just to think about it.

Troy: there weren't gonna be any, like, they weren't gonna ever probably be climate refugees. Put it to you that way. That's why I mentioned the thing about affluence. They had electricity. They weren't gonna miss any meals. They, They had running water, clean running water.

Cait: Yep.

Troy: These were kids and young men and young women, they were safe from nature for the most part, right?

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: But they still thought for various reasons, not really based around war. But they would talk about climate, human interaction, how we are one with the planet. It shocked me, especially coming from that population. Whereas I guess if I went to another environment, someone in, in the southern hemisphere, that would probably make sense.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Where there's constant flooding or droughts or whatever. That would constantly make sense. But these were young men and women and you know, people who weren't experiencing any of those things.

Cait: I think this is a good note to wrap up on and a really good takeaway for the listeners. If you, yourself feel very overwhelmed by climate change, maybe you're falling into climate doomism or, eco anxiety or a loved one, you're, you're watching this play out. What can you do from a therapeutic point of view to, to start to process that and move forward?

Troy: I think one of the first things we have to try to access is our awareness of what's really going on. What is the problem? What am I feeling? Is this something I can manage? Is this something I need help to manage? But first I got acknowledged, I am feeling uncomfortable about this, right?

Because one of the first and foremost things that happens to most humans is when there's lack of knowledge, when there's confusion, we feel even more uncomfortable.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: So clarity of what I'm feeling brings about a jumping off point. From there, when we talk about literacy, if we're talking about from a sustainability and from an ecological perspective, I don't know who coined the term, but ecoliteracy.

How much awareness do I have about nature? How much do I have about nature around me? How does nature affect me? How does climate change affect me? Again, knowledge, power, and it doesn't have to be from a scientific level. It doesn't have to be a whole bunch of papers you've read on Google Scholar or anything of that nature, right?

Cait: It could be Guilty Greenie.

Troy: It could be Guilty Greenie. It could be a book that you mentioned. It could be a TV show or a podcast. But like how does the planet that I'm involved with, that I'm connected with, that I have some saying in its wellbeing. How does it affect me? And then I think third, I would move towards building support. Finding people that think like you, talking to people. I think fourth don't be afraid to express your fear.

Cait: That, that one needs a huge asterisk because I think we as a society have I, I do see some progress on this, but I also think there is this shame narrative around being vulnerable.

Troy: Yep. Especially around eco anxiety.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Or planetary health. There's a lot of people who feel that way or me, and you wouldn't be talking about it right now. . Right. You know, there's like, you know, there's a lot of people who talk about it. I feel it. You feel it, right? Mm-hmm. . So I think connecting with those people, regardless of what the naysayers around you feel. I think as humans from a psychological perspective we get very distant from the idea that we're very social beings. We, majority of us do better when we're connected with others that make us feel safe around any issue.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: So I think those are some of the things that start, and then momentum. Momentum. Mm-hmm. It's fascinating, a lot of people say, well, I don't know

what to do. I don't know what to do. Well, what can you do? Find that one thing you can do.

Cait: Yep.

Troy: And once you get the momentum going, you'll start to find the answer. Hopefully the curiosity will kick in. The conversations are out there. The people are out. Don't feel as if you're alone. Don't feel as though you're odd or weird cuz you feel this way or think this way. Then I think another thing that really, really resonated with me lately is what's my duty?

What is my responsibility?

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: We all have this duty that we are responsible for and maybe I don't know what that is at certain times, but then maybe I do know what it is. .But I think for me, my perspective, my duty is to try to do what I can do to leave a better planet for the people coming after me.

Cait: And we always say, small steps are better than no steps.

Troy: 125% on that one.

Cait: You know, if you, if you can do anything,

Troy: anything, anything. Right. Yeah. No matter how small. Engage, read, donate, volunteer. Whatever you can do. Just to implement that into our lifestyle, our way of being.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Our experiences is going to affect the way we feel around sustainability, around eco anxiety, around world planetary health, around that hopeless feeling of climate change and doom and gloom.

You gotta do something and you be flexible with your ideas.

Cait: Mm-hmm.

Troy: Your experience might change, your viewpoint might change. Your perspective might change around how you view nature or how you view your weight in the world. On the world.

Cait: Yeah.

Troy: Be open-minded towards it. Yeah.

Cait: You raised a really valuable point there, which is it's okay to change your mind.

It's okay not to have an opinion on everything.

Troy: Mm-hmm.

Cait: you can't know everything in the world. And that's where community I think, really comes in because, you have other people who do know things.

Troy: Yes. Be open to learning.

Cait: Troy, thank you so much for joining and stepping into Sarah's shoes this week. And, to be decided. We'll let you know if Sarah's actually gonna come back or you'll be back .

Troy: No, you never know. I may have a new vocation.

There you go. Thank you. Thank you so much for having me. good, Great conversation

Cait: I appreciate it as well. If you have enjoyed this show, please share, rate, and or leave a five star review on any podcast platform.

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