

Michelle Agopsowicz Interview

[00:00:00] Welcome to the Peaceful Empath Summit. Get off the emotional rollercoaster. Find your path to peace and feel your life transform. I'm your host, Monica Owsichek. In this episode, we're going to be talking about how empaths often have an early experience of trauma, and how many of us spend years trying to heal the trauma and understand our roles as empaths. Our guest is Michelle Agopsowicz. Michelle is a Reiki master and has a master's in social work. She offers counseling and education opportunities from a holistic trauma informed perspective.

She aims to create wellness and balance through the integration of traditional counseling and mindfulness techniques. Her approach has been developed through her own journey of having an autoimmune condition, trauma and anxiety. Welcome, Michelle thank you so much for having me, Monica. Yeah, thanks so much for being here today.

I'm excited to talk about all things [00:01:00] trauma and empath, because I really think that's just something really important for us to understand as empaths. Let's just take a moment and let's just take a deep breath in together just to get started. So, let's take a deep breath in

and let it out.

Awesome. All right, so as empaths, you know, we all have different experiences of how we come to find out that we're empaths, and can you just start by sharing what does being an empath mean to you? Yeah, so I think this changes over time. What you, what I might have answered that as 10 years or 30 years ago might be different.

What it means to me today is, Really empowerment. So it allows me to be in the world in a way where I can read other people, I can read [00:02:00] situations. It keeps me safe, it keeps other people safe, and I'm at this place in my journey of being an empath. Where I feel like I can more easily discern what is mine and what is other people's, whereas a few years ago I would've said that I was a bit more victim to being an empath than I was soaking up everybody's stuff all the time.

Family lineage. Stuff, everything you could imagine. And I feel like today it comes with this place of being able to feel other people's experiences and then

also hand it back to them with love or transmute it back to the universe with love and come back to my center. And I feel like my journey as an empath.

I feel I probably always was one , and I say, as I'm sure most of your listeners are, and I believe that we all have the ability to be empaths in different situations. When I was [00:03:00] younger, it was often a result. Of traumatizing things happening, and then a result of me being too hyper focused, like the antenna was too finely tuned for future danger.

And so I was soaking up everybody's stuff. And so I did that I think probably till I was about probably in my early twenties, and I. Got really tired of everybody saying I was too sensitive, that I couldn't be a counselor because I was too sensitive. I was gonna pick everybody else's stuff up. Why was I crying all the time?

Why was I crying about the trees and the birds and the squirrels as well as humanity and everything else? And then I spent most of my twenties trying to shut it off. Trying to be less sensitive, trying to be a little bit more detached, feeling like that's what I had to do within the structure of our world just to survive.

And it was also what everybody else was telling me I had to do to survive. [00:04:00] And then in my thirties, I paid the price for shutting my empath abilities down. Hm. So I feel like I had spent my twenties intellectualizing my trauma, working through it, but never really integrating it into my body. And it wasn't until I got diagnosed with an autoimmune condition, and I knew immediately what that was.

I knew it was because I had hated myself. I had hated my body. I tried to shut down who I was. And I got this glaring big trauma, this big event that really shook me to my core and woke me up and got me back onto the path of reclaiming being an empath. But this time around really feeling like I was more of an empowered empath versus it happening to me all [00:05:00] the.

Question there. So did you know you were in empath this whole time or was it this health, this autoimmune that caused you to to learn that? Or did you know that before and you were trying to hide from it in a sense and deny it? I feel like I learned the word empath when I had the autoimmune condition, and it just resonated as true as long.

As well as being a highly sensitive person, it made my anxiety make sense. It made my social anxiety make sense. So, I discovered the label at like 34 when I

had the autoimmune condition. I absolutely looking back know that's exactly who I was at three. And at 10 and 15. So my dad has been ill his entire life and my entire life, but his, his health issues really started ramping up when I was three.

And energetically, I would [00:06:00] say that is the moment when the pathway of being an empath really got laid down because I star started to do the emotions for the family. And so family lineage stuff kind of picked up at that point. So, at three, I really learned to read the room, to read what people wanted to read, what people needed to not be too much trouble to anyone.

And I don't think it was into my thirties though, where I realized it was a choice as to how much I wanted to be taking on or not taking on from other people. Mm, I can see that. So, you're saying at around three is where it just kind of kicked into high gear because of your circumstances?

Right? Yeah. And I feel like it at the time was a coping strategy that actually was really brilliant. It kept me, you know, 10 steps ahead [00:07:00] of whatever next thing was needed in a lot of ways. Mm-hmm. . Mm-hmm. . And it taught me how to meet my own. But it also taught me how to meet everybody else's needs first too.

So, between the age of three and in your thirties, you were really honing those empathic skills without even knowing it. Yeah, and I feel like in my forties now, I feel like it's something I'm really proud of. I feel like it's the ultimate gift in so many ways, and I've really learned through mindfulness and reiki and just understanding my own body, how to be grounded, how to take a breath, how it feels safe to be in your body, really allowed me to realize that I could pick up other people's stuff, but I can also put it down again.

Mm-hmm. . So, Can you tell me just a little bit more [00:08:00] about figuring out that you were in empath? Mm-hmm. . So, you're going along, living in a sense as an empath, right? Absorbing all the energy, but not knowing it. And then you're in your thirties. What, what happened? How did you. Realize that. Yeah, I think it would be nice to say that it was a beautiful spiritual epiphany in some ways that would be very nice.

Um, it, the autoimmune condition really threw me into about a three, four-year process of this dark night of the soul, so continuous. Panic attacks, anxiety, feeling like I was dying. This really, this, this depths of my soul awakening, and so I got to a place where there was no choice. , but to do something else because the alternative was to get sicker and sicker and sicker.

So, it was one of those [00:09:00] rock bottom moments where you decide, you know, absolutely not. I am choosing not to live in this place of sickness. I wanna be at a place of empowerment. And then it took me another year or so to kind of climb out of that hole and really understand and claim that process of being an empath.

But I as a soul, I was aware there was a crossroads there, I think in a lot of ways. So where did you first hear the word empath? Sounds like it was more of a. Progression yeah. Yeah. It was definitely a progression. I was looking for alternative things to help with anxiety and panic to understand what was going on for me.

So I think it went from, cuz another one of my coping strategies is to over intellectualize things as a coping, which I think a lot of empaths. Do actually too when it's hard to be in our body and with our emotions. Sometimes we pop out of our body and retreat to our heads. I was on this mission to [00:10:00] research everything possible and when no.

Psychology or medicine can answer my questions. I'd also started my reiki training at that point, and so I also then started to look down more esoteric routes as to explaining my experience and why I had always felt like I didn't quite belong here on Earth, Earth. Um, and so I would say it was definitely a progression that came.

Desperate Googling for answers. Oh. Google! Yeah, yeah. Okay. So in that desperation, you came across the word empath. You came across that definition and it just really resonated for you. Yeah. I actually think I came across the definition of highly sensitive person first, and I sort of started really looking at that because my psychology counselor brain could get kind of on board with that.

And then from that I [00:11:00] started to look into kind of other ways of being, and then I kind of came across empath as well as, you know, all of our psychic abilities, so Clair audience and clairsentience Sentience, and how does that stay in our body? And, and then throughout my reiki training, I just started going deeper and deeper in meditation and getting more information too about what trauma does in terms of relation to being an empath.

And, and of course I have no scientific research on this, but what I think happens is that when we're empaths. We sort of displace ourselves to hold for someone else and then we forget to put ourselves back into the center and move them out. So, it gets pretty crowded in the center of our being and trauma and

stress makes it easier to bump us out of our center and other people to crowd in there.

Mm-hmm. [00:12:00] so. Once you realized that you were doing that, how did you. Bump yourself back in. Yeah, so I do a few different things. I definitely have a pretty dedicated daily meditation reiki practice. I also do things like tap along my collarbones and just repeat my name. So, I will say I am Michelle Michelle Agopsowicz and only Michelle Maria Agopsowicz and I call back all of my energy.

Any energy that's been given, any energy that's been taken, I call it back home to me and I send the energy back home where it belongs. So, I spend quite a bit of time, very intentionally calling home my energy and the bits that I've sort of allowed to leak out. Throughout the day. I also feel like nature and anything that gets us grounded, so drinking water, being in nature, and just moving [00:13:00] our body also reminds us that there's something else happening, that we have a human form that needs to be attended to in that way.

So, I do lots of energy and mindfulness techniques, but I would say, That the one I do between every single client I say is I repeat my name three times, just that I am this person and only this person. Mm-hmm. I like that. Just brings you back to yourself. And the reason why I sort of top tap along the bottom of the collarbones while I'm doing that is because it gets us back in our bodies as well as, there's an acupuncture point there too that just stimulates the vagus nerve, which triggers our nervous system that it's okay to calm down and come back home to ourselves.

So, you are a reiki master and a counselor, correct? Yes. It was counseling and then I added Reiki in. And I feel like it's enhanced my, my counseling practice in many ways because I did start to understand what is my energy versus other people's.

[00:14:00] But I also, one of my, perhaps one of my biggest awakenings within discovering that I was an empath was that I had no idea what it actually meant to be grounded. Mm. So I could talk about it, but I didn't actually know how it felt. And Reiki helped me to figure out, oh, this is what grounded feels like.

This is what it feels like to be at home in your body. And so what I helped my clients a lot with too is also figuring out how does it feel to actually be grounded versus just talk about being grounded and how do you do that? Yeah, I think some of the techniques I was just saying about calling their energy back also

about just that, really getting into that breathwork and noticing what that breath does for us.

Can we feel our feet? Can we be connected to something to nature? Can we ground? And I think I often thought that grounding might be just something I do once and that I'm [00:15:00] grounded. So, I think it's also really helping people to understand that grounding is something you know, I probably need to do 20 times a day, and some days I forget to ground and.

Then I start to feel overwhelmed, and I start to feel panicky and I start to feel like I don't know what's mine and what's humanities and what's my neighbors, and so then it's about remembering that it's an ongoing practice to to come back to the breath over and over and over again and remind ourselves that it's safe to be in our own body and our own feelings.

I've heard you say the word safe a few times now, especially in your own journey and what being an empath means to you. I feel like that is such a huge piece. It's feeling safe because it's almost like when we first learn that we're absorbing other people's energy. Hmm. Why am I doing that?

Why would I wanna do that? And it does come back to [00:16:00] feeling safe and feeling grounded. Your body and in the whole process of it, of living with that, what is a gift and a superpower. Yeah, and I think culturally we get taught to ignore that. So, we get praised in our culture for being busy, for overachieving, for pushing through, for pushing past our limits.

And I think that was one of my profound lessons in discovering I was an empath too, is that other people might push past their limit, but I'm not doing that anymore because it comes at the cost of disease process for me. Mm-hmm. And so I am clearer on my boundaries now as well in terms of what I will say yes to.

So, there's lots of people who are beautiful extroverts out in the world doing all sorts of busy things. It's okay that I'm not that person. Do you find, the, the people that you work with, are mainly impacts? Do [00:17:00] you find. You attract that? I definitely find that I attract that, or I find, I find that there's also another small subset of people who will say, I actually don't know how to label my feelings or have emotions at all.

And I feel like I attract them because then my job for them is to teach them how to have a language of emotions. And you talk a lot about trauma and. You feel like the trauma in your life is what led you to discover you were an empath?

Yeah. Do you see that a lot? I see that a lot. And I guess the caveat I would like to give about trauma as well is that when we think about trauma, we often think about terrorism or natural disasters or sexual assaults, these really big earth-shattering events.

When I'm speaking about trauma, I'm sort of speaking about. The messiness of [00:18:00] being a human. So, traumas also essentially involve anything that is overwhelmed, our ability to cope. And that's different for everybody. So for me it was my dad's illness. And then later on an event of sexual abuse. But for many people it might be divorce, um, it might be a grief in some way.

It might be just that you've got. 10 small things going on and suddenly you're feeling really overwhelmed by what's going on. And when we're feeling overwhelmed when our body can't handle and process that, I consider that a trauma. And it's different for other people. You, you know, it's pretty easy to compare traumas too, to say, well, mine's not a trauma because other people have worse stories than I do.

It's really this individual experience and it as empaths, oftentimes we're overwhelmed by. The sadness and tragedy of [00:19:00] humanity more easily than other people are and, and you need to own that. That is what's overwhelmed you. And it's okay. It's not about comparing. There's also lots of empaths who became empaths as a way to survive childhood abuse.

So, if you can be fine-tuned to what. Your alcoholic parent or your parent who has mental health or your parent who is abusive. If you are highly tuned to the mood in the room, then you have the beautiful coping strategy of knowing not to make that parent angry today or to be super, uh, to be very people pleasing today, or to be very sweet or to stay out of the way or to not say anything.

And that also tunes this antenna. Of being able to read the, the energy of the room. And if that was your childhood, then it's about reclaiming that as a beautiful superpower in your adulthood [00:20:00] that yes came out of something tragic. But out of that comes this gift of who you are and what you can give to the world.

Because I also have not met very many empaths who aren't. An incredible gift of healing to everyone around them. So true. And I think that trauma is a big piece of that a lot of times. everyone copes differently, but not everyone's absorbing, yes. All that. And I think that that's the major difference,

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And if we think of ourselves as sponges and we're absorbing it, we need to remember to ring out the sponge afterwards, right? Mm. Yeah. I like that. And that's kind of in line with the tools that you were saying, right? Mm-hmm. grounding the tapping, the saying your name, you talk a lot about the empowerment of, of being an empath.

Um, describe that a little bit more. Yeah, I [00:21:00] think it's the same as what you say, Monica, with it being a superpower. So, when we're empowered, we are in this place where we can go around and help people, which is what I think our most empaths purpose is. To be helpers. Most of us are helpers, and so it allows us to go and spread our light in the world.

It allows us to go around and help all those people. We wanna help and then come home to ourselves. Without having to carry the weight of everyone else's stuff because it's not our responsibility to do other people's work. One of the things that helped me think about being an empowered empath is if I go around fixing everything and feeling everything for everyone else, I am actually robbing them of the opportunity to discover that themselves.

and when we [00:22:00] don't discover a learning and a healing on our own, we often have to learn it again. Cause it doesn't really land in that epiphany way where we're like, whoa, I just integrated. That really means something. It doesn't mean the same thing if someone else has come and told you to do that work.

So, I try to think of being about being an empowered empath also by not. Injecting myself into every situation without other people actually giving me permission to be there either. So, in the past, I would've gone along and fixed everybody's problems and felt everybody's feelings, and probably at least 70% of the time, they hadn't asked for my help.

So, it helped me to also think about, okay, but they haven't given me consent then to go do their work, nor do I want to do their work. If they'd like to ask me, then I'm more than happy to walk on that journey with them. And so I think when [00:23:00] you get into this place of being an empowered empath, it's just information inform and that information is great, but it doesn't mean you need to act or do anything about.

And is that to say that I'm always an empowered empath? Absolutely not, right? I still bleed all over the place a lot of the time, but when I realize, and I, and I guess maybe this is the second step when I realize I'm, I'm kind of expanding

out into everybody's and feelings, everybody's things. I'm at least curious and aware enough of it now to remind myself to come back to me.

Whereas before it really happened to me versus me choosing to have it happen to me or. Yes, I can relate to that. And that's why I called the summit the peaceful empath because I feel like peace is such a powerful place to be in, healing isn't linear, we're going, we're figuring things out and [00:24:00] I feel like we are given the opportunity to figure things out. At certain periods, at certain layers, and we may be going deeper later. So, like you said, things are gonna come up again for us to learn deeper in a different way at a different time.

Yeah. And to be able to accept that instead of get into that place of like, oh man, I thought I figured this out. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Healing is this like circular spiral unfolding, and I think exactly as you say, right. What it means to be an empowered or peaceful empath in 10 years is gonna be even more firm in your sense of being, because you'll have healed it a few more times.

You know, life has a way of returning our themes to us when we're ready to look at it again, and most of us go. Oh, I don't wanna do it again. I already did it. I thought I'd gotten that to completion, you know? But I think there's also something empowering about knowing we're not ever gonna do it to [00:25:00] completion, so just enjoy the ride and enjoy the learning as you go.

Versus feeling like we, we come to these end points, which we, we never do. If I'm in a, depending on if I'm in a peaceful place, I can think of it as, oh, I'm being shown or given another opportunity to learn something maybe in a different way. Yes, So, try try to look at it that way instead of, dang it, this is happening again.

Yeah. Yeah. And I think this is a good point because if we're not in a peaceful place, if we're at this place where we are a bit overwhelmed, then it again, we can go back to this place where it feels like it's really happening to us and we're victim to it, and we all go there. Sometimes. I know this word victim has a big, it has a lot of energy behind it too, but we are all in that place at some point where it feels like it's happening to.

Versus us having the ability to walk through it of our own volition. Right. I'm curious. The difference when you didn't know you were in empath to [00:26:00] after when you did, what were the major changes that you felt? Did you feel it in relationships?

I think of the relationship to your dad that you mentioned, and I mean even the relationship to yourself, but what were the major things that you feel shifted for you? I think the major thing that's that shifted for me was for the first time in my life, I knew how to feel grounded. As I said, the second one was that the first time in my life I actually felt I had an appreciation and some semblance of self-love for myself, and I don't think I had any idea what that actually was before I reclaimed being an empath.

So what it gave me more than anything was probably self-love. So, I felt like I suddenly had a place to belong. I had language to put behind my experience. I wasn't the only one. I wasn't alone. And so then I had this [00:27:00] ability to say, okay, so even though everybody told me for the first 18 years of my life that there was something wrong with me for being so sensitive.

Turns out that's not true. Turns out we're all meant to be feeling. Beings and not just robots of intellectualization. Not that we don't need our mind as well. We need a balance of all of these things. And so I feel like discovering I was an empath, having the autoimmune condition, I felt like it put me on this trajectory of self-love and self-compassion.

For who I am uniquely as me, and being able to claim that rather than trying to be someone that I'm not or turn some part of me off that I can't turn off because when I turned it off, I got really sick. Do you feel like there were you on this quest for self-love before or. And it just looked different, or was self-love not really even on [00:28:00] the table?

No, no. I don't think it was even really on the table. I constricted my food intake. I, you know, I over exercised, I did all sorts of things and spoke to myself in a way that, and I was perfectly content to stay there. I was perfectly content to stay in this place of. I'm not pretty enough and I'm not thin enough and I'm not, you know, smart enough and I'm not.

And I was pretty comfortable there, even though it was making me sick. And the moment I got that diagnosis, this did come as an epiphany. It was like, oh my God, you've hated yourself forever. And now your body is saying, well, if you don't like us so much, we're gonna start giving up on you. Mm-hmm. . So suddenly it was like this whole thing opened up where it was like, I need to learn how to love myself for who I am, including all of my emotions and sensitivity and all of those things.

So suddenly, I don't think [00:29:00] in any way. I love this question, Monica, because I don't think I've thought about it in this way. I don't think it was in any

way on my radar before that I ask. Because a lot of times we hear that, right? Like, oh, you need to love yourself and this is self-love and this is self-care.

And I think sometimes we can think we're doing that. Loving ourselves and trying whatever that means, and then it, and then it can shift and it's, it just sinks in in a different way. So, I was curious if that happened or if it wasn't even on the radar, like you said. Yeah, I think it might have been slightly on the radar, but again, from a very intellectual, Place because in order to survive not having my feelings in everyone else's feelings, I went and got a master's degree and all sorts of, you know, like I really went fully into understanding the process versus feeling the process.

And I think when I discovered I was an empath. I got this balance back, were [00:30:00] suddenly, my head and my heart were speaking the same language. They weren't warring with each other anymore. And does that mean I have self-love all the time and self-compassion all the time? Again, no return to self-love. Just like you return to peace.

Exactly. But I do at least know when I'm sliding out of balance now. Mm-hmm. . . I love that. I, I feel like, I mean, awareness is so huge, right? It's the first step awareness that you're an empath awareness of what you were doing and not doing, and coming back to awareness. And so when you had that epiphany, That you were not loving yourself, that you were actually almost hating yourself in a sense, you mentioned mm-hmm.

What was the next step? What did that look like? What, like you mm-hmm. How did it shift? How did it change? Yeah, yeah. And, and I'd like to say that even though I had the epiphany in terms of a thought and, and a knowing, so I knew that the autoimmune condition was related to this, I had a deep [00:31:00] intuitive knowing about that.

But like I said before, it took me a couple years for my nervous system to stop having panic attacks and anxiety because I really did think I was dying. In that process, and so throughout this process, I knew my true north. I knew where I was headed. I was like, I'm headed to find self-compassion, self-love.

Reclaiming who I am. I knew where I was headed. The journey to get there though, you know, did involve some deep, dark wooded passages with some big, bad wolfs along the way, and it just, I felt like it just kind of got revealed to me a little bit at a time. A little bit at a time. If I use that metaphor again as I was walking through the woods.

Suddenly I realized there's a flashlight in my pocket and I've walked this trail before. And like, so there was, there was things that started to reveal themselves at the time. I didn't know if I was gonna survive it. Mm-hmm. And is [00:32:00] that when you found Reiki too? Yeah. Yeah. So, I also had that happening at the same time, like all of the detox and awakening that comes from sort of that whole process as well.

But I also don't think that that was coincidence either as to exactly when Reiki found its way into my life. Right. Yeah. So, I know that you have a free gift. Yes. To offer the listeners. Yeah. So, when you use the link and sign up for my mailing list, you'll find that there's a free chakra clearing meditation.

This chakra clearing meditation is infused with reiki and was done with the intention on my part. To help clear and move some of that trauma, eat out of each of the chakras. So that's my intention. So, I would love it if people would go and don, uh, download that as a free gift, just as a way of saying thank you and you can do this right?

Like we can become [00:33:00] peaceful empaths. This is absolutely something. That is achievable. And I think there were many summits like this along my journey as well, where. I downloaded gifts and followed people and, and it just started to put a piece of a puzzle together for me. So, I know that was definitely part of my journey as well.

I was absorbing as much information as I could to try to make sense of my experience. So please feel free to, follow that link and get your chakra clearing meditation. And do you recommend that we listen to that. Like once a day or however many times, or what do you suggest? the first time I would say listen to it and then maybe let it integrate for about seven days or so and then come back to it as often as you would like to do.

What I'm offering to, I'm also thinking about doing is that anybody who goes and downloads that free gift, I'm also gonna draw a name out of those people and [00:34:00] I'll contact you to give you another freebie as well. So that's another meditation. I have another meditation course that I'm gonna do as a draw from this summit once people have signed up for that download.

So, I would say, I would say listen to it and then wait seven days. And then maybe revisit it again and do it for a couple days in a row because there is reiki in that. I would just allow those seven days to kind of just integrate some of the energies that are coming through that meditation. Okay. Awesome. I'm looking forward.

I'm gonna download that too. And I love meditation and listening to different meditations. It's just, I feel can be so powerful. Just even taking that moment to take a breath. Yeah. Can just be so powerful. So, thank you for sharing that. I really appreciate that. I think everyone's gonna enjoy that.

Well, Michelle, we are running out of time now and I just wanna say thank you so much. I really have enjoyed our conversation. I feel like we've gotten a lot out of it just talking about the importance of [00:35:00] safety, of having your journey of the self-love, the self-compassion, and understanding all that has been so helpful today.

Well, and thank you just so much, Monica, for having me, because I love talking about being an empath and, and I love this topic and I don't always get to talk about it all the time. So, thank you so much for being an amazing host for this summit as well. Thank you. You're welcome. All right, well that was fun and enlightening, and I hope you got a lot out of it.

I just wanna remind you to head over to the speaker interview page where you can grab all your free gifts. That's where you'll find Michelle's Chakra Clearing Meditation. And thank you for listening everybody.