



A Voice of Empowerment: How Magdalena Broke the Cycle CONVO Podcast Transcript, April 2024

Presented by Mo, Advocacy Specialist,
featuring Magdalena, 2024 EmPower Luncheon speaker

MO: Hello and welcome to the Women's Center's CONVO, a podcast and resource hub that shares helpful insight for survivors, community members and service providers alike. CONVO stands for Creating Opportunities for Non-Violent Outcomes, and we invite you to learn more about this initiative on Instagram at [@convo_twc](https://www.instagram.com/convo_twc).

The Women's Center is based out of Waukesha, Wisconsin. We welcome and serve survivors of all ages, races, gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, nationalities, and immigration statuses. The mission of The Women's Center is to provide safety, shelter, and support to empower all impacted by domestic abuse, sexual violence, child abuse and trafficking. Each episode will feature instruction on a healing topic.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month! All month long, we work to emphasize supporting survivors by ensuring a safe and connected community that no longer tolerates sexual violence and prioritizes healing for all.

In honor of Sexual Assault Awareness Month and with the support of our keynote speaker for our upcoming EmPower Luncheon, taking place on April 24th, our topic is **A Voice of Empowerment: How Magdalena Broke the Cycle**.

This topic is a nod to Voices of Empowerment, a weekly support group we host for survivors of sexual violence to process trauma and explore how to heal in a safe, supportive, and empowering environment. Aspen, my usual co-host and facilitator of this group, works with participants on understanding their trauma, their feelings, and how to begin to heal through inviting conversations and a variety of activities to promote self-reflection and healing. Participants will learn exercises to assist with coping and grounding that can be utilized in their daily lives to support their healing. If you're interested in this support group, please call our Hotline at 262.542.3828.

Before we begin the interview, I want to first provide a brief content warning for discussions of trauma, victim blaming, and survival coping, including drug use. As you listen please take care of yourself, it is okay to pause or stop listening if you need to, and Advocates are always available to process with you by calling our Hotline.

Today, we will be talking about intergenerational trauma and intergenerational healing—breaking the cycle, if you will. Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next. Trauma impacts the way we interact with others, how we learn what healthy relationships look like, and how we cope with change in our lives—it can make a ripple effect.

I've been thrilled about this opportunity to interview Magdelana—she is a survivor that has been on a journey from hardship to thriving mom, businesswoman, and community leader. Magdelana's story shows the pervasive damage sexual abuse can cause if its victims do not receive the help they deserve. She believes strongly in survivors using their voices to help break the shame and stigma around sexual abuse and that without doing so, the cycle of intergenerational trauma will continue, leading to more tragic outcomes in more families. Her story of overcoming intergenerational trauma is one of resilience and hope that inspires.

Thank you so much for joining us, Magdelana. My first question for you is what does intergenerational healing mean to you?

MAGDELANA: So intergenerational healing to me means being able to talk openly and freely about experiences without fear of judgment, without holding on to guilt, without being shameful or taking the blame for things that happen in your trauma. Figuring out where it comes from—I feel like for myself, as an adult, I have to be able to look back on certain situations that I'm doing now and say, “hey, okay.” I know why I think that way, or I know why my body language is this way, or I know why my life is going in this direction.

It just means freeing myself, but also accepting where I'm at, learning how to get to where I need to be. It's teaching my daughters that—because they're mother's now—it's teaching them that it's okay to be transparent, it's okay to be open, it's okay to make a mistake, your mistake doesn't define you. Your healing is saying the things that need to be said without fear of offending the people in the room. That's what it means to me.

MO: That's awesome! I feel like alongside the trauma that gets carried through generations, there's also that shame and then that silence that can get carried. And, you know, sometimes... in some families, you don't know that the struggles you're facing have been felt by generations above you or even generations after you as well. So I love that: the transparency, the being open and vocal about where you've been, where you're going and yes, that's healing, absolutely. Absolutely! Have you ever dealt with people making assumptions about you based on traumas you've gone through?

MAGDELANA: Yeah, I've dealt with people making assumptions about me. I've had people say I wouldn't make it. I've had people say I shouldn't be where I'm at. I've had people say that, "oh, you could handle everything that comes to you." I've even had people tell me I've deserved some of the things that have happened to me because I'm too aggressive or I'm too assertive or I speak my mind. I've had many people make assumptions about who I am, where I should be, and what I should be doing based off of trauma experiences.

There's not... many times where people have looked inside and see that, yeah, they say I'm the strong one, but I really don't feel like I'm the strong one. I might portray that I'm the strong one, but just because you see me as a strong person doesn't mean you get to put me through more stuff. It doesn't mean you could test your waters with me and see how far you can go because I'm strong and I'm resilient, because your assumption is, "she'll get over it."

People have made a lot of assumptions about me, my motherhood, my parenting skills, where my children were going to be. And this just isn't with me—people thought my children were gonna be, you know what I mean, like not good, not successful, not healthy. So yeah, a lot of assumptions.

MO: Yeah, yeah, those are, it's hard to get through that, especially, you know, it's not a bad trait to be strong. It's not a bad trait to be resilient. Those are great, beautiful things, but when people start to make assumptions about that and try to add more on, like you were saying... that's where we start to see a bit of the problem. It's hard to navigate through that. Has there been anything that's helped you navigate that?

MAGDELANA: More recently, I would say, in the latter years, I would say probably in the last two years, I've learned it's okay to set up boundaries, to say no when I need to say no, to not have to over explain myself, to put myself first.

And also when to be transparent and say, "hey, I'm not in a good place right now, I'm not listen to your pain, I can't give you anything because right now I'm struggling with giving stuff to myself." I've just recently learned how to do that because I'm a people pleaser, and I like to make everyone happy and I like to be positive, but what I've done is accepted that it's okay to say, "I'm not the strong one today, and I need more from you than you need from me." So that's what helps me get through because it allows people to see me in a different state. I become vulnerable, which is not easy for me. They get to see an inside part of me that they made an assumption does not exist. So I'm learning how to get through that.

MO: There is so much power in that, that's incredible. Were there other things that helped you to cope during that time as well?

MAGDELANA: Well, when I was experiencing trauma as a child, I didn't cope because I didn't know what the word coping meant. So at that time, I was just going through the motions, doing what I was asked to do, doing what I was being told to do.

More recently, as I just stated, setting up boundaries is a big one. Listening to music, those are the things I do now to help me cope with previous trauma or any difficult situation I may face in my adulthood. It's redirection. I do a lot of redirecting myself. I do have a diagnosis of PTSD and major depression and anxiety, so I have to be aware of my triggers. I have to feel, if I feel overtired, I have to slow down, I have to make notes, I have to give myself permission to rest. So those are the things I do now to cope with trauma-related concerns.

MO: Right on, and I feel like, yes, coping is such a word that people don't always know what that means or it's got to be like a five-step plan: "Here's how I cope, here's how I start to cope, here's what I do in the middle, and so on." We can break it down to things like getting out of bed asking for help those sorts of things, like they don't have to be big grandiose steps because those little things, when we're in the thick of it can feel like those big steps, and it's okay to to start with those and keep on with those.

MAGDELANA: Yeah, because looking back on the experiences what would be considered coping to me at that time was drug use. That's how I cope with it. That, to me, that's what I would relate that to. It was bad relationships. It was filling a void. I never attached coping with healing. It was survival. So if I heard the word coping growing up, I attributed to how am I gonna survive this moment? How am I gonna survive to the next day? That's what I would associate that with. So people cope in different ways, I experienced that. I coped during my traumatic experiences with a lot of bad decisions, but even though they were bad at the time, they helped me in that moment. Now, knowing better, I cope in more healthier ways, because really what I was doing back then was self-sabotaging. So now I know not to self-sabotage.

MO: And you know, again, there's so much power to knowing that. In those days, coping was survival, was getting to the next day, the next moment. What we learn about ourselves as we go through the healing journey, as we learn more, as we learn better, as we find more sustainable ways to keep ourselves going. And so with that, is there anything that you wish you would have heard sooner in your healing journey?

MAGDELANA: Looking at that question, I'm gonna be honest, even if I would have heard “you are smart” or “you are worthy” or “you are...” I wouldn't have believed that. I don't think there were any words that really I could take and be like, “they're telling the truth.” In my healing journey, in the beginning and even now to this day, I don't trust people at face value because I don't fully see what they see in myself. So any words that someone else would give me, I would take it and I would hear it and it's a struggle for me to actually believe it.

But if I had to choose what I would have heard growing up or in my teenage years, it would have been you are worthy. I love you, but also have the actions behind it. You are loved, you are valued, you're appreciated. You mean something to me. I would have loved to hear that more on a frequent basis than the opposite of name calling or your burden or your derogatory names or you're never going to be anything. So I would have loved to hear more positive things In the beginning of my healing journey.

MO: Yes, and with those actions behind it too, that's huge. You know, words: we take them or we leave them sometimes, but having those actions behind them. It's what helps us heal, too—having that supportive space, right?

We've recently worked with survivors in one of our support groups to create a list of affirmations that felt more authentic to them, that felt like there was more meaning or more action behind them. Things like, "It's okay to ask for help," or "I'm enough, no matter what." Are there any affirmations that you use that resonate with you, that you'd like to add and share with listeners?

MAGDELANA: Yes, so I do have affirmations that specifically I have latched onto throughout my life. It works for me. So the first one that would come to mind is the one that I spoke about years ago, and it's “when you know better, you do better.” I have another one that is, “you are worthy and loved more than you know or might believe.” “I am wonderfully made,” Psalm 139:14. “I am blessed,” James 1:25, and the last one is “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” Philippians 4:13.

MO: Right on, yeah, and I think that's the beautiful thing about affirmations, it's that we can find meaning in lists of affirmations, things like that, but when we take them and we assign our meaning to them, we make them fit us rather than trying to fit into different healing methods, coping tools, all of that. That's where the healing comes in, where we find things and try to make them work for us rather than trying to fit ourselves into something and hoping for the best, right?

MAGDELANA: Yeah, and learning how to seek out the positive affirmations for me have helped. Again, if you don't hear that growing up, and you don't hear positive things, you have to be able to tell yourself that, and in telling yourself that, you have to be able to get to a point where you actually believe it. So for me, getting up every day, saying these things to myself, I no longer depend on anyone else to say it to me I know that I have to get up and I have to look in the mirror and I have to believe it, and if I say it more, eventually it'll come naturally and eventually I will feel it.

MO: In closing, we'd like to share some more of these affirmations and turn them into a chorus of healing, no matter where you are at in your journey, read by our Advocates.

***ADVOCATES:** I am doing my best and I deserve to give myself grace. It's okay not to be okay—it's okay to be feeling what I am. I'm proud of myself for getting out of bed. I deserve time to rest. It's okay to make decisions that others don't approve of or understand. I don't have to validate how people feel about me and what I go through. I am enough, no matter what. What do I need right now? I'm allowed to be true to myself and show up in this world—it isn't selfish. Today is a new day. It's okay to ask for help. It sucks, but I'm not broken and I'm still worthy. I am still strong, I am still beautiful, I can do this.*

MO: Thank you so much for joining us on this episode. Stay tuned to our website for future episodes, and feel free to take a look at our past episodes too. The Women's Center focuses our work in partnering with clients to overcome barriers and gain a life free from violence. Our work is grounded in equity, upheld by inclusion, accountability, self-reflection, and continual growth.

We believe that it is important for survivors to feel seen and heard. We believe that Black Lives Matter because we cannot end violence without addressing the distinct injustices that Black and Indigenous People of Color face. We know that all forms of oppression are ultimately connected, and when we center individuals most impacted, we are also supporting survivors who have faced any form of violence. While we are not experts in anti-racism work, we aspire to be allies in this movement; we all have a responsibility to contribute to unlearning racism and intersecting forms of oppression that take place in our communities.

If you would like to talk with an advocate about your own experience with abuse, please call our 24-Hour Hotline at 262.542.3828. Learn more about The Women's Center at www.twcwaukesha.org, and find the resources mentioned on this episode by clicking Resources, then Podcasts on our website.

Thank you again for listening, and be well.