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165 - How to Heal Your Childhood Wounds with Actress Chrissy Metz

Amy Morin:
Welcome to The Verywell Mind Podcast! I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a best-selling author of four books on mental strength.

Every Monday, I introduce you to a mentally strong person whose story and mental strength tips can inspire you to think, feel, and do your best in life. The fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys! Don't forget to subscribe to the show on your favorite platform so you can get mental strength tips delivered to you every single week.

Now let's dive into today's episode!

Today I'm talking to Chrissy Metz. She rose to fame in her role as Kate on NBC's “This Is Us.” The show tackles real-life issues like grief, substance abuse, and strained family relationships. If you're a fellow viewer, you know how heart-wrenching it can be to watch at times. I'm thrilled that we got to talk to Chrissy just as the show is approaching its finale.
In addition to her work as an actress, she also happens to be an amazing singer and a New York Times number one best-selling author. Her book, “This Is Me,” talks a bit about her childhood and lessons she’s learned along the way.

I was really excited to sit down and talk to her about connecting the dots between childhood and adulthood, something both the TV show and her book address really well. Some of the things she talks about today are the connections between our childhood wounds and our adult experiences, how we can heal those childhood wounds, and the proactive steps we can take to manage our mental health.

Make sure to stick around until the end of the episode for the Therapist's Take. It's the part of the show where I'll break down Chrissy's mental strength-building strategies and talk about how you can apply them to your own life.

So, here's Chrissy Metz on how healing your childhood wounds can help you grow mentally stronger.

Chrissy Metz, welcome to The Verywell Mind Podcast!

Chrissy Metz:
Thank you for having me.

Amy Morin:
So, I'm a huge fan of your show. In fact, it's one of the shows that ... I guess the only show a few years ago, I convinced my producer to sit down and watch with me. He had certain shows he wanted me to watch and I said, "You've got to watch 'This Is Us.'" It's an amazing show. Clearly, it took off. You've resonated with so many people, and so many people are sad to know that it's coming to an end soon.

Chrissy Metz:
I know, and I'm sad. We're sad, too. It's so hard when you do a show as an actor, as a creative, that means so much more than just entertainment. It's like a blueprint for life. It feels like we're all experiencing it together. Whether you see yourself as a character or you understand a character or
yourself better through the character or the writing, it's just so much more than just a TV show. Yeah.

Amy Morin:
When you tried out for the part of Kate, you knew this was the role for you, right?

Chrissy Metz:
Well, I knew it was, but I didn't know if I'd get it. I was like, "Oh my gosh, I know what it's like to be the second fiddle, to live in the shadow of someone, to have issues surrounding food and my behavior around food and what it's like to want to aspire to be something that you just can't quite get a grasp of and you have shame and guilt around it."

Yeah, I mean, I wrote a letter to the executives and to casting. I put it in my book, and I was just like, "Listen, whoever's going to be right is going to be right. I trust that you guys are going to choose the right person, but I think it's me." So sometimes it does pay, it does pay off to be vulnerable and to go the little extra mile.

Amy Morin:
Before you landed that role, you had 81 cents in your bank account, I hear.

Chrissy Metz:
It's true, you all. I was broke. I mean no savings, truly had to borrow money to get to the audition through a dear friend, who is my best friend in the world. She's like, "I'm telling you, Chrissy, this is different." I'm like, "I don't know. Let me just get to the audition." You need $20 in your account to have the ATM swipe at the gas station. So, I had to borrow some moolah for the audition, to get there.

Amy Morin:
A lot of people might not know that about you, that not that long ago, you were living a life as a regular person struggling to get by. Now here you are, this huge celebrity. I mean your book starts with you talking about the fact you suddenly got invited to lunch with Oprah.

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah. What in the world? What in the world? What's really crazy, I also talk about it in my book, is that when I was married to my ex-husband, who was an angel, I remember sitting at a restaurant in Montecito where Oprah lives and thinking like, "Oh my gosh. She's three miles away from here. I want to know her." I mean we all want to know her. We all think we know her. We all love her. I was like, "One day I'm going to meet Oprah." I never thought I would be invited to her home.

What? Even saying that now, I'm like, "What in the heck?" Yeah, I mean I'm still very much a regular person. I just have a different set of issues that you contend with, but they're all still the same as well.

But, yeah, I'm not in debt to the point where I was like ... Not being able to pay my car payment. I get to do something that I love, which is, I hope, inspiring for people who are also doing the same thing.

Amy Morin:
What some people might not know is you didn't live this charmed life. You didn't grow up in a family that said, "We're going to give you acting lessons. Here we go. We're going to put you up there and support you until you make your dream come true." That wasn't your experience.

Chrissy Metz:
No, no, no. I'm one of five children. The middle, of course, as you can probably tell. I didn't feel very heard or seen in many, many moments of my childhood, but I knew that I wanted to relate to people and I wanted to tell stories. I found so much joy in making other people happy. I really thought comedy was going to be my thing. I wanted to be the female Jim Carrey. I was like, "How in the heck am I going to do that?"

So, I never thought that I would have the ability to come to LA and audition for agents and managers when I'm making silly videos with my sisters on tape players in my bedroom. I mean my parents were divorced. I'm one of five children. My mom was a single mom who could barely put food on the table, but did it for us, and nights that she didn't eat because she sacrificed for us.

When you come from a situation in which you don't know if there's anything different out there, it can be very disheartening and very difficult. So, I met my manager at a random open call at a Holiday Inn that my sister told me to take her to, and then the rest is history. Crazy.

Amy Morin:
Right?

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah.

Amy Morin:
One of the things that I loved about your book, and I think that your viewers love about your show, is that you show these flashbacks to childhood. It gives us this inkling of, oh, this is how these certain characters became the people that they are, or the same insecurities they struggled with at age 12, they're still struggling with when they're 40.

Your book does the same thing for you. You give us these back stories about you, how you grew up, the things you learned, the happy stories, the little things that stuck with you, as well as the tough times and how those things can still stick with us.

Chrissy Metz:
Oh, I mean if we're not our parents' unresolved issues, we are just our own unresolved issues. They will plague us until we've faced them head on, and we're like, "Oh." The only way to go is through, and that's a really hard concept because we don't like to be uncomfortable. It is so uncomfortable to be uncomfortable.

I feel like I've definitely gotten more comfortable with being uncomfortable over these many, many years. It's definitely still stuff that I hold onto, things that ... Even after writing my book, that I was like, "Oh, this is not completely resolved. I still have feelings about that."

My biological father passed away a couple of years ago. We were still estranged when he did. There's been a lot of healing around what I didn't say, what I should have said, what I shouldn't have done, what I should have done. I've done a lot of forgiveness process around that because so much of the lack of relationship that he and I didn't have really informs who I am today.

It's funny because it's the opposite with Kate. Her father loved her just unconditionally just as she was. And so, it's interesting that through the role that I've played, I found healing. I'm telling you everything happens as it should, even when we don't know it yet. But, yeah, we're daily processing, progress not perfection, but the progress is what's important.
Amy Morin:
I'm a therapist. The number one thing people will say when they come into my office is, "Do I have to talk about my childhood," because there's often this fear of, "I don't want to go back and relive things that happened to me a long time ago." But now that you've written this book, you've been on this show, what do you think about our childhood hurts and how that affects us later in life?

Chrissy Metz:
I mean it's everything, from feeling like I wasn't heard or didn't feel important in the positioning of my childhood with my own siblings and being a chubby kid. I remember the only thing I could wear from my friends was necklaces and jewelry. We couldn't share clothes, and how I was always hooking my friends up with boys even though I liked them, because they didn't like a chubby girl. I mean every single thing. Every single thing is the way we walk through life, I believe, in what we've dealt with or haven't dealt with. Yeah, I mean it's all about the childhood. It's all about it. Yeah.

Amy Morin:
Has it stirred up stuff for you playing Kate, from your childhood?

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah, definitely. I mean seeing Mackenzie or little Isabella play the younger versions of Kate, realizing that, oh wow, yeah, it's hard to let go of our parents. It's hard to be on these journeys by ourselves. When we're teased or bullied for our weight or for any differences that we might have, yeah, I see myself completely in those younger versions of Kate. Then, of course, in present day, I'm like, "Oh yeah, that I'm still dealing with," whether it's relationships and feeling insecure or putting people first.

That's what's so beautiful about this last episode with Kate, when she finally climbed that hill. It's like she's finally putting herself first in a very real way, in a way that I don't think that society teaches women especially to do.

Amy Morin:
I think so as well. That's one of the things that makes this show so powerful. It teaches us those lessons, that the same sibling issues we had at age 10 often are still right there 30 years later, or those little sayings,
sometimes it might be an off-the-cuff comment that somebody makes. At the time you might not even think that much about it, but how it affects you, how it stays stuck in your brain, or how it really shapes into who you become.

Chrissy Metz:
Absolutely. I mean even with Kevin, Kate, and Randall, with Rebecca choosing Kate as her POA of some sorts, if anything should happen to her while she’s battling her condition, I was like, oh, I don't know if Kate ever really believed in herself. I felt like that really bolstered her confidence as far as how Rebecca sees her and what she realizes that her mom saw her in a way that she never thought her mom saw her and she's never seen herself. She's like, "Wow. Oh, this is like a whole new thing."

And so, I feel like she's finally realizing that she does have something to contribute, something to say. She is really damn ... Like not only qualified, but really capable of being that person for her mom. Also, it's such a beautiful way, too. Not only thank her mom, but to give back to her mom now that she understands her because she is a mom herself and all of those nuances.

Amy Morin:
Yeah. Your show covers so many real-life issues, from grief and terminal illness to aging, sibling issues, money, body image, I mean all the things that so many of us are battling in everyday life. Then you sit down and you watch this show and you guys are battling all of these on the screen and we get to see, oh, okay, this is how they're handling it. There's something about it. I mean everybody cries when they watch your show, yet people are hooked, right?

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah. Yeah, I think people need that catharsis-

Amy Morin:
I think so.

Chrissy Metz:
... whether they're comfortable with talking about talk therapy or therapy of any sort, that there is a bit of a reprieve, or so much that is relatable in the character or the storyline that they're like, "Oh." Some people aren't comfortable with feeling those feelings, so they're like, "Oh, I can't watch
it." I’m like I get it. I get it. Sometimes you're in the mood, sometimes you're not. It can be overwhelming when you start to feel things, that you're like, "Oh, I've repressed this for a long time."

Amy Morin:
Right, right. So, I can only imagine being on the show, how that must stir up things for you from your own childhood and your own experiences.

Chrissy Metz:
Oh yeah. I mean there are times where things have been pulled from my own experiences and I'm like, "Yup," either Dan's been listening to me or it's just so relatable that everybody's going to know what this is when they see it on the screen.

Amy Morin:
Right. You have a whole chapter in your book called “Hurt people hurt people.”

Chrissy Metz:
Whoo!

Amy Morin:
Can you talk a little bit about that?

Chrissy Metz:
Yes. So it's interesting. As a 41-year-old woman, I never thought that I would be able to get over what my stepfather ... What I endured. I do genuinely believe that everybody is innately good and that if we don't heal our pain and our hurt, we end up projecting and hurting other people. I really believe that's what my stepfather did with me. Whether he meant well and he had good intentions, it was a little hardcore as far as the discipline goes.

I think it's hard to not only talk about it but see that somebody could express that about a behavior. I know that it made him very uncomfortable and his family uncomfortable that I talked about it, but it was for me to talk about, and it was my story and my perception, it's my reality, and it needed to be said for my own healing.

But now I can like look back and say he did the best he could with what he had. It's not a justification, because that behavior towards
anybody, much less a child, is not okay. But I do realize that if he knew better, he would do better.

Amy Morin:
Yeah, absolutely. The stories about your stepdad were hard to read at times.

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah, I know. It was hard to write.

Amy Morin:
I can only imagine. I mean it's an understatement to say he was mean to you. There were times where he was, would you say, outright abusive?

Chrissy Metz:
Oh yeah, for sure. I mean emotionally, physically, mentally, because he was in so much pain. I mean it still brings up emotions for me, because I think if I was in that much pain, how much pain was he in from his previous experience? I really try to have so much empathy and sympathy, because I don't think that anybody wants to be mean or malicious, but people are what they know and become what they know, unfortunately. If we can reprogram that and find out who we really are, or if maybe he was listened to and he felt important, he wouldn't have done that for me.

There's, of course, a different way of life. The way that you would discipline children was very different in the times that he grew up. But it was hard because my father wasn't around, and he felt like a father to me in ways that I never had. But at the same time, I was having to ... He would make me weigh myself. Then I would be in trouble if I gained weight, or the doors would be locked up. It just felt so ... It was so counterproductive to my own healing around food and my body that ... Oh, it's a hard thing to hear and read. So, you still talk about it because it was a hard time in my life.

Amy Morin:
There was a part in the book where you almost say something to the effect of, he's not your biological dad, but he's doing better than your biological dad, because at least he's here. But at the same time you knew it wasn't okay. You shouldn't just have to put up with what you had to put up with just because he's somewhat in the picture.
Chrissy Metz:
Right, and because he was a great provider, and he gave a lot of stability to an otherwise very unstable childhood for me after my parents divorced. But it doesn't mean that being berated or feel tormented is ... There's no justification for it. I don't care how much money you're bringing in or what kind of shelter you have for somebody. It's not cool. It's just not okay.

Amy Morin:
Right. Are there ways that you grew up in Florida ... Which, by the way, I hear you were born in Homestead. We're down in the Florida Keys. So when I read that, I was like, "Oh, she's not from far away."

Chrissy Metz:
Oh, you guys are in the Keys?

Amy Morin:
We are.

Chrissy Metz:
Oh, so my boyfriend's a songwriter. He's coming to the Songwriters Festival, the Key West Songwriters Festival in May.

Amy Morin:
Oh.

Chrissy Metz:
So I'm hoping to get down there. So, yeah, I've never been to the Keys. Born in Homestead, raised in Gainesville and Japan, but never been to the Keys.

Amy Morin:
Oh, good. Well, we hope you do come down in May then.

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah. Yeah, me too. Thanks. I mean Florida was ... I spent nine years in Japan when my parents were married, and my dad was in the Navy. But then we moved to Gainesville and my mom remarried a man who I obviously didn't know. I didn't know all these new people in school. I felt like such an outcast. I was the chubby girl. It was a tricky ... I mean I
know it's all relative, but it was a tricky time in my life, for sure, and just navigating very uncharted waters.

Amy Morin:
And so, then you go from, at some point, living in a trailer park in Gainesville to now living in Hollywood. What's it like to make that leap from one life to another?

Chrissy Metz:
It's interesting. I was home recently in Gainesville. My family's still in the surrounding areas. I took a picture of that trailer I grew up in, just so I could have it. I remember so many of the positive, fun times, like when it actually snowed, and the little carport was frozen over and we were skating on it.

What's interesting about our lives is that there are the joys and there's the sorrow. Sometimes they're one and the same. It's interesting that I ... On paper, my life doesn't make sense. I'm like how did this happen? How did this happen?

I'm so grateful every day. I also don't forget where I came from. I know what it's like to not have any sort of stability or security. Now I'm like, well, is it just an idea in our minds? What is real security? What is stability?

I think, moreover of that, it's like consistency. That's something I haven't really had in my life. And so, I'm like, "Oh, I've had a job for six years that I've really enjoyed. That's been pretty consistent. That's really wonderful." It's coming to an end and I'm like, "Oh, all my childhood issues and traumas are coming up to the surface." I'm like, "Oh. Ha ha. These are things I need to work on."

But I mean I never even thought I'd own my own washer and dryer much less a home. It's really something. Every day I'm like, "This is my house. What?" But I try to stay in gratitude all the time.

Amy Morin:
Yeah, I like that you talked about how you practice gratitude even before you get out of bed in the morning.

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah. I mean there are so many things that we take for granted ... And I don't want to say we. I mean, of course, including myself, like running
water or electricity or the fact that we can walk ourselves to the bathroom, or even go to the bathroom on our own. I mean things that you just think, "Oh, this is my body, and this is what it does."

Then all of the other stuff that's the cherry on top, like I get to be talking to you with this cool technology. We get to share this amazing story that hopefully will inspire somebody else. So much, so much to be grateful for.

I always ... At least 10 things before I get out of bed and try to visualize how the day is going to go, and send out good energy and good vibes to everybody. I really believe that you can only keep what you give away.

I also know that the more grateful you are, the more you receive, which is such an amazing concept. I'm like, guys, guys, you've got to tap into that. But I also know that it's really hard when you feel down and out to be grateful for something. So, you can start with something small. I have a moment to practice gratitude. That's something to be grateful for. No matter what situation you're in, I do think that there's something you can find to be grateful about.

Amy Morin:
Tell me this, the more that you gain, the more that you achieve, does your anxiety go up because now that you have more to lose?

Chrissy Metz:
Oh, I've never thought about having more to lose. It's more about my identity is wrapped up in this role, my identity is wrapped up in my next job, or is that stability going to go away because I might not have a job? Will I have to downsize? There's nothing sort of ...

It's interesting. I came from an unstable childhood to an unstable job. I'm in the business of rejection and a very unstable industry. What in the hell does that say? So, I guess it's something I'm comfortable with.

So, I think it's more over about that, like, okay, what's the next thing going to be? Am I waiting for the other shoe to drop? I have to remember all I have right now is right now. Right now, right now, right now, right now. So, I try not to future trip or lament about the past and just stay present. I try.

Amy Morin:
I'm sure everybody's asking you, now that the show's going to end, what's next?

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah.

Amy Morin:
What's it like to have to, I guess, answer that question?

Chrissy Metz:
It's like I have to qualify. I have to qualify that I'm a good enough actor and a good enough person and a good enough track record to warrant another job. I'm like, "Ooh, this is uncomfortable." Then all of my neurosis starts coming to the surface.

Then I think, you know what? There are many people who have ebbs and flows in their lives and in their industry and their careers. The only thing I can do is be ready, so I don't have to get ready, constantly work and stay creative. Then if the right project comes along, it will, obviously I'm still songwriting and going to be finishing my album, which is very exciting, because I felt like it took a bit of a pause because of COVID, as everything did.

So, I'm really going to focus on that because I feel like it's something that I haven't really had a good shake at yet. I never want to sing the shoulda, coulda, wouldas. You know what I mean?

Amy Morin:
We were listening to your music in the podcast studio today. You have an absolutely beautiful voice.

Chrissy Metz:
Oh, thank you.

Amy Morin:
Can you share the story about you trying out for “American Idol”?

Chrissy Metz:
Of course I can. So, I was married to my ex-husband at the time and he was like, "I'll go with you." The arena was San Diego Stadium, the
Chargers stadium at the time. There were thousands of people. I mean I was like, "Oh, I'm not going to have a chance. What am I doing?"

I think we sat for about eight hours total before you can even have an opportunity to audition or sing for 30 seconds. So, they have multiple tents in a row, five or six judges. Everybody goes up in a row of five, you get 30 seconds to sing. I was like, "Oh Lord. You know what, Chrissy? All you can do is your best. Just be ready."

So, I sang, of course ... Not of course, but I sang "Heavy" from Dream Girls. I just love that song. The guy, one of the judges, said, "Well, you know what? Thank you all so much. It's not going to be any of you this time, but we wish you well." I was like, "Hold on. Hold on, hold on, hold on. Why is it none of us? How could it not be any of us?" He's like, "What?"

There were two women on the next tent over, judges, who were like, "Who are you? What are you doing?" I'm like, "I just think that he's wrong." They were like, "What?" Of course, I'm sure they were intrigued by my, dare I say, confidence. I don't know what it was. Something got into me and ... I don't know. I think I was like, "I'm not going to sit here for eight hours and not have a real fair shake at something."

They said, "Well, sing for us," and I sang and they gave me a ticket to go to the next round. I was like, "What? Huh? It worked?" Whether they were trying to make good TV or not, who knows? But I ended up going back for two more rounds, and then I got to the round before the TV judges. They were like, "Yeah, I don't know. I don't think you know how good your voice is. You don't really know how to work it or manipulate it."

I was like, "Yeah, okay, fair enough." They were like, "Huh?" I think they wanted me to have a reaction, as anybody would. I was like, "Okay." They're like, "You're a talent agent. Don't you know what talent is?" I was like, "You all think you're going to try to do this to me on national television. I'm not going to embarrass myself." I was like, "Well, thank you so much. I appreciate it," and I remember just leaving.

There's always a disappointment when we don't feel like we're included in something. But I was like, oh, obviously it's not my past. It's a great opportunity for many, many people and a really fun show to watch people who've never been discovered sing. But I got third-degree sunburn on my legs from that thing. It was a lot. Yeah, it was a lot.

Amy Morin:
I thought it was a great story where you said, "The first time I stood up, and the second time, I was all, 'No, it's good,'" and you were able to walk away.

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah. I would rather have felt okay with how I acted instead of being embarrassed, because, of course, my ego wanted to be like, "Hold up, you don't know nothing," and I'm like, "There's no point in causing a scene, Chrissy," believe it or not.

Amy Morin:
So, for our listeners who maybe have some unhealed childhood hurts, do you have any thoughts on how you work through those?

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah. Oh boy. I journal a lot. I have a therapist. I talk therapy a lot. I also do a thing called journal speak, which is literally getting out anything and everything that you feel. Sometimes I just do it on a computer so I can erase it, because I never keep it, because our feelings, I don't always believe, are facts, but they're definitely needing to be removed, excavated. So, then we can get down to the core issue, like what's really going on. So that's been very helpful.

Also, knowing that it's not going to be a linear process. I think, for me, I was like, "Okay, once I handle this, everything's going to be great." I was like, "Oh, oh, I just cleared the path for some other stuff to come to the surface." I'm like, "Oh, dang it. This is just what it is." It's like owning a house, perpetual troubleshooting. It's like perpetual just like excavation and exploration, uncovering, discovering, discarding, and the only way really is through. That was also something that was like, "Damn, I have to come to terms with that? All right."

Also, this whole point, I believe, of this plan of existence is to evolve. And so, I want to be better tomorrow than I was today and have grace around all of that, because it won't be perfect, it won't be linear, but it will be worth it.

Amy Morin:
Oh, I love that. I'm glad that you said that because it's absolutely true. We have days and times when life's looking pretty good and then a bump in
the road, whether we know what that circumstance is, or sometimes you just wake up and you think, "Ugh, no."

Chrissy Metz:
Yeah, this is not a great feeling. This is icky. But then I also know that feelings do pass, and it's hard to sit through them because it's just so damn uncomfortable, and that's okay. That's okay to have the feelings. It's okay to have a hard time getting through them. But just to feel them. I think so much of how our society is now, we're always being able to ... Whether it's the distraction of Instagram, social media, or alcohol, drugs, food, purchases, like online shopping, anything and everything, we can stuff our feelings down with.

But there's ... Oh my gosh. I think his name's Travis Meadows. He's a singer/songwriter and he has a song called “Sideways.” The line is, "I push it down, but it comes out sideways." Like, oh. Every time I listen to it, I cry. I probably can cry thinking about it. It's like it will come out some way somehow. Eventually it will, and you hopefully don't implode.

So, start working on it because, otherwise, it's ... There's just so much joy to be had, but it doesn't feel like it, but there is. It's just getting through it all.

Amy Morin:
Thank you for saying all of that. Thank you for your book. Thanks for being on the show.

Chrissy Metz:
Oh, thank you.

Amy Morin:
I have no doubt that you give a lot of people the courage to work through some of those unhealed hurts that we have. So, thank you.

Chrissy Metz:
I hope so. People have encouraged me, and I'm so grateful to those people. So, we're all just paying it forward.

Amy Morin:
Absolutely. Chrissy Metz, thank you so much for being on The Verywell Mind Podcast.
Chrissy Metz:
Oh, thank you for having me.

Amy Morin:
Welcome to the Therapist's Take! This is a part of the show where I'll break down Chrissy's mental strength-building strategies and share how you can apply them to your own life. Here are three of Chrissy's strategies that I highly recommend.

**Number one: get comfortable being uncomfortable.** You've likely heard people say this before, but the context is probably about challenging yourself to do scary things. Chrissy said it in a different context. She was talking about the death of her estranged father and all the feelings she has surrounding her loss. She said some of those feelings and the feelings surrounding other issues in her life aren't completely resolved.

It's uncomfortable to think that you have unresolved issues or that you haven't worked through certain things in your life, but that's okay. You could force yourself to believe that you've worked through every bad thing that happened to you or every mistake that you've made.

But the truth is, as you grow and learn even more, the way you look at unresolved issues will shift. You might see things differently or develop a completely new outlook if you allow it to happen.

If we're honest, we all have unresolved issues. The goal in resolving those things shouldn't be to see how fast you can overcome them. You don't need to check items off a list declaring that you've resolved everything. Instead, part of the healing process might involve living with uncomfortable feelings for a really long time and resolving things just a little bit at a time.

Chrissy called this perpetual troubleshooting. That's a great way to put it and to consider yourself a work in progress that will always need some ongoing maintenance.
**Number two: pay attention when you discover an unhealed emotional wound.** Chrissy has somewhat of a unique experience when it comes to addressing unhealed emotional wounds. She plays a character in a TV show who has flashbacks to childhood. She said watching the scenes from her character's childhood reminds her of unresolved insecurities or issues that she still hasn't addressed.

The rest of us don't get to see a literal representation of our childhoods like this, but we do get glimpses at what our unhealed wounds are. Pay attention to the way you feel when you walk into a new situation. When you don't know anyone, what fears crop up into your head?

Or pay attention to those thoughts that run through your head and the feelings you experience when someone gives you a compliment. Do you feel uncomfortable? That's likely because you aren't sure you agree with the kind of things you're hearing. That might be a good signal that there's an unresolved issue there.

You might even be able to connect those things back to that time in childhood when something happened, like maybe someone made fun of you or you failed at something and felt like you weren't good enough. After all, childhood is when you develop beliefs about yourself, other people, and the world around you. Just raising your awareness to some of those unhealed wounds can be helpful. When you can say, "Yeah, I don't like to attend networking events because when I was a kid, I always felt left out, and I don't want to feel like that again," you'll then know why you feel certain emotions.

Making those connections might help you make more sense of things. It may help you overcome some of those insecurities that still threaten to hold you back.

**Number three: work through your uncomfortable feelings.** Chrissy talked about how tempting it is to distract ourselves from uncomfortable emotions with things like social media or alcohol. But distraction only gives us temporary relief.
There's a lot of truth in that. Distraction is a good temporary coping skill. It's something we've talked about on the show before. If you experience an intense emotion, a temporary distraction might reduce it enough so that you can think clearly. Like when you're really angry, you aren't likely to have a productive conversation. But if you go for a walk and distract yourself for a few minutes, you can calm down enough that you can then return and have a healthy conversation. Or if you're so anxious that you can't think, watching some funny videos for a little bit that make you laugh can help reduce your anxiety enough so that you can go back and tackle a problem.

But once the intensity of an emotion has subsided, it's important to get back to working through that feeling. You might allow yourself to feel that emotion for a while. You might also process that feeling by writing in a journal, talking to someone about it, or by working on practicing radical acceptance (a strategy that we talked about in episode 111).

Ultimately, you don't heal from uncomfortable feelings by running from them. They'll follow you wherever you go and keep popping up in unexpected ways until you work through them.

So, those are three of Chrissy's strategies that I highly recommend. Get comfortable being uncomfortable, pay attention when you suspect you have an unhealed emotional wound, and work through your uncomfortable feelings. If you're having trouble dealing with unhealed emotional wounds, or you have difficulty working through your feelings, seek professional help if you can. Talking to a therapist could help.

If you want to hear more about Chrissy's story or to hear more of her tips, check out her book, “This Is Me.”

If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger.

Do you want free access to my online course? It's called “10 Mental Strength Exercises That Will Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential.” To
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Thank you for hanging out with me today and for listening to The Verywell Mind Podcast! And as always, a big thank you to my show’s producer (who sometimes watches “This Is Us” with me), Nick Valentin.