



Transcript: #464 How to Create Epic Love, Dissolve Fear, and Find Your Power in Relationships with Stefanos Sifandos

Dr. Wendy Myers:

Hello, everyone. Welcome to the Myers Detox Podcast. I'm Wendy Myers of myersdetox.com. On the show today, we have an amazing guest. We have Stefanos Sifandos, and he's a relationship expert that's going to be talking to us about so many amazing things; how to find your power in a relationship, how to not self-abandon just to be in a relationship, how to improve your communication, how to be aware of your polarity in a relationship and being more in touch with your masculine or feminine just because you need that polarity to have a healthy relationship. What are the top ingredients needed to have a fulfilling relationship? When is it time to leave a relationship that isn't working for you? We have so many good tidbits. If you're interested in working on a relationship or detoxing your relationship, then this is an amazing podcast.

I'm in a relationship now, and I've been following Stefanos' work for a little while now. I just love, love his content and all the little tidbits he throws out there. I just love his energy, and I know you're going to love this podcast too. I know you guys watching this podcast or listening are concerned about your mental health, concerned about your physical health. I've been delving into the research over the past few years in regard to emotional trauma and how our childhood relationships with our primary caregivers create this foundation upon which we show up in our adult relationships. So I touch on this with Stefanos as well.

But if you really want to do a deep dive on addressing your childhood development trauma that so many of us deal with, whether our parents were narcissistic or they were avoidant, or you had any kind of attachment issues with your parents, or they were abusive even or neglectful, all of these things affect how we show up in our relationships and can negatively impact them if we're not doing this work on ourselves to develop self-love. That involves releasing our emotional trauma. So I created a program called the Emotional Detox Program, and it's all the latest research on how we develop trauma, how this affects us as

an adult, and how to release it through sound therapy. So this is what all the current research is talking about, about how to release emotional trauma. So I created a free masterclass that you can take that touches on all these little topics at emo-detox.com. Go check that out.

So our guest today, Stefanos Sifandos, so he's a trained educator and relationship expert with a background in behavioral science. So he's passionate about leading people closer to their highest potential. He helps men and women escape negative patterns and cultivate a positive sense of self, as well as restructure and reclaim their relationships with themselves and their loved ones. You can learn more about Stefanos and his work, and he's got lots of different programs. You can do courses and work one on one, in-person workshops as well; you can check them out at stefanossifandos.com. Stefanos, thanks so much for coming to the show.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Thank you for having me. Appreciate it.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah, so I've been watching a lot of related content because I'm in a relationship right now and just trying to do the best I can with that. There's always so much to learn. I've been watching a lot of your content, and I love your messaging, and I wanted to just volley a bunch of questions at you. I know all of our listeners are going to be really interested in what you have to say. But why don't you tell us a little bit about yourself and why you got into relationship coaching and trying to empower men and women to have better relationships?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah. Simply point, I really sucked at relationships as an adult. Not completely, but enough to eventually, eventually being the keyword, notice. But my relationships were strained as a child. It was very difficult for me to be in intimacy and feel safe in relationships. I grew up in a very volatile, violent, abusive household. There was a great deal of uncertainty. So the way that I approached others was really with caution. There was a hyper-vigilance, not only in my nervous system but in my psychology and the way that I believed people could be safe in my presence. So that really lent itself to why my relationships as an adult were really strained. Largely my intimate romantic relationships. They are often reflections of our primary caregiver relationships, the core relationships we form during our developmental and formative years with self and others, and how we attach. Not just attachment theory but how we give love and how we receive love as well. So that was really challenging for me.

As I became more aware of this trauma within me that was suppressed and repressed and really stuck. Well, let me actually backtrack. So I began my journey in the personal transformation space somewhat formally over two decades ago. Since I was a little kid, I have had this desire and yearning to support others, help others, change the world, heal the planet, and all these things. I grew up thinking if I could be the United Nations Secretary-General, I

would be able to make a big impact in the world. As I grew up, I realized that as an organization, there were a lot of complexities to the United Nations; that's a conversation for another time. But as a kid, I just had this big dream of helping others. So naturally, when I did go to university, I studied behavioral science and psychology and social psychology and really wanted to understand people, human potential, and how we relate to each other.

So for a very long time, I wanted to help and support people, and I was doing that, but I was avoiding dealing with my stuff. I was using helping others as a way to somewhat trick myself into that I was helping myself. I didn't know that at the time, but as I look back and as I've reflected over many, many years and have done deep into work and exploration of myself, I've realized that was really the case. You'll find that most therapists, most people of service, are going into that service because there's a part of them that they want to heal and they want to attend to. This isn't a judgment. This is a reality for most of us that go into that service-based industry, whether it's therapy or coaching or counseling, or spiritual healing, whatever it may be.

So as I started to unravel that and unpack that and became clear in who I was and actually started dealing with my stuff as opposed to just focusing on everyone else and distracting myself from my own pain, my purpose, for lack of a better term, my dharma, my vision for self, just solidified even more. I started serving from a more authentic place. It didn't change; my desire to serve and support others in their journey didn't change. What shifted was an equal desire to also support myself and to be in integrity and to really only support others if I was supporting myself and working on myself and being with myself and evolving and expanding my being.

That's when things really shifted a great deal. So I've been in this space for 20 plus years, in the personal transformation space, more so with relationships probably the last decade specifically, and masculine and feminine polarity and dynamics, sexual identity with a larger focus there. Also, performance, like high performance, how do we optimize ourselves? What I've found is that we optimize ourselves when we are in the "right relationship with ourselves" into the things in our lives that matter. Including our past, our traumas, our challenges and difficulties, our celebrations and our joys, and all the important relationships in our lives. So for me, relationships are almost at the epicenter of that. I'm wondering, can we as a society and humanity move into a couple's culture where I use that term, but where we're essentially prioritizing the power of the couple and the power of intimacy.

Dr. Wendy Myers:

Yes. I mean, some people want to be in a relationship. They desire to be in a relationship to be happy and healthy and get their needs met. But I think it's so easy for people to self-abandon in their pursuit to find that ideal relationship. So what does that ideal relationship look like to you? What does a great relationship look like to you? Before we get into what people tend to do wrong or what they need to be doing.

Stefanos Sifandos.: It's very different for every person because every person brings their own history to a relationship. Their own values of a relationship, their own likes, and dislikes, and their own non-negotiables to a relationship. So what's ideal for one couple, based on what they want to experience in this lifetime and the various experiences they want to have in this lifetime, and the type of relationship container they want, is going to vary from person to person.

For me, what contributes to making an ideal relationship for me. And I think this could be applied to most people that are on a journey of growth, is that myself and my partner prioritize growth as a high value. In other words, we are committed to our own expansion, individual expansion. We're also committed to the expansion of the relationship. That means that we have to embrace all of it. We're not just embracing the good, we're not just embracing the convenient, we're not just embracing the pleasure, we're embracing the spectrum of what that relationship offers us as a mirror and a reflection of who we are and who we can be, and who we've been maybe and what needs to shift and change. Can we be different in terms of our behavioral patterns and our emotional patterns and interactions with a theme in our lives that has been playing out. I'll give an example in a moment that it's time for that theme to die?

For example, if you come into a relationship and you hold needy or desperate energy, there's codependent energy that you hold. As a result of that, you become a people-pleaser; you maximize the needs of others, and you minimize your own needs. It's a common theme for so many of us. So in that relationship, maybe the partner that you've attracted is being selfish or has selfish tendencies. That doesn't make them bad. It's just who they are; their own history and conditioning, and experiences have contributed to the person they are today. Your old self, that would perpetuate an old pattern that's outdated and actually not helpful to your growth, would make sure that they're okay all the time. You would sacrifice yourself in lieu of their needs. The new version of self that wants to come through may gently and compassionately point out that and not sacrifice self and have an open conversation, a dialogue with a partner and make requests and say, "Hey, this behavior activates something in me that's my responsibility to deal with. However, I'm clear that in a relationship, the way we interact with each other, I prefer a greater balance of selflessness and selfishness, and here's what it looks like."

So it's those types of mature conversations that your partner, in a sense, is actually giving you the opportunity to break a pattern. But we don't see it that way. We often see it as our partners asking us to change for them, but it's actually for us. Does that make sense?

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah, for sure. Yeah, and it's hard to change your patterns. But you know, you have to ask your partner for what you need. I think that so many people can be afraid to ask for their needs to be met or afraid to express them. Things are going really well; they're in a good mood, and they don't want to have a heavy

talk. But I think so many people self-abandon in relationships when it's really the very thing they need to get their needs met and to help their partner grow as well.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah. We're often scared to ask for what we need because we don't want to be rejected. We don't want the thing that we need that's vulnerable to us, and that's very real to us, to be rejected or abandoned or humiliated or discarded or disregarded. So it's easy to hide, or it's easier to ask for something that's really accessible but not really what we desire. That builds resentment, and that builds distance. It creates distance and puts barriers between us.

Dr. Wendy Myers: The reality is if you ask for what you need and that person rejects you or dismisses you or your feelings, or leaves you, that's an alignment. You still get what you need, even though it may not be what you want.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah. Better to know now than to know years down the track and then reflect back on if only I was in my truth.

Dr. Wendy Myers: It's so easy for so many people to be like a little bobblehead like, "Oh yeah, I love soccer matches," or "Oh yeah, I love camping."

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah.

Dr. Wendy Myers: They're not themselves. They don't just show up or are true to themselves to try to fit into this relationship and are miserable.

Stefanos Sifandos.: The more comfortable and exposed we become in a relationship, we'll generally start speaking our truth a little more. Unfortunately, though, if we're not deliberate with it and we're not purposeful with it, the truth leaks out or comes out in more abrasive ways, and we see our partners as threats as opposed to not. So the example of camping that you just gave, one partner loves camping, and the other one doesn't, and for years they've been camping because that person's been acquiescing. Then finally, that person's just built up so much resentment they just say, "Look, fuck you, I don't want to go camping; we're just not going camping." They start abusing camping and being outdoors, and there's this, and there's that, and there are the insects, and there's the dirt and whatever it may be.

Dr. Wendy Myers: The dehydrated space food.

Stefanos Sifandos.: The partners like, "Whoa, we've been camping for four years. What are you talking about?" Then the arguments really begin, and then the distance is created again because we haven't been deliberately authentic, and we are angry at ourselves. We're upset at ourselves that we haven't been in our truth, and we take it out on our partners.

- Dr. Wendy Myers:** For sure. Yeah, I had that with my ex-husband. He's like, "Yeah, I love traveling, and I'm going to get my passport," and doing all this stuff. Then he hated traveling, actually. I haven't gone traveling for eight years, and it's my biggest passion. So it really just hurt our relationship a lot. So you have to be honest with your partner about what you want because they're signing a contract; they're signing up for what you're presenting. So you have to be honest with what you like if you want to have a healthy relationship.
- Stefanos Sifandos.:** And permission to change. Everyone has the right to change their minds, but can you communicate that? As you're shifting and changing, can you communicate your needs and the changes that you're experiencing as an individual on your own journey?
- Dr. Wendy Myers:** Yeah. So what do you need to do to attract the right partner to you? So what kind of work do people need to be focusing on? How do you help your clients attract that ideal partner, their dream romantic partner they're looking for?
- Stefanos Sifandos.:** Inner child work is super helpful. Trauma-release practices and exercises are super helpful as well. Somatic work and somatic therapy, an example of that is breath work, can be really useful in shifting old patterns and old paradigms that are lodged in our bodies that are really unconsciously dictating how we behave and keeping us safe in hypervigilant ways and not allowing us to be fully expressed in relationship.
- But getting to the core wounds that we've experienced that form our patterns and our behaviors and our beliefs and ideals about relationships and working with those core wounds in very compassionate ways, in very slow ways, in ways that are in and out. So slow titration in and out is pendulation, and just really being with this stuff. Addressing the stuff that we haven't addressed, the unresolved pain, the unresolved fears, the unresolved trauma, and really working with that to create clarity in the body and the mind, to create spaciousness in the body and the mind so that we can then make decisions and be our truth and attract from a place of truth as opposed to a place of pretend.
- Dr. Wendy Myers:** Yeah. So I think relationships are so amazing when you're in this relationship and they bring up these old wounds, it's kind of holding a mirror up to yourself, where these old wounds come up to be healed. Can you talk a little bit about that dynamic?
- Stefanos Sifandos.:** Yeah, so I mentioned I touched on this earlier. Harville Hendrix has written a number of books with his wife as well, and one of them is Keeping The Love You Find or Getting The Love You Find is another one as well. He very much speaks to the primary caregiver relationships, or I would say our adult relationships, our adult intimate romantic partnerships, are reflections of our primary caregiver relationships with respect to what we did and did not receive both consciously and unconsciously from our primary caregivers. So as we become adults, we're looking to have a redo with some core fundamental ways of relating. In other

words, how we derive our utility in a relationship and our usefulness, our self-worth, how we are treated if we've 'done something wrong, how we work with challenges in relationship and difficulty and difference of opinion, and can we remain in the in-group and not separate and go in the out-group, which can be very scary from an evolutionary perspective in our nervous systems. That's why public speaking is so scary, too, because if we say something that is against the status quo, there's this feeling of annihilation that we're going to be kicked out of the group where we're going to be on our own.

A hundred thousand years ago or 500,000 years ago, being wild on your own was surely death. So we want to be agreeable with each other, but at the same time, we want to be in our truth. Navigating that often as children, if we see something or we experience something with our parents that isn't healthy for us, our voices are minimized, our power's often taken from us, we give it away, we lose it because we are little people. We rely on others for our survival, particularly our parents or primary caregivers. So it becomes important for us to realize that we will play out very similar scenarios with our adult partnerships, our romantic partnerships, to have a redo in order to be different.

An example of that is, let's say, you experienced a lot of physical abuse from your father. You may attract someone that is very aggressive as an adult; maybe not physically abusive, but really aggressive and just very loud and reminds you of your father. What did your little girl need? I'm using a woman as an example. What did your little girl need to do back then to feel empowered? Often that question can give us insight into what we need to do now in the adult expression of that version to feel empowered, take back our power, and begin to change the dynamics of what we're creating and attracting.

It could also be, let's just say, you've worked through that, but then you attract someone that is very similar to that energy, and you think to yourself, "But I've worked through this. What do I need to do here?" Maybe you need to say no to the relationship and be really clear. I'm not attracted to this kind of relationship, and you do that early on, and you start to build a somatic body that is conditioned for a different type of relationship, a different kind of experience completely.

Dr. Wendy Myers: It's hard to say no. It's hard to.

Stefanos Sifandos.: That's what's familiar.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah. It's hard to put your boundaries down when you start getting into a relationship, and you've been alone for a while, and they're giving you lots of love, or maybe they're even love bombing you and they lie to you about something, or they don't keep their word. It can be very difficult to enforce your boundaries or what you really need and turn away someone who's offering love to you or amazing hot sex or love bombing you or what have you.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, that's a tough one. The love bombing and the explosive sex is often what's needed in order for that couple to come together. Because if your shadows and complimentary wounds met each other on the first date, you'd go, "I'm not going near that." But then, if you don't go near that, you don't have an opportunity to heal that. So it has to come together; something has to pull it together. Usually, it's explosive sex; it's chemistry. It's "Oh, you love this, and I love that." The values align, apparently, on the surface. Or the love bombing takes place that hooks you in.

Then after that limerence phase dissipates, and that hormonal flush dissipates. It's generally anywhere from six to 18 months; sometimes it's longer, and sometimes it's less. That honeymoon period. Then the more complete version of self starts to come forward and present itself. That's when the real inner work begins. That's when the real relational work begins then. How you are with that and what you extract from that, what you give to that, how you choose to show up differently. Most people don't. They'll go back into their old pattern and then say, "Well, the relationship isn't working. Let me just discard it." Maybe? Maybe the relationship isn't meant for you, but have you left too early without the lessons? Have you left too early without fundamentally changing who you are? You keep repeating the same thing over and over again.

Dr. Wendy Myers: So can you talk a little bit more about trauma? 'Cause I think this is such a huge issue that a lot of people maybe go into couples therapy, "Can you just fix him? Can we talk about how he's behaving?" Or what have you? It's very easy to look at what the other person is doing and hurting you or what you have. But can you talk about how to really have that ideal relationship? How much work do you need to do on yourself and address your own trauma?

Stefanos Sifandos.: The greater the trauma that we experience, or the perception of that, often the greater the inner work and the more consistency that's required. It's fundamental to any healthy relationship that each individual takes responsibility for their stuff, for their own personal experiences. When I say that, I'm not stating that it's your fault that you were hurt or it's your fault that someone decided to molest you. Not at all. It has to be your responsibility to heal that, though. Because if it's not, then you're disempowering yourself. If you're trying to put that in the hands of someone else, whoever it may be, a counselor, a coach, a therapist, or your perpetrator, all you're doing is disempowering yourself further. You're cyclically caught in the same spiral.

What we'll often do in a relationship is a project, and if only our partners could be different if only they didn't react this way, if only they didn't do this, if only they weren't as angry. If only they acquiesce to my needs, if only they fill in the blanks. That's very disempowering for us, and we're never going to shift from where we've been to where we want to go.

Dr. Wendy Myers: So how do people make those changes? So from wanting their partner to change. At what point do you do your work on yourself? At what point is it time to call it quits on the relationship?

Stefanos Sifandos.: That's very difficult to say. It's not a one-size-fits-all paradigm for everyone to say, "Okay, at this point, this is when you've got to call it quits." There are so many inputs that influence that decision. For some people, it could be, "I'm going to give it three months." Some people need to see certain milestones along the way in terms of progress and growth within the relationship and the way they're interacting. Some people they're addicted to trauma, and they don't want to let the relationship go, and it's very difficult. Often usually comes from a "This pain that I'm in right now is bigger than the pain of change. I've got to get out of this relationship." When that happens, then people will make that decision.

But what I say is that can you exhaust, as best as possible, yourself in that process? In other words, can you make the changes that you need to make? I'd strongly suggest being in reflective containers with other people - coaches, counselors, therapists, et cetera, groups of people, women's groups, men's groups, colleague groups, whatever it may be - where you can get a reflection on who you're being, honest, non-judgmental, compassionate reflection and there's healing that takes place in that as well in the nervous system and in the psychology. You make the changes you need to in the relationship, and once you feel you've made enough changes and you're not seeing that reciprocated, and you've made the requests, and you've had honest conversations, and you've been non-judgemental, and you've practiced compassion, and you've been consistent in your being, however long that is for you, and still no changes and there's unwillingness from your partner? I'd say that's a pretty good sign that you need to leave the relationship because they're not going to change. They're not willing, and they're not wanting.

Dr. Wendy Myers: I really like what you said before about how you and your spouse you're both committed to growth individually and growth in your relationship. If you're a person doing that, but your partner is not interested in relationship growth or communication, you're fighting an uphill battle that you may lose.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yep.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah. Can you talk about some of the top ingredients that people need for a really fulfilling, happy relationship?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah. Space away from each other is really important. Time and space together are equally as important. Having your own interests and hobbies separately and together is important. Sexual intimacy is important. Effective communication, so learning to communicate in ways that are healthy, such as utilizing nonviolent communication or the Imago dialogue, which Harville Hendrix talks a great deal about in these books. Simple communication styles and methods are very

effective, especially when you start to master them. Because you enhance your ability to listen and reflect back and hear someone else and do that for your partner as well, which is very healing. Often that's all someone really needs is to be heard. If you can master that without getting triggered and charging yourself, it's tremendous.

This leads me to another key ingredient: your ability to hold space for your partner's stuff. The definition of that for me is when we hear this in the spiritual community, hold space. Hold space for your partner, hold space for your friend, hold space for whatever. To me, the definition of holding space is can someone bring themselves to us in their fullness? Not project and abuse us. We have to have boundaries around that but bring their fullness. Maybe not like, or it may be really intense what they experience what they're bringing, but can we not bring our stuff at that moment? Can we not be triggered by that? That just simply means doing our own inner work to realize enough that it is that person's stuff, and they need to express it right now, and it's actually really healing for them to do. Again, there are safe ways to do that. If you're being abused or experiencing violence against you, there needs to be a boundary set there. "I'm just going to let that happen and be a punching bag," no, not at all. But that holding space is really important as well.

Fun and play. You've got to have fun; you've got to play. You've got to laugh together. It's such a crucial ingredient. There are so many more. I'd also say creation. I think creating together is really beautiful. That could be as simple as you have your own mini book club, and you read the same book over a period of two weeks or whatever it is, and then you talk about the book, and you talk about the learnings of that. It could be fiction, or it could be nonfiction. It could be something that contributes to the relationship.

This leads me to the next one, which is growth. Can you do activities together that are growth-promoting? Could you go to a yoga class together? That's something super simple. Or training or exercising or going for a walk together. Or, again, reading a book or doing an online course together, or making a retreat together, whatever it may be. That personal growth is really, really important.

The creation part, I should come back to that; actually, the create together could be doing business together as well. It could be a service to humanity together, too. Depending on what industry and what space that you're in too. It could be a pottery project that you do together. It could be gardening. It could be a project around the home, like putting solar panels in on the house, and you're both taking care of that. Can you create together is really important. Have novel experiences with each other. For example, say one of you is a mad astronomy fan; go to one of the greatest observatories on the planet and watch the stars together. Engage in adventure and travel, and novel experiences. That also ties into the fun and the play as well.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah, I know. Tomorrow I'm watching the World Cup all day with my boyfriend.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Awesome. Love it.

Dr. Wendy Myers: I'm going to get into it too. So let's talk a little bit about polarity. I think this is something that a lot of people don't really think about in their relationships as much as they maybe should because I think there are a lot of issues today with gender roles and masculinity and femininity. It seems like a lot of men are maybe not masculine, that they could be maybe more masculine, and a lot of women are taking on a lot of masculine characteristics and roles. How does this hurt relationship dynamics? What are your thoughts on that?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, I think every couple needs to decide what dynamic works best for them. But when a couple is feeling an imbalance, and I'll use a conventional example, where a woman is too much in her masculine energy, and a man may be too much in his feminine energy, and that doesn't fit them. 'Cause for some couples, that may fit really well. Perfect. That dynamic and that role play and that expression of energetics works really well for some couples. It depends on who you are fundamentally at your core. I developed a very simple assessment that helps you identify what your dominant energy is in terms of what your preference is of how you like to move through the world and think about the world, whether it's more masculine-orientated or feminine-orientated, and that's nothing to do with biological gender. I should say another thing, too. It's got less to do with biological gender than we think and more with orientation and culture. There is some biology involved in that, of course, but more towards conditioning and how we see the world. For anyone that's interested, you can just find that on my website pretty straightforwardly.

But polarity is very important for magnetism to occur. So let me go back to the example of a woman being masculine. It doesn't feel 'natural' for her in the intimacy of the relationship, and the man is in his feminine energy, and it doesn't feel natural to him in the intimacy of the relationship. Forget about what's happening in the outside world; just talk about that couple between them. If they're not in their natural expressive states, there's going to be a lack of polarity. When there's no polarity, there's no magnetism. If there's no magnetism, there's less connection and less intimacy, and we start to drift away; emotionally, physically, and spiritually. We start to then seek pleasure outside of the relationship because the relationship isn't giving us pleasure. It can actually be giving us pain because we have these unconscious resentments and frustrations that we're projecting into the relationship. That's where relationships start to break down.

You said key ingredients. I mentioned that sexual union and sexual intimacy are really important. Even just physical touch and intimacy, even if that's not a primary love language for you, it's important that we have physical intimacy at some level. You'll gauge that based on your own personal preferences. But that's important because that's how our nervous systems adapt. That's how we learn

to be safe in the presence of others. It's through that nervous system activation in the physical presence of others and in physical touch as well.

So if polarity doesn't exist in a relationship, essentially, the relationship starts to break down and break apart, and we'll seek that polarity, that excitement, that magnetism, elsewhere. It may not just be in sex. It could be at work. The creation could be in getting validated externally by other people, friendships, or the workplace that gives us that spark, that gives us that excitement. 'Cause sexual energy is creative energy; it's part of our personalities.

Dr. Wendy Myers: <Yeah, and can we talk a little bit about toxic masculinity and what that looks like, and the role that it plays in relationships?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Sure. So my take on that term is that it's been bastardized in our society and it hasn't, from my perspective, been used in the way that it could be used. What I mean by that is when I think the majority of people, when they hear the term toxic masculinity, the common association with that is that basically masculinity is bad, and by default, men are bad. I completely disagree with that. I vehemently disagree with that for so many reasons. Because I do believe toxic masculinity exists, and I also believe toxic femininity exists. We look at them as just energetic expressions. There are maladaptive, unhealthy, extreme expressions of the masculine. I'll give an example: doing. So doing energetic, getting things done, achieving, and being objective-orientated can be taken to the nth degree, where we sacrifice our health and we become malicious in our intent to achieve. That's an extreme version of masculine energy. You could call that toxic. Femininity. A feminine expression is energy, but let's just use the connection. Being in connection, being in intimacy in the feminine energy. We can take that to the nth degree, men and women, human beings, by being very needy, by being desperate, by being manipulative. Now we're in a toxic feminine expression.

The way that it's conventionally understood, I disagree. The way it's connected to patriarchy, and even that term, is so complex and loaded. When you look at just basic definitions but how they've been used and how they've been appropriated, these definitions in our society create villains, it creates victims, it creates saviors. It creates this triangle of placing people or groups in these areas, which isn't bad. But when we are constantly doing it for one group of people, and we're villainizing or demonizing one group of people, in this case, it's men and toxic masculinity, I don't think that's healthy for anyone. I don't think that's healthy for humanity.

What we've seen in today's culture is an overly politically correct culture. Nothing wrong with that. I see that the pendulum has, and it needs to be, actually. At some point, we'll come back into greater harmony, but what we're also seeing is that we're seeing more and more separation. But as a result of that. Here's the beauty of it. As a result of that, there are certain individuals and certain groups that are saying, "Too much separation. What does unity look like?

What does unifying our common interests look like? What does it look like to not demonize difference and celebrate difference and our sameness as well?" and point out where we are saner than not. So we're seeing that. I'm an advocate of that. I'm a proponent of that. So we're seeing that I think, more and more in society. Maybe I'm seeing that more because I'm a proponent of it, so I have an inherent unconscious conscious bias toward it. I think that is happening as well.

Dr. Wendy Myers: <Yeah, I think it's very easy to look at your partner and think of them as an opponent or someone that you have to protect yourself against or fight against, rather than thinking of them as being on your same team.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yep.

Dr. Wendy Myers: And someone that can work with you. It's one of those things where I think that there can be a bad polarity where people can be working against each other and fighting too much rather than changing that mindset and flipping it and thinking of working together to better the relationship.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, it's interesting that point that you just made about, I guess, villainizing our partners and making our partners wrong. I think that comes from my own experience. I've done that in a way to avoid what I need to feel within me, to look at my stuff, and to take responsibility for, "Hey, I could be doing something better," and my ego self doesn't want to change and my ego self doesn't want to feel that shame that's associated with that. For so many of us, but in my life, my shame has been so big; it's been a prime mover. It's something I've been avoiding like the plague for so long. 'Cause I didn't want to feel my own internal shame, I would project onto others. I would be combative with my partners.

I think we see that a lot in partnership because we're unable to touch our own painful bodies. That's where doing that inner work slowly over periods of time gives us exposure to all parts of ourselves. So we start to apply love and compassion to all those parts of ourselves, and it doesn't become so daunting. We can feel shame and not retract fully like we once used to and not project it onto our partners. I think that's really important too.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Also, just always think about love and compassion before you speak and before you act when you're thinking about your partner's behavior. Because that's essentially what we're after love and peace and joy at the end of the day.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, agree. Yeah, I think everyone really wants to experience love and wants to experience joy and connection and intimacy and to be seen and to be heard and to be appreciated and respected. These are basic human needs.

Dr. Wendy Myers: And it takes a lot of work.

Stefanos Sifandos.: It does.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Just when you think your work is done, like another bone that flies out of the closet or something that comes up. It never ceases to amaze me knowing how I mean we're always on this amazing journey of learning about ourselves and relationships and how we show up in relationships. There's just always something to unpack, it seems like.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yep. Often. Often.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah. So how do you work with your clients? So you work individually with people, with couples. What does that look like working with you? What are some of the programs that you have, et cetera?

Stefanos Sifandos.: I pull from various modalities. I've been studying, and I continue to study for 20-plus years, human psychology, trauma, and somatics. So I pull from various modalities when I'm working with clients. It's very individualized. I've created at your own pace evergreen programs, and I've created many of those. I guess they're more structured in the sense that this is the program, here's the video, here's the pdf, here are the lessons here, the reflective practices or the practices that are involved. It's quite locked in, and that. Whereas when I'm working with someone with couples or in a one-on-one capacity, I'm really working, and I'm meeting them where they're at, and working back from that and working forward from that and applying modalities to the healing that they require and holding space in a very specific way to them, to the individual, to the couple. That's going to be beneficial for where they are in their lives now. Again, the order of the modalities that I may lean on or the way that I help them navigate or journey through particular issues is going to differ from most clients to most clients. However, there are some fundamentals there. There's inner child work, and there's somatic work. There's trauma work there. There is an understanding of our developmental and formative years; there are polarity dynamics and masculine and feminine dynamics as well. But inner child work is a big part of what I do.

Dr. Wendy Myers: You work doing breathing workshops every month as well, right?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, correct. Yeah, so myself and my wife, and we have other practitioners there that are with us as well. We have a monthly event called Breathwork for the Feminine. That was really born from another program that we do call Be the Queen, which my wife and I run as well; we've been doing that for about three years. That's a three-and-a-half-month container where we would take women through, largely single women, a journey of connecting to self again. Christine would really go through so much of her journey and what it took for her to be where she's at now and comfortably in her own skin and her relationship with men and all of that. I hold space through that program, as well as a masculine pole, as a component of that program.

But what I witnessed was the immense value of the somatic work that I was taking some of these women or these groups through. I thought we needed to do this on a regular basis. We need to do this on a monthly basis. Cause Be the Queen, we'd launch that program live once a year, and we have an evergreen program as well. But I really wanted to be more regular with this.

So we started Breathwork for the Feminine. It's live in Austin, but it's also live-streamed and recorded as well. So last time we did this, we had a touch over 300 women, which was just fantastic. It's a beautiful space, and it's a three-hour immersive, and we go deep. It's not just Breathwork; it's a connection, exercise, and healing. It's for women only. In the room physically, there are anywhere from 80 to a hundred women plus, really just doing deep healing work. It's such an honor to be in that space.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Great. Yeah, that sounds amazing. So that's in Austin, Texas?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah.

Dr. Wendy Myers: And you're doing that every month?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Every month, yeah.

Dr. Wendy Myers: That's great. And your next one's on December 12th?

Stefanos Sifandos.: December 12th. Yeah. 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM CST.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Central? Great. Perfect. Okay. Yeah, so I'm from Texas, so I love all people living in Texas. I was just there for Thanksgiving with my family on the ranch right outside of Houston. But Stefanos, thank you so much for coming to the show. I love your content on Instagram, and you have a lot of juicy little bits on there if you guys want to tune into that. What's your Instagram handle?

Stefanos Sifandos.: [@stefanossifandos](https://www.instagram.com/stefanossifandos).

Dr. Wendy Myers: <Okay, great. Is there anything closing that maybe we haven't brought up that you want to touch on in regards to relationships?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, I would just say maybe an extension of what we touched on earlier was if you're thinking about leaving a relationship, don't leave too early. Just extract the wisdom for yourself that you need, and you'll know where you could be different and where that difference could actually be beneficial to you and possibly the relationship and your partner.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah. 'Cause I know a lot of people who leave their relationship and get into a very similar one. It's like the same shit, a different story. They keep choosing the same people. So it's kind of almost work with who you have. Unless they're too toxic and hurting you and whatnot.

Stefanos Sifandos.: Absolutely.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Yeah. Well Stef, thanks so much for coming on the show. Where can we find your website?

Stefanos Sifandos.: Yeah, stefanossifandos.com.

Dr. Wendy Myers: Okay, great. So we are going to spell that out in the show notes for you guys. So tune into myerdetox.com to get all the show notes and links to all of your products and programs.

So Stef, thanks for coming to the show. Everyone, thanks for tuning in. I'm Dr. Wendy Myers, and every week I love bringing you experts from around the world to help you with every area of your life, not just health and detoxification. I wanted to do this relationship series cause I know it's so important for so many people to work not only on their relationship but their relationship with themselves and self-love so they can show up and be the person that they need to be. To be totally present in a relationship and get that fulfilling relationship they deserve. So thanks for tuning in, and I'll see you guys next week.