

Esther Martínez Navarro

on Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy

Mireia Mujika (MM): Hi everyone. Welcome to this first-ever episode of 'Ways to Grow' where we will learn about different disciplines that will help us grow and improve our well-being. If you suffer from stress, anxiety, insomnia, pain, panic attacks, digestive issues, dis-regulation of the autonomic system, or if you need to reconnect with your body, or on the other hand, you have a baby that has breastfeeding issues or sleeping issues, or is crying a lot or has reflux or colic, or the baby had a difficult birth or pregnancy was not easy, this episode may interest you. My name is MM, I'm a personal and executive coach and for this first episode, I have invited EMN to join us. Esther works at the Genesis Healthcare Center, here, in Dubai. She is a physiotherapist with over 15 years of clinical experience. She is also an osteopath. She is a certified provider of a safe and sound protocol developed by Stephen Porges and a Biodynamic Craniosacral practitioner. Welcome, Esther.

Esther Martínez Navarro (EMN): Thank you so much. I'm so happy to be here.

MM: I'm so happy that you are actually here, yeah. Thank you for coming. Well, so the Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy, this is what we will be talking about today. But before we get into that, I actually would like to tell our listeners about my own personal experience with you. So, well my baby, my second baby, Max. He was born 12 months ago and the first month was perfect. He was sleeping a lot, everything was all right, and then on week number five, he started crying a lot and there was no way to calm him down. And he was like ninety percent of the time that he was awake he was actually crying and also his sleep was not calm. And a friend Ale, Alexandra, told me oh you should go to Esther. Esther makes me close, that's what she said. I was like, oh okay. Well, let's see.

EMN: No pressure.

MM: No pressure. Well, then I went like okay, let's meet this there. And then... Well, I actually saw that miracle. I saw it, I mean Esther just put her hands in on Max and after two weeks he was sleeping super well. The crying stopped and I was like okay, my God. So that's when I decided and I went to stay and I was like, do you do this for adults as well? I was like okay then, I want to be your passion and that's how I went. So, I was with this there from I think it was February to June that we were together, yeah and well for me it also works miracles. It also works miracles in me so I was... It was awesome. Thank you very much, really you helped me so much.

EMN: Thank you.

MM: Some levels that you cannot actually imagine... like that I haven't even told you. One day over a coffee, I will tell you everything. So, well what is? So, please tell our listeners what exactly is Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy?

EMN: Okay. Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy is a really gentle, non-invasive, hands-on, bodywork. And the goal of this approach is to support the healing process by listening to the body and regulating the nervous system.

MM: Well...

EMN: When you hear the description, no one understands what it is. I think you have to try it because for each person it's a different experience. But what I think is most important is again, that it's really gentle and the idea is not to fix anything from the outside but allow the body to get in contact with the resources and heal. Yeah, the origin of this therapy comes from osteopathy and specifically from cranial osteopathy. He was one of the first osteopaths who developed Craniosacral Therapy. His name was William Sutherland.

MM: William Sutherland?

EMN: Yeah and he is the one that started to work with the nervous system, with the cranial rhythm, with the bones of the skull, and from there other therapists developed chronic therapy.

MM: Okay. And where is the main thing about our osteopathy?

EMN: Osteopathy, I mean this again is another hands-on kind of bodywork and that works with the whole body. The intention is to re-establish function with, usually, manipulations. There is also visceral osteopathy that works with the organs so again of course, at different levels. And cranial osteopathy is one part of the whole approach and craniosacral therapy comes from that part of osteopathy...

MM: Okay, okay, and when we say Craniosacral, is it the sacrum?

EMN: Yeah... Yes, that is the name but we work with the whole body. Actually last week I had a lady and we did the session and then after the session, she was like "you didn't put your hands in my head". That depends, I mean, we don't always put the hands on the head because again we are working with the whole body. We can do craniosacral therapy from the feet, the whole session. But yeah that is the name and that is the system that we are working on.

MM: Okay. So, how long is usually a session with you, and what happens? What can we expect there?

EMN: Yeah, usually it's one hour. Yes, sometimes it's 45 minutes, 15 minutes but usually is one hour.

MM: And one hour every one week, every two weeks?

EMN: Yeah it depends. Usually, in the beginning, I would recommend once a week, if that is possible and if not we will adapt to whatever the person can do. We usually start with once a week and then, we do twice a week or once a month or sometimes like, oh "I need it now" and that is when we do it. It also depends on if it's something acute, or if it's something chronic, what is going... And what to expect?

MM: Yeah.

EMN: That's a tricky question because as I said before, for each person it's a different experience. We don't know what is going to happen in a session. Like, I don't know it as a practitioner and I don't know it when I am the client. I don't know what is going to happen.

MM: But let's say, I walk in the room and first I feel this aura because Esther has this aura... that was the first thing I felt when I entered that room. I was like "oh what's happening here?" And then, I sat down with my little baby and I remember feeling this calm and then, you ask me: "oh, can I put my hand on your back?" and I almost fell asleep. I... Suddenly, I felt like this.

EMN: Yeah, that is a very common sensation. That feeling of "oh, everything goes very slow and the body is very heavy and the body actually settles".

MM: Yeah, settles. So, what is happening there?

EMN: Well, the... If we go to the architectural biology of what is happening, is actually, and that is what Stephen Porges would say, is that the body is feeling safe and when the body feels safe and I say the body, not the head. When the body feels safe, it can switch off the defensive mechanisms and that is when the body can actually rest and sink and melt and that is what usually happens. For some people might take five minutes but for other people might take three sessions.

MM: I see. So, the body feels safe. That's... That is extremely important, I think, right?

EMN: Yeah, that is actually Stephen Porges. He always says that safety is the treatment.

MM: Safety is the treatment, wow.

EMN: It doesn't matter how we get there as long as the body feels safe, the body will do what it has to do.

MM: And again I have to say it for the listeners. So, the body feels safe, not the person. So, we're talking about the body here.

EMN: Yeah and it's an important distinction. In my head, I can feel like I can assess the situation. Nothing is going on but the body might be experiencing something different. So, yeah it is the body.

MM: And we will go to this later on. So coming back.... I enter that room and... will we have a conversation? what will happen there?

EMN: Yeah, the first thing is that I take notes and ask you some questions. The first one is why you're here and then, I will ask questions. I mean if it's a baby, I will go into how was conception? How was pregnancy? How was birth? What is going on? And if it's an adult, I will ask for sleep, digestion, allergies...

MM: Stress levels?

EMN: Yeah. I will go through some questions and one of the most important questions is, what is the intention? Because we always work with an intention and before every session we will set an intention.

MM: What is the intention of this session?

EMN: Yeah, the intention in terms of... How would you like to feel? Not like oh I want my boss not to do this or I want my husband not to do that, no. It's How you would like to feel?

MM: How would you like to feel? Okay. So, just feel or how would you like to also be yourself?

EMN: Yeah, it's like no matter what is going on around. What do you want to connect with? And actually, that is going to guide the session: naming the intention. Everything is going to be around that, and that is not something that we necessarily do in Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy but it's something that I always work with.

MM: Okay, that's great and so that our patients know, so do they have to close their eyes? Do they have to get undressed?

EMN: There is nothing that they HAVE TO. I always work with fully clothed patients. Everything is an invitation and I'm really happy for them to say yes and as I am happy for them to say no. And that is a very important part of the work that we are doing and that has a huge impact because usually, we are so used to saying "yes" even if we don't want to or without even checking if we really want to...

MM: Yes, above all when we go to doctors.

EMN: That's it. It's like yeah whatever, yeah.

MM: You told me this, yes, I'll do it

EMN: Yes, yeah so, actually... I ask everything like is it okay? Is it's okay to lay down? It's okay if I put my hands on and for some people it's like of course, it's okay. But again, we are not used to checking with the body, we are already in the headset. I'm supposed to say yes. I'm going to say yes. So, that in itself can be a big shift. Yeah, just check...

MM: A big shift towards that safety, right?

EMN: Definitely, and to say NO which is something that we are not used to. Especially in a medical setting. Many times, this is because we were not able to say NO when we were really small, so... It's really powerful. One of my teachers, Ray Castellino, one of the principles he works with, is called the Principle of Choice. He always used to say, (he passed away last year) and he used to say that in order to have a hundred percent yes, I need to be able to say no because if not, the yes is conditioned and it's not real, so this is one of the things that we work with.

MM: Okay.

EMN: With adults and with babies...

MM: With babies as well?

EMN: Yeah.

MM: The baby is choosing?

EMN: We ask and we listen. In babies, we listen to the body and to the reaction, and if it's okay or not. It might not be the right moment and we might need to wait. And that is something that is also revolutionary when we go to a doctor. Let's see if it's okay or not.

MM: Yeah, that's great. So, you give the patients the opportunity to choose what they want to do? For example, if they want to close their eyes?

EMN: Yeah, that's it.

MM: Get undressed or not?

EMN: Yeah, definitely.

MM: If they want to lay down?

EMN: I mean, sometimes we can do the session seated in the chair or we can choose to go to the floor.

MM: I remember! You asked me: Do you want to go to the mat? I was like no, I want to lay down on that table and close my eyes.

EMN: That's it and again, for example, they close the eyes. Well, some people may not feel comfortable: They may feel like: "I don't know.... who you are? You're going to come next to me and you want me to close my eyes? no!"

MM: Yeah, it's a way to feel vulnerable.

EMN: Definitely. So there is nothing that I expect. I always say that the only limit that I have is that it is safe for the client and it's safe for me. That is the only limit that we have. And in that, anything can happen. That's it.

MM: Oh that's great. And in a session, so apart from the Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy, what other disciplines do you apply?

EMN: My background is in physiotherapy and osteopathy. I don't do classical physiotherapy or classical osteopathy anymore. But the knowledge is there. As you said, I use the safe and sound protocol which is a listening intervention and means to help regulate the autonomic nervous system. And I also include other modalities, I like compassionate inquiry and other ways of regulating the autonomic nervous system. It can be through breathing, there may be questions and the way we interact, that is in itself, part of the treatment.

MM: And that's also something that I found very special when I was with you. I mean I would choose how much I wanted to talk or not.

EMN: Yeah.

MM: Yeah. So, I think that was also very important, for me. I'm the kind of person that I would go to therapy and would feel like, "oh don't ask me so many questions!" Whereas with you, I was like look if I want to talk, I can talk and I couldn't feel that you were putting any pressure on me or that I was supposed to answer anything or do anything. So that's something that felt nice. Maybe that's why I felt so good.

EMN: Yeah again, there is always the choice and like what I said before, each session is different. In some sessions we might just speak a lot.

MM: And some others we don't say a word.

EMN: It really depends.

MM: That's great. So, what fascinates you the most about the discipline you work with?

EMN: I think that what always surprises me is how deep and profound it can be and yet how subtle. I think that is like, really? Especially coming from a very mechanical background where I was supposed to do lots of things from the outside and it was like oh I'm not doing anything and yet again is really profound.

MM: Yes, very deep.

EMN: Yeah.

MM: It can move many things, right?

EMN: Yeah.

MM: When you were saying “so profound and so subtle” I remembered there was this one session where I closed my eyes and I even saw a playground that I used to go to when I was a child. I never had that image since probably the moment in my childhood, and I remember that we were not talking much or anything but it was still so profound. I was going deep in my body and I was liberated. I think that’s what happened most of the times when I was with you, right? After the session, I was feeling very liberated like I left a little bit of my, whatever wasn't right in my backpack, I left a little bit of that on the side. It was as you said very subtle because you wouldn't touch much or don't do much as you were saying, right. Sometimes that happens also to me when coaching. Sometimes I have had sessions in coaching where I just asked three questions and said two words. And the person was like: “ wow this was the most amazing coaching session”. I was like “oh, really?”

EMN: Yeah and I think that is the beauty of it, yeah.

MM: Yeah so that's one of the things that fascinate you most. Well, one of the things that I have learned thanks to you, is the importance of the body, what we were saying in the beginning. The importance of the body when it comes to healing and this is something that I was repeatedly told during my coaching certification but I couldn't understand it. I just could not get it. I couldn't understand what my mentors were telling me. They were telling me “you have to use your body”. “Just use it when you're coaching”. “Your body is part of you”, right. I remember someone telling me you're just using your body to have your hair, yeah and I was like oh wow, really? So... But actually, I think it was my first session with you that you told me why don't you read this book? And it was this book that actually changed my life. So, the book is ‘When the Body Says No,’ by Doctor Gabor Mate and my life changed. I understood so many things. I understood how... I understood what my mentors wanted, right? Yeah, and you know, well he uncovers, I think Dr. Gabor Mate uncovers the hidden connections between our mental health and physical illness. Sometimes we imagine our minds and bodies are totally different entities when in reality they are deeply interconnected, right? I mean it's just one.

EMN: Yeah.

MM: And then after this book, I continued reading ‘The Body Keeps the Score’ by Bessel van der Kolk. He explains how trauma and his resulting stress harms us through physiology. Stress causes physiological changes to the body and brain and that those harms can persist throughout

our lives. I think, well what I learned with these two books it was life-changing. I think I am another person because I read this.

EMN: Yes, I'm sure. I totally can identify with that and I think that has been the experience for so many people. Actually, I mean, they are best sellers books. The Body Keeps the Score, through the pandemic, has been number one in the US. Yeah, it has the potential to change lives, definitely.

MM: Yeah and I think, both of them are quite disturbing. I mean it's not an easy read.

EMN: Yeah, I think, I told you, it's very easy to read in the sense of the narrative but it is difficult to like... I remember when I read the one from Gabor Mate that I had to stop several times, breathe and say okay, yeah. I mean, it is triggering. It can't be treated.

MM: I think I was crying throughout the whole book.

EMN: Yeah, definitely. I can relate to that but, at the same time, it has the power to steer.

MM: Yeah that's a very good word.

EMN: And make us work with it and I think it's an opportunity.

MM: Yeah, for me it was mind-blowing, like eye-opening. I have no words actually.

EMN: Definitely, yeah.

MM: This is one of the best presents that anyone can give. And you gave it to me, so thank you very much for that.

MM: So what can you tell us about the connection between mental and physical health?

EMN: Yeah again there is no difference. It is exactly the same and the importance of connecting with the body. It is that the body has a lot of information that we cannot reach through the head, through the mind, by thinking, by trying to remember, no. So, if we can connect with the body, we are going to have access to a lot of information and a lot of resources which is the goal of therapies, to be able to heal and move forward, and change the physiology, and change movement, and change behavior, and change the way we think and the way we live, and the way we understand everything. So including the body is key. I don't see any other way. And that doesn't mean that it has to be a hands-on technique. We can include the body doing coaching and we can include the body gardening or we can include the body... It's again being present in the body and many of us, at least, it was my experience, I had to shut down the body.

MM: Shut down the body?

EMN: Yeah I had to, in order to survive. When I was small, I had to switch off the connection and that is the experience for not all of us but...

MM: Many of us.

EMN: Many of us. So, being able to reconnect with that has an amazing impact, yeah.

MM: So you're saying that many of us when we were children, we had to shut down our connections because it was too much?

EMN: It was, I mean because of the environment and the adults that took care of us, they didn't know how to handle us. They didn't have the resources, the knowledge, the skills... to hold it. So, in order to maintain (and this is something that Gabor Mate talks a lot) is that dynamic between attachment and authenticity and both our needs, basic needs of every human being. But when we are children, if the attachment is threatened, the authenticity will go through the window. So in order to survive, some of us, have had to not be in contact with who we really were. In order to maintain that attachment with our caregivers, we had to shut down who we were and that was something really smart to do and that saved our lives. But now, in the present, as adults, this might be getting us in trouble or even sick. We can get sick.

MM: So, let me see if I understand. So as children, for example, if the attachment with our adults, with our parents, is threatened by who we are authentically... So, if I'm a child that is very loud and my parents cannot handle that, I will stop being loud so that I secure the attachment.

EMN: That's it. In order to...

MM: So, I lose my authenticity.

EMN: That's it. In order to maintain that attachment, we will do whatever...

MM: Whatever it takes.

EMN: Whatever it takes and it's not even a conscious decision. In order to survive, we need to do it.

MM: Yeah so that our parents will provide for us.

EMN: Yeah and again because it's not a conscious decision and because usually, it happens when we're very small as adults we don't even realize that is a pattern. That is not who we really are. That is something that we had to do in order to fit, in order to maintain that attachment. So most of us, are not even aware of that. We are not aware that some of the behaviors or the way that we react or the way that we interact with other people is based on that. So the idea is to release that. Gabor Mate always talks about flexibility. We want a flexible

nervous system. We want to respond in a flexible way. Not always in the same way. That was really useful then but it's not useful anymore.

MM: Exactly.

EMN: And I think, I don't know if someone has been able to be completely authentic, not me. I learned how to measure my words not because my parents didn't love me. They do love me, they did their best but there were not enough resources, there was not enough space, there were not enough skills. So, I had to... Again, I had to do many things to adapt. And as an adult, if I'm not conscious about it, I will do it because that is the default mode.

MM: Yeah and I guess, like our nervous system.

EMN: Yes and again is used to it... It's a pattern and also it was really helpful then. So, it's like why?

MM: Whatever. Yeah, come on.

EMN: It has to be.

MM: Yeah.

EMN: So, when we understand that and again, not only cognitively, but from the experiences, like "oh so actually this behavior that is not.... that I hate...". I don't want to keep doing that. That is making my life very difficult now. It was really useful then. And when we do that connection again something settles. It's like, oh okay there is, no it's not a war inside. It's again those parts that are trying to help.

MM: And how do we do that? How do we actually... that's the key? Right?

EMN: Yeah. There are many ways of doing it. There are things in common in different disciplines but again, we go back to safety. We go back to slowing down because again, the faster I go the easier is to go back to the passenger. But if I slow down, then I have more choices to choose something different and to be in the body because that is what is going to allow us to be in the present.

MM: To be in the body.

EMN: Yeah and again being, if I'm in the present, if I'm truly in the present, I'm going to be able to assess the situation from my adult self. But if I'm not, I'm going to interpret it from the child.

MM: Yeah, so let me give you an example. So, I'm with my daughter, four years old, right?

EMN: Yeah.

MM: She is doing something that is going to trigger me. If, at that moment, I'm able to breathe and count to ten, I may have the opportunity to respond in a different way than if I actually go, WOW. Right? So taking that space, taking that moment, taking that time to slow down and give the opportunity to my nervous system to answer in another way.

EMN: That's it. And I must say that children are great masters. They are going to show us. But again this is an opportunity. It is really challenging. It's a lot of work but it's also an opportunity.

MM: But you can help with this?

EMN: Yeah, often... Yeah, again it's what I said before like in the intention... Really often again. It's like I want my husband to or I want my child to...

MM: Yeah, it's not about your child...

EMN: That's it.

MM: My response is MY response...

EMN: That's it. That I am the one that is having this tension, so that tension is telling me something and each of us, we are going to be triggered by different things.

MM: Sorry, I think what you're saying is extremely important because... I remember when I realized about this moment, years ago... I remember saying, "ah this person triggers me!!!" but it's not "this person triggers me". It's, "I get triggered".

EMN: Yeah, definitely. And it also has to do with the interpretation that we are giving to what is happening. Like when we are not in the adult, when we are in the fear or in whatever thread, it feels like that again...

MM: Everything is a threat.

EMN: Yeah and that everyone is doing it on purpose. Even children! Sometimes people say "they're doing it on purpose" and they are not. They are just overwhelmed. They don't know what to do but there is always this perception that they are doing it on purpose.

MM: Oh this is actually something that I still hear a lot. "Because this child is doing this so that I get angry or to make me angry".

EMN: Yeah that makes me sad because we understand behavior as being something under voluntary control. As adults, we are not able to do it but we expect children to be able and their nervous system is not yet ready. The structures that help us do that, they are not there yet. And they will develop on time and the way we respond to them is going to have a huge impact in their ability to actually regulate and respond in different ways. It's very difficult and one thing that I want to say is that it's not about us always being super zen and being able to respond...

it's not possible. Noone. It's not even the goal. We are going to make mistakes and the important thing is what we do with those mistakes? How do we respond, if we repair? I remember again Ray Castellino...

MM: Rupture and Repair.

Yeah that's it that he... one of the first workshops, I went with him and one of the things that stayed with me is that he said, that it was even more valuable when we make mistakes and we repair that when we don't make some mistakes.

MM: Sure.

EMN: And I think that is something really important, especially when we are talking about parenting. It is not about being perfect, is never the intention, that wouldn't be helpful. Children would grow with the belief that they need to be perfect, that they cannot make mistakes. The important thing is that we are going to make mistakes. So, what do we do with them?

MM: So, Rupture and Repair.

EMN: Yeah.

MM: Yes. I read a book, I cannot remember right now. But yeah it's a psychologist, I think she's from London. Yeah, one of the things that she says is always rupture and repair. (*The book you wish your parents had read, by Philippa Perry*)

EMN: That's it. That is how the nervous system learns. So, yeah that is the key.

MM: That's how the nervous system learns.

EMN: Yeah.

MM: That's deep. Yeah and now, so I guess we have to let our nervous system relearn.

EMN: Yeah or unlearn.

MM: Unlearn.

EMN: Yeah, that's it. That is what I was talking about before, about the flexibility that we want the nervous system to be able to respond in an actual way to what is happening. No the way it learned, 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago?

MM: Yeah, when were children... super important.

EMN: Yeah and it's so difficult because those patterns are again, they are like engraved in stone. They are not but that's how it feels. But that is why engaging the body is so important. We are

not going to change a pattern because we want to, because we really are working with the head: "I'm not going to do it again. I'm not going to do it" and then we are doing it again.

MM: I think what you're saying is extremely important when it comes to addictions as well.

EMN: Definitely.

MM: Yeah, so that's why sometimes we cannot stop the habits

EMN: That's it.

MM: Because we're not engaged in the body.

EMN: We are not engaging the body. We are not understanding the purpose that it has.

MM: The purpose?

EMN: Yeah. Gabor Mate always talks about any addiction and he doesn't. When he talks about addiction, he doesn't only talk about substance addiction, he talks about working, workaholism, gambling, sex, shopping, perfectionism...

MM: So many...

EMN: Yeah.

MM: Sweets, sugar...

EMN: Yeah that definitely is an important one. It has a purpose.

MM: It has a purpose?

EMN: Yeah, it gave us something that we didn't have. It soothed us.

MM: Like a pacifier?

EMN: Yeah and when we understand that then we... The inner critic can lower the voice and we understand why we are doing that. And he always again another one of his mantras is that we should ask not why the addiction but why the pain?

MM: Why the pain?

EMN: So...

MM: Go ahead.

EMN: Yeah what that addiction is trying to help us with? And yeah that is a paradigm shift. I mean it's not how we understand addiction and we again, go back to this idea that is oh you should be able to control it. You are not doing it. You are not working hard enough. It's not a

matter of intention, it's not a matter of will. It's a matter of that... that is serving us. It is serving a purpose. It is helping us deal with the pain. It's a coping mechanism.

MM: So, addiction is a coping mechanism.

EMN: Yeah. So when we understand it that way, it completely changes the way we see it and we have more access to compassion. And if we are more compassionate with ourselves it will be easier to change those behaviors. On the other hand, if we are like: "how do you do that? You're doing it again".

MM: "You're such a bad person"...

EMN: That is what I mean. The little child in us that is shouting for help is not going to be able to change it. But if we realize "oh okay, so this is helping you, this is giving you some comfort, some sense of control, some..." When we ask people Why? Whatever the addiction is (and again, it can be work, it can be anything) we will learn that there is always something: it gives me hope, it gives me vitality, it gives me peace. There is nothing wrong with wanting vitality, peace, comfort. When we see it from there we can be way more compassionate with ourselves and with others.

MM: So important and such a shift of paradigm as you were saying. Right?

EMN: Yeah. Gabor Mate always says that society tends to have this idea that addiction is based on a flaw or...

MM: Weakness?

EMN: Yeah, weakness or not enough will, and actually that is not the case. And then, we have the other option which is the biological model. Think that everything is based on chemistry, which of course is based on chemistry but the reason for that chemistry being altered is development.

MM: Development? So, how important our development is. How important is parenting!

EMN: Yeah, it's the key

EMN: Yeah and the good thing again is not about being perfect. We don't have to be perfect. It is this idea of good enough... And it's important also to revise that because sometimes what we think we should be doing actually has nothing to do with what our children need. They don't need us to be perfect. They need us to be authentic.

MM: Yeah. So, I'm still processing... Yeah, I'm processing it but in order to... So we were talking about the body, the importance of the body and you were saying that there is no healing if we don't.... If we don't engage the body.

EMN: I mean, I'm not sure if there is no healing. But definitely, it is way more difficult.

MM: Way more difficult to heal someone.

EMN: Yeah, the head has so many barriers, so many coping mechanisms. It's very... Like it's going to take us to...

MM: Sneaky...

EMN: Yeah it's very sneaky. The body is not. The body is just there and we can always access it. As long as we're alive we have a body, it is there. We don't need anyone else, we don't need anything else.

MM: And you were saying before..., something that actually struck me was that you said, the information... There is so much information in the body, right? So, how do you access that?

EMN: Yeah, there are many ways of doing it, and the way I do it is with craniosacral therapy. And with a compassionate inquiry and again, we need to go slow. If we go fast, the body is going to say: "no, oh no. We are not going there". and it's again, what we were saying about negotiation. It's more like: "oh, is it okay? Oh this is too much? Okay, let's go. Okay, slowly and..."

MM: Step by step.

EMN: Yeah and the body needs to feel safe in order for us to have access to information that is there. And even going beyond the technique is also the relationship that you have with the person that you are working with. That is actually what is healing. It's not that much the technique is how safe we feel.

MM: Oh, okay.

EMN: That is something that Peter Levine always says, is not the technique...

MM: It is the relationship that is person-to-person.

EMN: Yeah that is what is healing. That is what didn't happen when we were children. There were issues in the relationship. So the way to heal it is in a relationship.

MM: Oh, wow.

EMN: It is also in relationship with ourselves. But when we are talking about therapy, when we are talking about coaching, is the relationship that we establish with the other person.

MM: That is healing.

MM: That is... It comes to me now, these family constellations. Have you heard of it?

EMN: Yeah.

MM: So, it's mimicking also the relationship that we probably didn't have.

EMN: That's it. It's repairing that and that I also think is like I'm talking, I have chills in my arm. We have this idea that someone else needs to do something or my mom has to repair what happened or didn't happen. And that is not, we don't need anyone to do anything and I think that is so liberating that right here, right now, we can change. We cannot change what happened but we can change how we interpret what happened. What we made it mean.

MM: What we made it mean.

EMN: Yeah, because that is always going to have to do with ourselves. I'm not good enough, there is something wrong with me. I don't deserve it....

MM: In order for them to love me, I have to be this way.

EMN: That's it. So....

MM: It's huge.

EMN: Yeah the potential that is in there.

MM: The potential that lies in all of us, right? We can heal ourselves in relationship with someone else.

EMN: Yeah and in relationship with ourselves. Sometimes again.... I believe that we can do it with ourselves but I cannot dismiss how helpful it is to do it with someone else. Sometimes we are working very early, very early stuff. Sometimes even pre-verbal, so it's very difficult to do it, to do the work with ourselves if someone is there, sometimes as a witness, that is going to change the experience completely and that is why I say that it goes beyond the technique. It can be with a horse.

MM: Equine therapy!

EMN: Yeah, that's it. But the relationship is key.

MM: I am processing. When I'm talking to you, I am always like wow. Let me think about what you just said!

EMN: Yeah.

MM: One question that I wanted to ask is, what is or who is the client or the patient that would most benefit from a session with you? From a session or with continuous sessions with you?

EMN: Well, I think that I need to talk about babies on one side and adults on the other. Because with babies with so little, with just a little bit of support, it can change so much.

MM: And that's what I saw. That's what I experienced.

EMN: Yeah and it is so important. Yeah. I would love every baby, I mean not with me, but I'd love every baby to have some kind of bodywork and space to also tell what has been their experience. Any baby with breastfeeding issues or sleeping issues, or that is crying a lot, or has colic or reflux, or who has had a difficult pregnancy or difficult birth... it's always good. I wish I had had it when I was a baby. That would have been awesome and also again it's not the baby, it's the whole family. And I think you saw that?

MM: Yeah.

EMN: It is important to understand that families are systems and the idea is to help with that co-regulation of the family and that is what it actually changes. It's not that I did anything... I don't do anything to the babies. We help to regulate and settle. So that is one part. And in adults, well anything related to stress, dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, anxiety, pain... And the thing is that we can work with anything. We are just supporting the body.

Because in my door, it says physiotherapist, people think this is for back pain and sometimes that is the last thing that we will look at. But it's about supporting the person wherever they are and with whatever intention they have. And again helping to reconnect with the bodies. Very often we go to professionals as people come to me, expecting me to fix something and it's not about fixing anything. It's about: "Oh, let's see what is going on".

MM: Yeah and let's help. Let's guide. But not fix.

EMN: That's it. There's nothing that needs to be fixed. So, yeah I would say that especially only a stress-based condition and from insomnia to panic attacks, to again pain, digestive issues. This is not the solution for everything. It's just a healing modality that can support the journey. Yes, I think that is what I would say. And another thing that I would say is that usually it's very, it happens often that people come to see me with an idea and then something different happens... I don't know if you relate to that.

MM: Well, I didn't know what to expect. I went there because my friend told me you have to do this. She was like you have to see Esther. I was like whatever it takes to have my baby, my poor baby calmed down so I was like yes, I'll do it. So, I didn't know what to expect but... So what's the idea that normally, people have?

EMN: That I'm going to do something and they are going to stop having headaches. And actually, those headaches do have a lot of information and is that understanding of what is

going on, not necessarily from a cognitive point of view but the body actually processing whatever might be going on.

MM: So interesting. And so, imagine that I have this friend, Mike, He's around 38 years old and he's suffering from burnout at work. So, he comes to you. How can you help him?

EMN: Yeah. Well, first of all, we'll go through the clinical history. I will ask questions. I will ask for the intention, how would they like to feel? I know usually when I ask that, it's like "I don't want to feel the way I'm feeling". But we are so used to saying what we don't want that it is difficult to say what we actually want. What do we want? So, actually, that is already an intervention. I shift like oh I don't know, I just know that I don't want the pain, or I don't want the tension or I don't want insomnia and then, it really depends. I will ask and depending on what they feel is better, we might go to the table. We might go to the floor. We might stay in the chair and what we will do is to start to connect with the body and see what is going on and help that co-regulation. And help the body to find that more settled place. And then, we... I will invite an inquiry to see where this is coming from and often we find that this burnout is not trying to make our life miserable, it's actually trying to say "hey no, this is not the way. That is something that needs to change". I know it's very vague, but let's see what is going on.

MM: Let's see. Let's ask.

EMN: That's it and let's allow the body to let us know what does it need? And how we can support that? And again the good thing about Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy is that we don't need to talk that much. so, yes, allowing the body to settle is already shifting. And from there we don't know where we'll go. I have no idea, each journey is going to be different. And in Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy, there is this trust that the body knows. The wisdom in the body is beyond what any therapist can know. So, trusting that is one of the key principles in biodynamic craniosacral therapy. Yeah, trusting the body.

MM: I think, yeah I don't know where we lost this connection with the body. I don't know when...

EMN: When we lost the authenticity?

MM: Yeah but in history, right, I mean, I don't know if it's when we said, I think, therefore, I exist. It's coming from there or where it's coming from? I'm pretty sure that we had a better connection with our bodies.

EMN: Definitely. We had to... In order to survive, we had to. There is no living in the jungle... There is no way you can survive if you are not in contact with your body.

MM: In connection and trust, right? So as I was telling you at the beginning right that I couldn't understand what my teachers were telling me when they were telling me to connect with my body. I was like "I'm connected". What are you talking about?

EMN: I think there are many things that take us away from connection and the life that we live has got to do with that. Living in cities is not what we are supposed to do. Living isolated is not what we are supposed to do. We are talking about Dubai, most of us, we are ex-pats not having the connection to the land, not having those close relationships... that is going to have an impact in our body, in our nervous system and again it's not that our body is failing, it's just that it is saying "hey this is not working".

MM: It's supposed to be.

EMN: That's it. So, yeah, I think there are many things that move us away and it is important that we engage in ways to reconnect and that can be running or that can be gardening or that can be playing an instrument, or can be a pet. But it is important that we are aware of the disconnection and again, the fast space is one of the things that is going to make us disconnect from the body. We don't have the time to actually feel it.

MM: To feel... to come down. To feel our body.

EMN: So, again the faster our life is, by definition, the less connection we are going to have with the body and the more we are going to have to somehow compensate for that and that is why it's so important to do sports, to have those moments where I can actually rest. I mean if we talk about technology, screens, social media, that is taking us away and we live in the world that we live in. But the more aware we are, the more we are going to be able to deal with it and compensate for it and find balance in that. It's not that we need to go to live on the top of the mountain, a little lodge. No, it's not that we need to do that but we need to pay attention. Yeah and each of us, we are going to have different ways but of course, nature is where the connection is going to be. So, even if it's going to go for a walk on the beach that is already having an impact on the body, and if that is not possible, just breathing...

As long as we are alive, the body is with us. There are so many things that we can do.

MM: So much learning.

EMN: Yeah easier said than done...

MM: So, what book or other resources would you recommend to a person that is interested in your discipline?

EMN: You actually mentioned two of the bibles which are, *When the Body Says No*, from Gabor Mate and *The Body Keeps the Score* from Bessel van der Kolk. There are so many resources right now if you go online, there are so many other authors that I would recommend. One is Peter

Levine, Stephen Porges, Deb Dana. There are so many. And there are two books and that also because we have talked about parenting that I really like and I think I recommended it to you. One is *Rest, Play, Grow* from Deborah MaFamara, which I think is a gift. I think every parent should read that book. That is one. Another one is, *Hold On To Your Kids*, which is also from Gabor Mate and Gordon Neufeld. But there are so many resources, it's difficult for me to choose.

MM: It's all right.

EMN: But if I have to choose four books. I would choose those four. If people ask me to be more specific, then there are many others that are really good books but it's what you said those books can be life-changing.

MM: So, listeners, you can go to www.waystogrowpodcast.com where you can actually find the books that Esther is mentioning and all the resources. You will also find her details in case you want to follow or contact her. You just have to go there where it says books and resources and you will find it there. So, I think you were mentioning another...?

EMN: Yeah, there's another book when talking about children that I like a lot, for parents, for teachers, for anyone working with children. And this is the one written by Mona DelaHooke. The name of the book is *Beyond Behaviors*.

MM: Okay, so yeah you will find all these books there. So that.... Sometimes it's not easy to.... So, you won't find them there. Okay. So, well I don't know if you want to say anything else. Is there, like this is something that I ask in coaching. So, is there any question that I haven't asked that I should have asked?

EMN: How much time do we have?

MM: Any.

MM: No, anything you want to mention... I think you mentioned, you said two things when that recording just stopped. There were two quotes you said. I think they were quite....GOLD

EMN: Yeah. One is from Gabor Mate: Tension needs attention. So, whenever there is tension in the body is telling us that something is going on, so pay attention to what is happening in the body. There is a lot of information there.

MM: How? I mean, maybe for our listeners and for people that are not so used to it. How do we actually listen to the body?

EMN: Can be something as simple as what is going on in my back? What is going on in my belly? Is there anything going on in my jaw? How is my breathing? It's like stopping one second, checking, doing a body scan, and checking what is going on? And then, we might find that we

are clenching our jaw and our shoulders are on our ears and that we are really small or that I'm holding my breath. So that is something as easy and yet as difficult as... that looks like what is going on in my body right now?

MM: So, doing a little body scan? and asking, so, what's happening?

MM: I have to close my eyes.

EMN: Eyes closed, eyes open but for me, if I close my eyes, something changes. Just because I'm paying attention. And the other quote is from Eckhart Tolle. And I'm going to paraphrase because I don't remember the exact words. But is that something along the line that we should pay as much attention to the person that is triggering us as what is happening to us. So, it's when I am the person, one eye on us and that happens also when we are talking about therapy or coaching. We are going to be triggered, oh yeah. So, it's like oh okay. One hour on the client. One hour on the patient. One hour when I am myself. And again, we can apply that to every single relationship, work relationship, personal relationship with our children. It's like oh okay, we are two here, so yeah it's re-centering because we have this, all the time we are projecting outside. What is happening outside of us? Okay, let's go back, see me, and see what is going on. I am again, I am in tension. I am really angry and be aware of that. Again not with the idea to change it, that is never the idea of a body scan or checking with the body. It's not that I want to change what is going on? I just want to be aware of what is going on.

MM: So that I can respond

EMN: I haven't realized that and that is already going to give us more space and more time.

MM: Yeah but you were saying like and yeah you listeners cannot see it but I Esther did this gesture with her hand: she held herself upright and she closed her fist in front of her and she did this recentering gesture.

EMN: Yeah that going back to the body. We are all the time outside of our body.

MM: And coming in, checking in with us

EMN: Yeah and that is something that I'm very grateful about my work because it forces me to do it. I have no other option. So, for me, it's an opportunity to go back to the body and it's something that I need to remember when I'm outside of the room. But that is actually what is going to make the difference.

MM: Yeah. Coming back to our body. So, the importance of the body. I think that is clear. Well, that was one of my intentions actually and one of the reasons why I wanted to talk to you. So that you could put out the message that you have for all our listeners. I think as a society, we are not aware of how important the body is when it comes to healing. And I think this is

something that I understood thanks to you and I want our listeners to get that from us. I hope that can help many others as well.

EMN: Yeah and again I just want to say that there are so many ways of getting there.

MM: So many ways. 800, 8 thousand, or a million?

EMN: Yeah.

MM: Esther, thank you so much. Thank you so much for coming here. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. Thank you so much also for pushing me a little bit because when you told me oh I can do it on Thursday. It was like oh my God, Thursday is just in today's...!!!!!!

EMN: I want to thank you for not only having me here which of course I'm again, I told you was super excited. But all the way... I'm always grateful when a mom or a dad comes with the baby to see me, there is a lot of stress in there. So, I'm so thankful for that.

MM: But it's also very easy to trust you. It was very easy.

EMN: I want to say that it was so easy to support you and your family. It was a pleasure and it's what I told you is that it's giving so little and then and you did that. So... It was a pleasure.

MM: Oh, thank you, and yeah hopefully, I know that we will invite you some other time to talk about something else, here,

EMN: Thank you so much. Thank you for this first time and next time, I will be maybe in a different setting. Today, we are in the Spotify Studio here in Dubai and it was a pleasure and thank you also to the Spotify team for letting us do this here.

MM: Definitely. Yes, so until next time. Bye.

MM: Listeners, I hope you enjoyed this episode and that we are helping you find your own way. If you like our podcast please, please, please, remember to follow us. and as said before, you can go to www.waystogrowpodcast.com where you will find all the information.

See you in two weeks

Be well!!

List of Authors, Books and Resources

'When the Body Says No,' by Doctor Gabor Mate

'The Body Keeps the Score' by Bessel van der Kolk

'Play, Rest, Grow' from Deborah McNamara

'Hold On To Your Kids' from Gabor Mate and Gordon Neufeld

'Beyond Behaviors' by Mona Delahooke

Stephen Porges

William Sutherland

Peter Levine

Eckhart Tolle

Deb Dana

Ray Castellino