

TRANSCRIPT #: 1024

'Horses Helping People'

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n[00:00:10] I guess I'll start with **my history** and just kind of give you guys a little rundown of my story. I was sexually abused starting at the age of three. It went on for a couple of years, also suffering, emotional and mental abuse. I was raped at the age of 14, lost my fiancé at 19, was married to a mentally and emotional abusive husband. Got a divorce then was in a long-term relationship with a physically abusive boyfriend. I was getting really sick all the time and in a lot of physical pain. I became really, really sick and could barely function in everyday life. It took five years of nonstop doctor appointments to finally get a diagnosis of lupus. But by that time I was already on 16 different medications, and life was miserable. I had started taking some classes, and one of them I took was Lianne's [Dyche] with the hopes of learning how to manage my pain because life was all about pain. But I started to learn so much more.

[00:01:30] The **biggest turning point** for me in my life was being up at OHSU [Oregon Health Sciences University]. I was up there for more testing. My blood pressure was skyrocketing, even though I was on two different medications for that. My heart was beating irregularly, and it was hurting. They rushed me in for an EKG and also gave me some kind of shot to try to help with whatever was going on. As I lied there, I thought, "If I die, what is going to happen to my animals and my rescue?" You see, I started **Linn County Animal Rescue** to help animals in 2008, and at the time that this happened, I was responsible for over 40 horses and 17 dogs. So I decided then and there I was going to change this.

[00:02:20] I was released to go home and immediately went home and looked up my **medications and their side effects**, and I was shocked. I could not believe how bad some of the side effects were and how bad they affected my other issues like my PTSD, my anxiety and my depression. I immediately stopped taking some of them. **I do not recommend** anybody do that. Please talk to your doctor to get off medications the right way. Don't do what I did. So I got myself off all of them, but one. To this day, I only take one medication and it's for my blood pressure. And it is the lowest dose that you can take.

[00:03:05] That was about **five years ago**. I continued to take classes. I learned how my trauma was affecting my perception of pain and how that affected my body. Pain was not what I thought it was. So **my opinion of my pain** and my lupus diagnosis changed along with other things in my life. I learned the pain science, and how my brain was trying to protect me because of the past. I learned that when my brain perceived something as a threat, it sent out signals to protect me. But there was no real threat. It was just the past. But I had to put that piece together to where I understood that this was **my past. It wasn't actually anything that was happening now**.

[00:04:04] The perfect **example** of this is I used to not even be able to walk a half a mile without running out of breath and almost having a panic attack because I felt like I couldn't breathe. Then it came to my attention through learning all of this, that my brain was perceiving that as when I was under threat. Somebody had stopped me from breathing by choking me, and so my body thought that's what was going on. Once I figured that out, I would talk myself through it. "I'm safe, I'm fine. And everything's okay."

[00:04:40] Now I can jog without stopping, can jog and do all that stuff without any problems and breathe just fine. So I started focusing on other things that would ground me. As I like to put it, **get me out of my own head**. So I stopped focusing on my pain and my sickness.

[00:05:04] One of my biggest allies in this was the animals. In one of the classes I was taking, we would set goals for ourselves to try to help us grow. I decided with help and encouragement from my teacher and other classmates to **set two big goals**. One, was to be around people. Two, was to have my horses help other people like they had helped me.

[00:05:31] You see, **I totally isolated myself from most everybody**. I couldn't even handle going to the grocery store. It was just too stressful. I set small goals like hanging out with one friend off my property, so I'd actually have to go somewhere. And I didn't realize that the second goal was going to also help with me being able to learn how to be around people.

[00:06:00] Because my second goal is having my horses help other people. That one was a big one for me **to actually let people be in my space** and be around my creatures. That was hard, but it was a good one. But I realized how much they had helped me with my

PTSD, anxiety and depression. The calming peace that's being around them is so healing to me, it would be so healing to others. I thought. So I **started the Healing Hearts with Horses** program to help people with PTSD. This program is where we invite people who have PTSD to come out and spend time with our horses. And it works great. They get to spend time with these amazing animals.

[00:06:48] It was so amazing to see the connection that the people were making with these horses and the connection the horses were making with them as well. You see, our **horses** that are here have been abused, so they **have been through trauma themselves**. They have such an understanding of pain, especially emotional pain, because they have emotions as well. Horses are extreme empaths. They feel emotions so, so immensely. They know the difference between someone who is suffering from PTSD and other disabilities like autism any, anything like that. And they know somebody that doesn't have any of those issues. The horses that are here, a lot of them, didn't even like people to start with because of what they had been through. But they started loving on these people and showing them compassion and kindness. And the people were loving on them. And it almost still brings tears to my eyes just to see that happen. Because it's amazing, and it makes people feel so great. And it makes the horses feel great.

[00:07:57] So we have **expanded the program to extend to people with physical and mental disabilities and other issues**. We have also started working with several other groups like Kids Northwest, who works with kids with mental issues such as autism, things like that. Youth Build, who work with troubled youth to try to get them to be successful in life. And the Oregon Farrier School, to get kids to learn how to do horses' feet and deal with them. And we are setting up more groups to try to start coming out, to help as many people as we can.

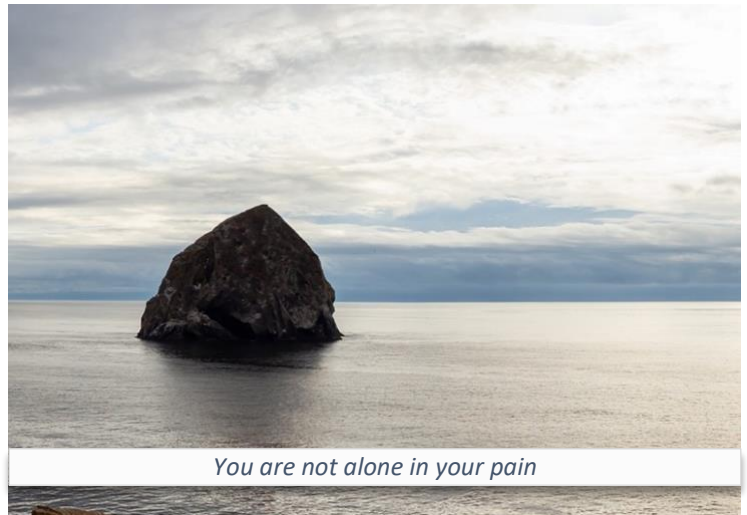
[00:08:29] And we use **cows now too**. We do have some cows that are helping out with the program also.

[00:08:33] So what I have learned has been huge for me in my life. I still have work to do. You know, life's not all roses all the time, and sometimes you have to put your tools to practice. But I do because I have an understanding of it, and I have an understanding of **what tools I have that I can use** whenever things get hard.

About Pain Science Life Stories

Formed in 2018, the Oregon Pain Science Alliance (the Alliance) is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501(c)3 corporation. Our members come from the health care community, their patients, and others who follow pain science research.

We seek to share current information on how pain experiences are formed in the brain and influenced by biological, psychological, and/or social factors. Through community education events, health care workers describe how pain-science-based practices have changed their interaction with and care for patients, and patients tell stories about their experience with learned pain science tools used to help master chronic pain. We can now share these collected and curated stories, and other unique features, through the Alliance “story website” launched in early fall of 2022.



How to get involved?

Do new Pain Science insights and practices resonate with you?

We welcome anyone interested in collaborating to find or produce good stories and insights, then curating them to display on our website. Sharing in our discoveries and making them broadly available is both personally positive, and mutually satisfying.

The phone number or email address below will get you more information about us; then use the website link to the Member page for the steps to become an Alliance member, if that makes sense to you.

If you have a story using pain science tools and practices, and would like to share it with the larger community through our website, please send us an email. We would love to hear from you.

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