



Episode 31: The Matrix of Minds: Wonder, Safety, and the Power of Showing Up

Hosts: Tracy Stackhouse · Cory Dundon · Michelle Maunder



LISTENER NAME

DATE LISTENED

TOTAL LISTENING + REFLECTION TIME (MINS)

CPD HOURS CLAIMED



Episode Summary

This one is warm and personal before it gets clinical. The three of us own our neuro-spicy, tangential brains and why we keep showing up to the mic anyway, then move into the sensory matrix: how neuroception and sensory modulation are so braided together that separating them is almost artificial. The keeper is Tracy's butter story, a masterclass in treating defensiveness through wonder and safety rather than chasing the symptom. Our throughline is strengths-based: individual differences are not deficits, and modelling that is part of why this lands for listeners. We pick up where Ep 30 left off, with Tracy working through the sensory matrix, a phrase she credits to Ruth Lanius, describing a braided system of surveillance, detection and mobilisation that adjusts thresholds and activation across the sensory, motor, autonomic and arousal systems. We reframe sticky thoughts as portals into where a child's mind and body are, rather than deficits, and Tracy tells the story of learning from her mentor Lois Hickman, making butter on a trampoline with a profoundly tactile-defensive seven-year-old, using wonder and safety as the real treatment while the proprioception, vibration and rhythm did their quiet work.



Resources & Mentions

- Ruth Lanius, source of the phrase "the sensory matrix".
- Lois Hickman, Tracy's mentor, and the butter-on-a-trampoline story.
- The SPIRIT model and the A functions, Tracy Stackhouse, the low and high routes of A.



Reflection Prompts

Take a few quiet minutes to consider each prompt and write freely. Add or remove a prompt block to suit the episode.

- 1 Where do your own individual differences show up in your clinical work, and do you meet them with the strengths-based language the hosts model, or with self-criticism?

- 2 Think of a child whose sound or touch sensitivity you've called sensory. How braided is that with their sense of safety, and how would you tell the difference?

- 3 Recall a child with a sticky thought or intense special interest. What might it be a portal into, and how could you follow it rather than contain it?

- 4 Tracy treated defensiveness through wonder and safety rather than chasing the symptom. For a defensive child on your caseload, what would shifting from symptom-chasing to safety-building look like?

- 5 Consider a goal you're under pressure to reach directly: toileting, feeding, sleep. What would it mean to come at it through the low route of A first, building safety, before going anywhere near the target?

