

# Redefining Health & Wellness

## #75

Featured this episode: Shohreh Davoodi

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**Shohreh Davoodi:** You are listening to episode #75 of the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. And let's pause and take a moment to absorb what I just said, which is that this is the 75<sup>th</sup> episode of the show. Since this whole shindig got started, I have never missed a week and I am dang proud of that!

This is also the second episode of my three-part Self-Trust Series where I'm discussing the ins and outs of learning to trust yourself. Today in Part 2 I'll be talking about all the things that hold you back from developing a deeper sense of self-trust, including something that I've deemed the "ghosts of self-doubt." By bringing awareness to the things in your life that are making it difficult to trust yourself, you'll be able to see a path forward to do something about it.

To access the show notes and a full transcript of this episode, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/75](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/75). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/75](http://shohrehdavoodi.com/75). In the show notes you can also find a free download for this episode which provides some self-trust journaling prompts specific to part two of the series.

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financially, you can always subscribe, rate, review, and share it so that more people can find and benefit from the show.

However you choose to invest in the podcast, thank you for believing in me and tuning in each week.

[Music plays]

Welcome to the Redefining Health & Wellness podcast. I'm your host and resident rainbow glitter bomb, Shohreh Davoodi. I started this project because I saw how black-and-white messaging about health harms everyone, and I wanted to paint a more honest and vibrant picture. This podcast is a space where we can reimagine health together by confronting limiting misconceptions, delving into aspects of well-being that are often ignored, and prioritizing conversations with marginalized individuals. I encourage you to take what you need and leave behind what you don't. Are you ready for this? Let's fucking go!

Hello, hello, and welcome back to the Self-Trust Series. To quickly recap Part 1, in the last episode I talked about why I've reoriented my business around self-trust, how I define self-trust and why I think it's so valuable, and some of my favorite self-trust icons, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Hayley Williams. Also, I realized after the fact that I didn't include Megan Rapinoe on my list of self-trust icons, which was a glaring oversight on my part because she is a total self-trust queen. So, consider this my official addendum to Part 1.

Today in Part 2 of the series we are going to be talking about why self-trust is so hard to come by, and believe me, there are a lot of reasons. But don't despair because if we can bring awareness to those reasons, then we can figure out what the hell to do about them.

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To start, I want you to think about any kids that you may have interacted with lately, the younger the better. Because something that I always notice about young kids, toddlers in particular, is that they know what they are about and they don't give a fuck what you think about it. They know what toys and shows they like, they know what food and drinks they like, they know what clothes they want to wear. And when you try to get them to use, or eat, or interact with stuff that they don't want to, they will let you know how they feel about it.

Young kids are also super curious. I mean, this is why there is a running joke in TV shows and movies about children who ask "why" a hundred times. Kids need to explore themselves and the world around them when they don't yet have the full powers of speech and reading at their disposal.

Most of us can't remember far enough back to be able to recall a time when we were that self-trusting and sure of ourselves. And that's because we're exposed to a lot of the things in the world that erode self-trust pretty early on.

When we're little we get messages about what is and isn't okay to do based on the environments that we're in and who our caregivers are, even before we get into school settings. So if you had parents who were very invested in the gender binary, for example, you probably learned that there were certain toys you shouldn't play with, clothes you shouldn't wear and maybe even friends you shouldn't have or emotions you shouldn't express based on the beliefs of your caregivers. If you grew up with very religious caregivers, they may have started teaching you purity culture at a young age. Caregivers with a lot of anti-fat bias can introduce diet culture very early on with kids and start restricting food and teaching lessons about what is "healthy" or "good" when it comes to eating and exercising.

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So before you even got to school, you may have already learned in more ways than one that who you are is not okay. And in case it's not obvious, what I'm talking about here is different from teaching kids what they need to do to be safe, for instance, the importance of certain manners, and that it's not acceptable to throw poop on the walls, right? I'm also not discounting that the line can get really fuzzy between those kinds of things and the kinds of things that I'm talking about that erode self-trust. I'm not a parent and I don't envy anyone who is trying to navigate that grey area. I'm just explaining how this path away from self-trust can get started.

Outside of the relationship between caregiver and child, kids start interacting with the world at large in a variety of ways, and each of those domains provides new opportunities to erode self-trust. School is a big one.

When I think back to my school days, I remember that if I wanted to use the restroom, I usually had to wait until a bathroom pass was available and get the teacher's permission, and there were definitely times the teacher denied me permission for who knows what reason. And that taught me that when my body was telling me I needed to use the restroom, I was not always going to be able to reliably respond to that.

I also remember that I was only allowed to eat food during my short lunch period or briefly in between classes, so there were plenty of times I was hungry and couldn't do anything about it, or I was hungry and had to sneak food during class and hope that I didn't get caught, or wasn't hungry and had to force myself to eat because that was gonna be the only opportunity until school was over.

And then there's clothes again. And clothes are important because they're a form of self-expression. I remember that if the clothes I felt most happy

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and comfortable in didn't conform to the school's very sexist dress code, then I couldn't wear them. Or if I tried to wear them anyway, I ran the risk of a school administrator pulling out a measuring tape in the hallway and embarrassing me or being sent to the principal's office and being forced to wear someone else's sweats from the lost and found so I would be more "presentable."

As kids get older, they also start to have far more interactions with peers, and that is often a self-trust killer. I think we can all remember the days of realizing that if we couldn't be one of the cool and popular kids, we at least wanted to fit in and not stand out. So we made ourselves smaller in all kinds of ways, whether that meant giving up a hobby or interest because we got made fun of for it, acting less intelligent and being less engaged in class because we didn't want to be called "teacher's pet" anymore, or doing anything else we could to not be seen as different.

I also want to note that privilege isn't something that starts in adulthood. So navigating those relationships is doubly hard for marginalized kids who have no real chance to fit in because they're in a classist, white supremacist, cisheteropatriarchal environment. At my north Texas public high school, for example, you did not want people to think you were gay because at a minimum you would be mercilessly teased for it, and it could be really dangerous for you. No one who I went to high school with that now identifies as queer actually was out publicly in high school.

Hell, at my high school you didn't even want to be known as a democrat. I was in the Young Democrats Club for a year with some friends and there were like six of us in it, and this was a public school with well over 3,000 kids, and I remember we put up a club poster at one point, just like all the other clubs did, and ours got vandalized.

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I've spoken on the podcast before about how I let kids and teachers say my name wrong until college, and I also tried to get a few nicknames started for myself because I didn't want to stick out any more than I already did with my non-white name.

And that's just the peer interactions. Think about all the interactions that you had with authority figures that you've probably internalized. I'm sure that there are things that teachers, coaches, caregivers, etc. said about you that you still believe are true today without having stopped to interrogate any further. If you got called "lazy" enough times or were told that you didn't apply yourself, you may still believe that today. And the same is actually true for people who got "compliments," like being called "gifted," who now may be perfectionists who constantly talk shit to themselves because expectations were so high on them for their entire lives. Hi, it me. Okay, it used to be me. I've been working hard to recover from that.

Like, I think about how my mom told me multiple times that I wasn't graceful. And admittedly, I still trip up the stairs a lot and I wasn't great at ballet as a kid. But I really had to overcome that belief about myself when I started doing trapeze because I was convinced not being graceful was just who I am. I didn't understand that being clumsy and being graceful weren't mutually exclusive and that graceful when applied to something like trapeze is a skill, which means it can be broken down into parts, like fluid movement, nice lines, and pointed toes. Am I the most graceful person in the world? No, definitely not. But it's something that I have improved on immensely when I started practicing it.

A lot of times other people's perceptions of you are bullshit, or at least incomplete, but they can stay with you your whole life. They become the

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familiar stories that we tell ourselves, and it can be difficult to get out of that loop.

The final layer I'll mention in terms of things that we encounter growing up that erode self-trust is the very daunting societal and cultural layer. We don't grow up in a vacuum. We grow up seeing things on the news, in movies, on TV, and in magazines. Today kids grow up being heavily influenced by social media and things on the internet. Many people grow up in religious traditions that they had no say in participating in. All of these societal and cultural aspects teach us that the answers we seek are outside of ourselves.

This is where diet culture and standards of beauty start to rear their ugly heads. This is where we learn racism and misogyny and homophobia. The world shapes and molds us before we're even aware that it's happening. When we experience all of that during our formative years, over time we become so far removed from our internal voice that we can barely hear it anymore, which is ironic because adults are so often told to trust their gut and follow their instincts. But as kids we learn the exact opposite.

I've coined a phrase for all these voices in our heads that don't belong to us. I call them, the "ghosts of self-doubt." These ghosts are living rent-free in our heads and wreaking havoc. They are constantly moaning, and groaning, and poking and prodding us, making us question who we even are. And hopefully it's clear from everything I just explained that the presence of these ghosts is not our fault. All of this stuff from our upbringings and our culture is what puts the welcome mat out for these ghosts and invites them into our heads.

What makes it particularly tricky to deal with these ghosts is they are sneaky motherfuckers. They are expert shapeshifters who will convince

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you that the voices you're hearing arise from your own spirit, even though they actually belong to the spirits of others. How are you supposed to realize that some of these ghosts need to be exorcised and other ones need to be tamed when they have you convinced that they're actually you?

We can't do anything about these ghosts of self-doubt until we know they're there and we delve more into their back story. In pretty much every ghost movie ever, you get some scenes where the protagonist is trying to find out the history of this ghost and their story so they know what to do next. You have to do the same thing when you're dealing with the ghosts of self-doubt. Self-trust is deep inner work that you're not gonna be able to fully dig into if you stay surface level.

And unfortunately, the ghosts aren't the only thing you have to worry about when it comes to eroding self-trust. Womp womp. I told you at the beginning there are a lot of things that fuck with self-trust, so bear with me because it's important that we talk about them. One of the biggest self-trust killers that I see, especially with clients, can be our own mistakes and fuck-ups. And I say "can be" because they don't have to be. And if we can learn to view our mistakes in healthier ways, then they won't hurt our self-trust.

Remember what I said back in Part 1—having self-trust doesn't mean that you're perfect and you don't make mistakes. Because last I checked, you're not superhuman, so you're gonna fuck up. The problem arises when you view your past mistakes as proof that you cannot be trusted, or that you're unworthy, or that you're stupid, and then use that supposed proof as an excuse for not trying to change the circumstances that aren't working for you.

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So let's say someone has chosen to date partners in the past who were not a good fit for them and who treated them poorly. And after doing that a couple of times, concluded that they're just bad at choosing partners and they're self-sabotaging because they simply don't want to be happy. I mean, could that be true? I guess. But that's a very limiting viewpoint that keeps you stuck. That's the cycle of, "I've been bad at this before, I guess I'm just always going to be bad at it, so what's even the point of continuing?"

Another area where I see this really defeatist attitude is in anti-racism work. White people will try to get started with anti-racism work, and inevitably, they'll accidentally say something offensive or mess up in some way. Because of course they will! They're brand new to anti-racism, and they grew up in white supremacy, and all of us are always learning. But when they get corrected or called out, they get defensive, throw up their hands, and swear off of anti-racism work forever. "Well, I guess I just can't do anything right, so why even bother? Fuck anti-racism work." Y'all that is not the right conclusion to draw.

When we get stuck in a place where we're reliving all of our mistakes and fuck-ups and we believe that we can't change, that's when we start to drown in shame and drown in regret. Just because you did something in the past that you wouldn't do now, doesn't mean that has to define you forever. You can do a bad thing without that meaning that you are a bad person at your core. If you can get curious and try to understand why you did the bad thing in the first place, then you can learn from it and that can inform what you're going to do in the future. That's one of the gifts that self-trust has to offer us.

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Another thing that can erode self-trust is not just the voices of the ghosts of self-doubt in your head, but the voices of actual people in your life. When you have to deal with a lot of people who are intent on crushing your dreams, who never have anything positive to say about you, who doubt your abilities, or who shame and belittle you, that does not create an environment where self-trust can thrive. Because you're essentially surrounded by people who are teaching you not to trust yourself.

If every time you attend a family dinner your mom makes a comment that you're eating too much, or that you're not making healthy choices, or, "Are you sure you need that second serving?" you'll start to doubt your body's signals unless you're very firmly rooted in self-trust. And if that continues for long enough, eventually your mom's voice will become one of the ghosts of self-doubt in your head and you'll start to regulate your eating even when your mom's not around to say anything.

This is why community is so important. This is why you need supportive people in your corner who cheer you on. Because those kinds of people can help us start to trust in ourselves because they trust us in our decisions, even if we don't yet.

There have been a lot of people in my life who have tried to knock me down a peg because they didn't like that I refused to fit into their boxes. I will never forget the guy in high school who told me that my ego could fill a room. I'm pretty sure I retorted back that actually it could fill a stadium. But I still found the comment hurtful, and he never would have said it to another guy. In the immortal words of Demi Lovato, "What's wrong with being confident?" And my answer to her rhetorical question is, absolutely nothing, unless you're a woman, in which case you apparently need to be meek and humble.

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Now as an almost 31-year-old, I can tell you that for the most part, I have stopped putting up with other people's bullshit, especially the flavor of bullshit that comes from white cishet men. But it's taken a lot of work to get to this point and a ton of self-trust development.

Another self-trust killer that goes hand in hand with struggling to move past mistakes is staying stuck in black-and-white thinking. Y'all, when I started coaching I had no idea just how much of my work would revolve around helping people learn how to be more flexible and be able to understand nuance better. Not a day goes by where I don't have a conversation with a client about how all-or-nothing thinking is holding them back.

And we're actually biologically inclined to categorize things because it helps us organize our world and allows our brains to be more efficient, thus preserving energy. So it's an adaptive trait. But in a world as complicated as ours is now, binary categories will be the death of you. If you cannot or will not extend flexibility to other people and situations, you won't extend it to yourself either.

There are plenty more examples I could give of things that erode self-trust, but I'm just going to mention one more in this episode, and that is looking everywhere but within for the answers you need. This one's actually kind of a paradox. We do this because we don't trust ourselves, and the act of doing it leads us to not trust ourselves.

How many times in your life have you needed to make a decision and instead of sitting with yourself to figure it out, you turned to just about anything else you could get your hands on to help you make up your mind? Researching in books or on the internet, scouring advice columns, asking six friends and two mentors for their opinions about what you

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should do. We have all been there before. But most of the time we end up doing all this extra work only for it to take us further away from where we need to go, which is back to ourselves.

Turning to others for answers often overshadows what we already know to be true deep down, but we're just not ready to contend with yet. I'm not saying there aren't times where it's helpful to do research or ask for advice. There absolutely are and I do it all the time. But if you rely heavily on external sources to make most of your decisions, it starts to hurt your self-trust. And what ends up happening is we start to rationalize away what we already know to be true.

I'm sure you can think of a time where you were trying to make a decision that your body was way ahead of you on. Your body already knew the answer and was giving you fairly clear signals about it, but that answer scared the crap out of you. So rather than listen to your body, you tried to push down those signals and let your brain get over-involved to convince you they must be wrong. You thought you could think your way out of the truth. And you probably successfully prolonged the situation and put off making the decision, but in the end, trying to rationalize the feelings away didn't change them because you already knew. You just didn't trust that it could be the truth because it was scary as fuck.

With increased self-trust, situations like that happen far less often because you learn to see fear as a messenger instead of the grim reaper, and you become acquainted enough with your body that you know rationalization just isn't going to work for very long. Self-trust helps you be more discerning about when getting other people involved is going to help your decision-making process and when getting other people involved is going to hinder it.

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After listening to me talk about all these different things that can erode self-trust, you might be feeling a bit overwhelmed and like self-trust is even further out of reach than before you started listening to this episode, but remember, until we have awareness of what is going on, we can't change. Without knowing about these barriers to self-trust, without being able to witness the ghosts of self-doubt in our heads, there's nothing we can do about them.

But if you can see these things, really see them, then you can decide how you want to move forward. And all of a sudden these things get harder to ignore, and you start to crave self-trust because you can't unsee this shit. The self-trust journey requires peeling back the layers, peaking behind the curtain, so that you can create opportunities to be more intentional.

Awareness of what makes self-trust so difficult is what allows you to position yourself in the big picture so that self-trust development doesn't just become another thing where you feel like you've failed before you've even started, so why try at all. Understanding everything you're up against creates space for you to extend self-compassion and kindness to yourself. I mean, what a fucked-up world we live in that has taught you in so many ways you are not to be trusted. There's a lot of grief wrapped up in that realization.

The good news is that you absolutely can improve on your self-trust and develop a better relationship with yourself. It's something I've helped a lot of people with. And naturally in Part 3 of the series, I'm going to be sharing with you how to do that. So be sure to check out episode #76 to learn what it actually takes to cultivate self-trust.

And in the meantime, for each episode of the Self-Trust Series I'm offering a free download of self-trust journaling prompts around that episode's

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topic. Even if you're not a journaling person, you can think through the prompts, make a list, talk through them with someone you trust, or use them in other creative ways to dive a little deeper into the topic of self-trust. To get the free download for Part 2, just head to the show notes for this episode at [shohrehdavoodi.com/75](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/75). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/75](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/75).

I'll see you back here soon for Part 3.

If you've been enjoying the podcast's Self-Trust Series and want to take your self-trust to the next level, I invite you to join Follow Your Arrow, my brand new membership program for 2021. The 12-month membership experience will guide you through my Pillars of Self-Trust Framework so that by the time the program is over, rather than strictly being shaped by the world around you, you'll be able to step into your power and shape the world right back.

Through group coaching calls, educational and practical components, and an online community, you'll work through self-doubt and shame so you can come home to yourself with confidence.

Follow Your Arrow starts on January 4<sup>th</sup> and you have until December 31<sup>st</sup> to sign up for the program. To get all the details about the membership and sign up, head to [shohrehdavoodi.com/followyourarrow](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/followyourarrow). That's [shohrehdavoodi.com/followyourarrow](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/followyourarrow). I'll also include the link for the program information in the show notes for this episode.

And that's our show for today! If this podcast has taught you anything or helped you in any way, I hope you'll consider supporting me in my effort to keep it going. You can join my Patreon community and receive members-only perks by going to [shohrehdavoodi.com/Patreon](https://shohrehdavoodi.com/Patreon), or you can tip me for my work through the payment links located at the bottom of the show

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