



Episode 550 – Miss Robynn Murray | whistlekickMartialArtsRadio.com



Jeremy Lesniak:

What's happened and everybody welcome back. This is whistlekick Martial Arts Radio Episode 550 with today's guest, Miss Robynn Murray. I'm Jeremy Lesniak. I'm your host, I'm whistlekick's founder and I love martial arts, traditional martial arts, in all forms. And that's why we do what we do. And if you want to see all that we do go to whistlekick.com, that's our online home, it's the place to find our store. And the code, `podcast15` is gonna get you 15% off, anything you find in there. Everything for this show is on its own website, whistlekickmartialartsradio.com. Show comes out twice a week and the goal of this show and of whistlekick overall, really, it's all under the heading of connecting, educating, and entertaining traditional martial artists throughout the world. If you want to support that work, there are a number of ways you can help. You could make a purchase, you could share an episode with friends, put it on social media, make your family listen to it, you know, whatever. Follow us on social media, we're @whistlekick everywhere you could pick up. You could pick up one of our books on Amazon, there are quite a few of them. You could leave us a review on Facebook or on Google or anywhere you get your podcasts. Or you could support the Patreon, [P-A-T-R-E-O-N.com/whistlekick](https://www.patreon.com/whistlekick). Patreon is a place where we post exclusive content. And if you contribute as little as \$2 a month, you're going to get access to at least some of it. The more you contribute, the more we give you in fact, at the \$10 tier, we've got a new show. It's a show where I unpack the things that I do, training at home. I show you the drills that I use, that I've refined out of necessity, and over the years and well, probably stuff that you're not seeing anywhere else from anybody. Today's show is intense. I've said that before. And it's been true before



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and it's true again. In fact, this is the first time I feel the need to kinda offer a warning. The subject matter that we get into on today's episode is very real, it's very raw. And it may not be suitable for everyone. If you have trouble listening to stories of violence, or if you have small children around, you may you may not want to listen to this one or at least be aware of it going in. It's stuff that needs to be discussed. It's important subject matter. And I'm thankful to Miss Murray for coming on the show and talking about it. And I don't know what else to say to set it up because anything I say further just seems to dilute it. So let's just let it ride. Ms. Murray, welcome to whistlekick Martial Arts Radio.

Robynn Murray:

Hi, so nice of you to have me.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hey, nice of you to be here. We've got some stuff. We've got some stuff just in the last five minutes. You you you broached like three really big just topics, I guess. And I know we're gonna get into them. And, and I first off want to thank you for your willingness to be here and to unpack some big stuff with us. And the audience right now is going, Jeremy what the? What the hell are you talking about? What's going on here? But it's all it's all gonna happen. We're gonna we're gonna let it, we're gonna let it unfold as naturally as it can. Now of course, we start in in a pretty generic way. You know, it's it's a martial art show. We're talking about martial arts with martial artists. Martial artists are listening and so when did you start with martial arts?

Robynn Murray:

Um the very first time I ever took martial arts, I was a teenager, I was 14 and I took Aikido and Self-defense. And then, I was in the military. I eventually became a sergeant in the army. So I did regular combatives and grappling but most recently, I've been training for around two years. I started with Krav Maga, and then recently I added Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu to the mix, and I really love it. I really love the combination as well.

Jeremy Lesniak:

That's quite the combo.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And, and if we were, I don't know if martial arts lends itself well to a spectrum. And I'm sure there are gonna be some people who might might get a little bit offended as I tried to shoehorn this in, but if we were to, to force martial arts onto a continuum of let's say, aggressiveness Aikido would kind of be on



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one end and then military combatives you know, we've had a few guests who who participate and even taught MCMAP, the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program and I assume the Army Corps is similar in their combatives and Krav's kind of down on that aggressive spectrum too. Right? So, it sounds like that's where you've settled, but I want to go back I want to talk about the Aikido for a minute, because it's such a contrast. Like, how did you end up there? Like, why Aikido? Why? You said 14, that's not an age most kids jump into martial arts?

Robynn Murray:

No. Um, well, I had been having issues with people. I don't know, people wanting to fight. Like for reference, I'm 35. So when I was coming up, even though I lived in kind of like suburban areas in New York, there were still people that wanted to like have gangs, form gangs, like warship, violence, and I was always kind of just a really soft spoken kid that, you know, really wanted to be left alone. And when it comes to Aikido, the whole thing is, it's not aggressive. It's like taking someone else's energy to use it against them. Right, um, which is what I liked. But even then, when I first started Aikido, I was so docile, I would just say I'm sorry all the time. I didn't even like striking.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And was, was Aikido or it was martial arts in general, was that your idea? Or somebody suggested to you?

Robynn Murray:

You know, I don't remember. Um, I had been interested in it in a while, like, I was athletic as a kid to a certain extent. Um, I tried, I think, a little bit of everything. Like, I really wanted to sample everything from the buffet of life, like, I was a cheerleader, and I did, um, school plays, and I played softball, and then I played lacrosse, and then I was a Civil Air Patrol Cadet. And, um, I really did like martial arts, it was just, I didn't have a lot of support outside of school to get to things. So it didn't last as long as I wanted it to.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But it sounds like it made a mark.

Robynn Murray:

Definitely.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Just the way you're talking about it. And when you think back on that, Aikido time you talked about how docile you were. Did that start to change through Aikido? Or was it something that well I'm set of putting words in your mouth. Tell me more.



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Robynn Murray:

Okay, um, well, you know, I really would probably have remained a very docile pacifist, had life, and other people just not got in the way of that. Um, and, you know, I joined the military, my family has a history of service. Um so, you know, I had to start to become more aggressive. And one of the big things when I was deployed, my first deployment was to Baghdad, like, right when I got done with training, and one of the things you absolutely need to do is, like, declare your space, right? And, and no one someone's being hostile or acting hostile towards you, you kind of have to, in certain circumstances, be an aggressor? Um, and it was really foreign to me, but I had to adapt. It's one of those things like really, um, you know, adapt or die, essentially. And I was a machine gunner during my first deployment. So, it was kind of like, you know, be aggressive or other bad things might happen. And...

Jeremy Lesniak:

If I, if I can jump in there for a moment, because I, I have not served. I've not, I've not been overseas, I've not engaged in the type of conflict that you're talking about. And the majority of our listeners haven't either. So I think I know what you're referring to when you talk about this claiming of space.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

But I'm wondering if you if you have a, an anecdote or a quick story that might illustrate that a little better for those of us who don't get it.

Robynn Murray:

Okay. Yeah. So at the time, when I was serving, it was I got there 2004 left in 2005. A lot of the problems that we were having, were what we call the VBIEDs, vehicle borne IEDs, car bombs, and they would drive up on convoys and get in the middle, and detonate. Um, which, as you can imagine, is disastrous and harrowing in any way possible so we developed strategies to deal with it, like having signs on the back and fronts of humvees saying, you know, stay X amount of meters away, or we will shoot. Because the hard part about it is, if you are in the position to make the judgment, where you don't know if someone is just not paying attention in traffic, or if they're coming to kill you, you kind of have to learn to be louder and to get attention, rather than just wait and do something that you might really regret.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Hmm okay. That make sense. That's a tough, that's a tough call. And it seems to illustrate and I suspect we're doing some foreshadowing here. You anytime we talk about self-defense, we talk about that, that line, that moment where you have to make that tough call. Because if you wait even a little bit too long, there might be no getting out of a situation. And I mean, certainly you're talking about car bombs.



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There's no, there's, there's a pretty tight span of time, I would imagine where you have to make the decision - is this a threat or not a threat.

Robynn Murray:

Right. But on the flip side of that, that's an extreme case. It's, you know, it's hard to find any, any gray area in that hole, I need to be aggressive, where more people would get hurt in combat because it's very cut and clear. You know what's expected. And even though you don't know who your enemy is, you're familiar with the concept. However, you know, when I was in AIT, for people who don't know that's job school in the army, um, I was sexually assaulted by another soldier. And it wasn't, how can I explain it, it wasn't, I'm gonna give a trigger warning, it wasn't a rape. But it was complete invasion of my personal space. It was like a touching it was it was very unwanted. And, you know, he was a man who was a lot larger than me. He had been in the army longer than me. And at that point, it essentially made it feel like I couldn't have fought back, even if I wanted to, without having more negative things in the army come to me than to him. Which, at that point in time was in unfortunate reality in the military. And for a lot of women that still is, um, which is, you know, horrific. But further on, I don't know if you wanna pause there. You're awfully quiet.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. The last thing I'm gonna do when you're talking about this is step on your words.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah so, um, that happened in 2004. And then I went, I was deployed right after. And I didn't really have a whole lot of time to process it. And honestly, the way that it had been treated by everyone around me, it didn't get treated like sexual assault. And not until I started to do work with other women who had been sexually assaulted, did I realize like, yeah, that's what happened to me. Like not only did he unwantedly touch me, he gave me unwanted attention. He threatened me, he threatened my friends. He wanted retribution. Um, it was just it's a mess. So, you know, there's, that's one facet of it, the assault which I'm very fortunate that it didn't have the opportunity to go further. Um, I count myself lucky. I know a lot of women have horrific, horrific and brutal stories when it comes to that, and I'm thankful that it didn't yeah happen that way. However, um the assault that happened 2004 I went on my first deployment from 2004 to 2005. I went to my second deployment in the Horn of Africa from 2005 to 2006. And then I came home. And I've been dealing with a PTSD stuff for a long time. And I would say, later on in 2012, I was dating a man who had been my fiance while I was still in the army. Um someone I was really close to, like the first time I ever lost a friend in a combat and and needed someone to call and talk to you about that. This is the man I called. But our relationship had started to go bad and he had started to become like, verbally abusive, and try to get controlling and he was involved in the motorcycle club scene which I'm not making a judgement about all men and motorcycle clubs just about him. Um, he became like macho and controlling. And he wanted me to, I don't know, ask act like a



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hausfrau and I was not all about it. That's not my personality. And, you know, I left. I was like, I don't know what's going on. I'm not doing this anymore. I'm not waiting for the other shoe to drop. So I left. And then when he found out, I was dating someone else, he came to my house I was living at when I was alone on the porch. And he assaulted me. He tried to kill me. Um, I got choked, I got punched, I got kicked, I ended up with broken ribs. Oh God, my face was messed up, my shoulder was messed up. And after that, I was just I couldn't even process it for a while because it's one of those things where, you know, when we think of an enemy, when we think of someone that wants to hurt us, um, we're always taught that it's gonna be some creepy stranger in a van. But it wasn't. It was it was the person that was my person. You know what I mean? The person that I almost married, and it was just incredibly hard to deal with. And it still makes me very anxious to talk about I, I've had to go through a lot of therapy. Um naturally like someone in my position does.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure sure. Quite, quite reasonable and expected I would say.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

To healthfully process it.

Robynn Murray:

Right. So when it comes to, you know, being aggressive, um, I can, I can remember, like the first, like, punch to the face, I guess I'm gonna get a graphic for a moment, but I can remember the first punch to the face. And I just remember being so shocked by it, that the next thing I knew he had had my hair and he was slamming my face um on the sidewalk. And then the next thing I remembered as he was, you know, on top of me, choking me and telling me you're gonna pop and die. And the only thing I could remember out of anything I had learned in the military and Aikido in any self defense class I had ever taken. The only thing I could think to do in that moment was to take my thumbs and drive them into his eye sockets. And even though I ended up taking a serious beating on that probably saved my life because I was on the verge of passing out. Um, but it's hard because there is a thought that goes in your head, like, oh, I don't wanna hurt this person, I love them, I don't wanna cause them pain. Completely forgetting that, hey, they, pardon my language, they started it. And, as it turns out, that's, that's common in a lot of women. Um, because we're socially conditioned to be nice. Um, we're socially conditioned to be nurturers. And even though in that relationship, I had seen warning signs and I did leave, I had seen the signs earlier but given my conditioning and every rom com I've ever seen, I'm like, no, he's gonna change. He's gonna remember that he loves me and it's gonna it's gonna be fine. It wasn't fine. And I think a lot of that does a great disservice to women. Like we need to be able to not



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feel guilty for not just defending ourselves but for taking up space, period. Um, uh, you know, just considering crime statistics. 40% of all women murdered in the United States are murdered by a partner or former partner. That's staggering. And the number one cause to a cause of death to pregnant women, other than complications from childbirth is murder of a partner.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Wow.

Robynn Murray:

It's terrifying.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I I can only imagine. You know, I'm I'm never going to be pregnant. I don't I don't have to worry about that and I'm not trying to to make light. I'm simply trying to convey that, that I recognize what I don't understand.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

In this conversation. You connected a couple dots here for me that I want to go back to if I may. And that was the idea of taking up space. You talked about that, when you went to Iraq, and you're talking about that, kind of in this, this other context here. What does that mean? We talked about a woman who maybe is I'll use the word that you use, docile. And needs to make that transition into taking up space. What is what does that look like, physically? And what does it feel like emotionally?

Robynn Murray:

Okay, so as far as, you know, being up, taking up space, you know, there's another podcast that I listened to that I love called "My Favorite Murder", and one of their slogans is "F*** Politeness". Um, which, you know, vulgar words, but it makes a point, because, you know, go back to social conditioning from a very young age women, girls were taught to, you know, be nice, um, don't make waves. And we sacrifice often our feelings of comfort, or even safety, to make someone else feel comfortable. And it's, it's a process to start to unlearn all of the things that have kind of been forced on us, which is not to say, um, everybody did horrible things to us growing up, but there are a lot of things that, that do a disservice to little girls. Like, I don't make my daughter hug anyone she doesn't want to. Um, she's seven years old. I want her to know that she has absolute agency over her body and she needs to apologize to absolutely no one about it. Um, but just on a bigger level, um, you know, we need to know that we are valid, our emotions are valid. We are worthy of being heard. We are worthy period. And we don't need



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to compromise our safety or ourselves to make someone else feel comfortable. I'm allowed to have a voice, I don't need to quiet down or shrink myself, sometimes physically, you can look at women, and they will hunch over or around their shoulders almost to make themselves smaller, so they're less imposing. Um, we don't really do that to boys or men, we have other things that we do to them that is also crappy social conditioning. I mean, you all do we all get the fuzzy end of the lollipop stick on that one. But, um, the way that we treat little girls, um, is kind of dangerous. Even now, like 1 in 10 teenage girls is has been abused by a partner. That's scary.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So when you when you think about some of these things that have happened for you, and you're talking about some of this social conditioning, are there things that you remember from your childhood that you can point to and say, ah, I wish this had been different?

Robynn Murray:

Hmm, I can remember, um, dealing with it more specifically, when I was a teenager, my stepfather had like drunk, lecherous friends. And for some reason, I had to be nice to them. Well, no, I don't wanna be nice to them. I'm 15 years old, I should be able to wear a bathing suit at my house and not have a 50 year old man look at me and I feel gross. No, no way. No, thank you.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah, yeah, and this, this is stuff that I hear discussed more and more, and I'm glad it's being discussed more and more, because it the, in order for us to stop this behavior that we need to reach some kind of critical mass and, and not gonna put pronouns on it. People speaking out on these subjects, holding each other accountable, is critical. And that's part of why you're here today to to invite some conversation.

Robynn Murray:

And it really, women are not the only victims. Um, you know, the statistics say 1 in 7 men are also victims of some form of extreme violence in a partnership. However, they're much less likely to report it. So we don't really know what the statistics are. But I had a close friend of mine, who was a former Marine, um, who, you know, his wife who had been a kickboxer, um, used to hit him. And I remember he told me, he goes, You know, I just never really thought twice about it, because I'm really big and it didn't hurt that bad but then he got injured. And she hit him in the spine one day so bad, he passed out. And then when he came to, he had fallen down the stairs, and she was still punching him in the face. Um, it's dangerous. Anyway, you shake it.

Jeremy Lesniak:



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Yeah. Okay. So we don't need to put a firm timetable on the things that you're talking about here but there's some period of time or was there no period of time between this incident, this porch incident, and you resuming martial arts?

Robynn Murray:

Um, let's see that happened in 2012. I restarted the end of 2017 I wanna say. And how I came to it specifically, I'll give you I guess a little more background. Um my daughter when my daughter was little, I was going back to university and like I mentioned before, I was studying criminal justice in law at the same time with the goal of being a lawyer. However, um all of the trauma, and all of the things that I just did not deal with had come creeping up on me and all of the sudden one day, it, you know, got to a place where it was just bad. And I had tried to fight it, and I couldn't fight it alone, but I ended up getting really sick. I had to drop out of school. Um, I had to be hospitalized numerous times. And I would get really frustrated, because I really wanted things to be better. I love life, I love my daughter, I love new experiences. Um, but I had gotten anxious to the point of having agoraphobia. Um, I don't know if you're familiar with it, but it's basically like a fear of the public or a fear of public spaces. I had become scared to leave my house. And I would get such overwhelming anxiety. Um, my pulse would be about a 140 beats per minute, four hours at a time. It was so bad to the point where I would shake. I could do literally nothing. And I just kept going in the hospital, trying one med. And then that didn't work so it would get overwhelming and it lasted on and off for two years. Um, and I honestly, I don't know how I made it through because it felt like torture. Um, I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, I wasn't really sleeping, I would just pass out kind of from the exhaustion, and then wake up the next day at five o'clock in the morning with my heart beating out of my chest. And it seemed like for a long time, nothing I was doing was working or making it any better. Um, and then I found um a well I wouldn't say I found a PTSD treatment clinic was recommended to me by the Peer Support Specialist at the VA where I live in Buffalo, New York. And it was a nine week residential PTSD program with other women veterans. And I was terrified to go, I didn't wanna leave my young daughter for that long. But I knew that I was pretty much worthless to her at that time, unless I got some help. Which I don't know if anyone listening. It struggles from mental health, but I just want to let you know, you are not alone. It does get better. And people care about you. That is all I needed to hear and for some reason, doctors would not tell me that, um, until I got to the PTSD clinic. So I was there for nine weeks with other women. And it was nice being with women veterans, because, you know, we had the ability to understand each other not just as women and not just talk about, you know, combat, but, you know, sexual assault as well. And usually, when you go to therapy, it's one or the other, like combat, you know, therapy for combat trauma, or therapy for sexual assault or, you know, other things. And we all had each other and we all understood where each other were coming from, and the programming that they have for us there are the different types of therapy and the things that they introduced us to, um, was amazing. And I don't know where I would have been without it. But when I found out about BJJ, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, that's where I was. One of the other women that were in the PTSD clinic with me, she was a blue belt in Jiu-Jitsu and you know, the one day she has offered to teach some of us, you know, different grappling techniques. I was like,



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yeah, I was like, hell yeah, I wanna do that. So I remember her teaching me simple stuff, take downs, this that. And you know, how long is it it's been like five years, and we're still friends. We train Jiu-Jitsu together now or sometimes. When I got out, and when I got enough space and healed, at least somewhat enough from trauma and found the right meds where I could be in public, I was like, I'm gonna join a gym. I'm going to do it, I'm not gonna mess around anymore. I'm gonna do something because at that time, my daughter was starting kindergarten. And all I had at that time was anxiety and time on my hands. So I decided to do something about it. And I googled, you know, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu gyms near me, because aside from her, I had, I had other you know, male combat vet friends tell me, you got to try this, you're gonna like it. Like, all right, whatever. So I went into the gym. And I go to SPAR Self Defense in Buffalo, New York. And primarily, they have Krav Maga, and Jiu-Jitsu. They also have like, different kickboxing and stuff. But I walked in, and it was a off hour, so there was nobody really in there. And they're like, hey, what can we help you with, I was like, I wanna learn self defense. I'm like, and my friends have been telling me about Jiu-Jitsu. And the guy behind the counter who I now know, as my coach, Coach Matt, he is like, if you're more interested in self defense, you might like Krav Maga a little bit more. And I was like, alright, I, you know, I'm willing to give it a try. He goes, well, you could try a class for free and see how you like it and go from there. Like, alright, cool, got my schedule, I went, and then I was all about it. Um, and it at first, I was very apprehensive to go in, um even somewhat apprehensive to train with men. And I can specifically remember being a white belt. It was my first or second month of training, the first time we were learning a choke defense. And when somebody even just put their hands on my neck, not even squeeze, but just put their hands on my neck. I had an anxiety attack, burst out crying, and went in the women's locker room and broke down. And I just remember being so embarrassed until one of the other women, my class came in with me and you know she asked me what was wrong, and I was like, I I'm getting choked up just thinking about it. Um, I was like, somebody, somebody tried to kill me this way. And I'm not, you know, super comfortable with it. And she's like, that's, you know, she had been assaulted. That's why she was in the class. Turns out a lot of the women that I trained with train because they were assaulted. Um, and she just made me feel comfortable. I talked to the coach I had about it, and he's like, you don't need to do it. Right now, you can take your time and I was like, there's got to be some like leeway in between. So for a while, while we were training the defense, instead of putting, you know, putting hands on my throat, people will put their hands on my shoulders. And then I just after a while, I got used to it. And then I got a little bit more confident defending it. And now, man with Jiu-Jitsu, I've got marks all up and down my neck from brush burn being choked with my gi, and it doesn't even bother me. It's just that slow, like, slow introduction of things and then taking the time to get comfortable with techniques and being closer to people and training with larger men. Because even though I had been training Krav Maga for a while, by the time I started BJJ um having a larger man in particular, like, put all of his weight on me inside control, I would just, you know, not even consciously thinking about it, I would just panic and scramble to get out. Um, so it was something I had to work on, consciously. And, you know, talk to my different coaches that I trusted like Ben, you know, as soon as this happens, I panic. And all I want to do is scramble. If you see me start to panic and not breathe, let me know I'm panicking and not breathing.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Can we unpack that a little bit? 'Coz what you're talking about, you're talking about the what's essentially overcoming at least enough of this trauma, to train. Right. And, and I have not endured what you're talking about. But I'm, you know, statistically, unfortunately, we have plenty of people listening to this show right now who have, and some of them may not have had the time or the people around them or whatever, to be able to move through. So we're talking about and help me understand and help them understand. So we're talking about not only your ability to process, we're talking about an environment where you're feeling comfortable, we're talking about people, that you're feeling comfortable, we're talking about your own skills within your training, and somehow a combination of those and this isn't me in disbelief but me in wonder, that a combination of those has helped you move forward enough that, what would you describe it, as bruises up and down your arms.

Robynn Murray:

Oh, I've got kind of a bumper on the head right now, too. I hurt my rotator cuff.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure so. And you're laughing about it right? And it doesn't sound forced, it's genuine. And I'm sure everybody listening can hear that. So this is a piece that I want to get into a little bit more if you're willing. Because I think there's something really educational for the rest of us here. What did that process? What did that exploration of this horrible incident through your training? How did that unpack and what advice would you have for others who have similar things to work through?

Robynn Murray:

Well, I would have never just started training if I didn't have like a psychiatrist and a psychologist to talk to. And when I first started to get sick, the doctors I had, I didn't like, I didn't feel like they had my best interest. And they seemed pretty uninterested in my pain, you know, as a generality. Um, so it took me a while to find the right doctors, find the right kind of therapy, find a community of people that I could talk to about it, be it you know, online. I've been to healing retreats with indigenous women veterans, where I've been through the sweat lodge. Um, you know, I've tried, I've tried everything. Meds, meditation, yoga, the big one was, I did for one, trauma. I did something called CPT, cognitive processing therapy. And it really I don't wanna say desensitizes but it helps to process what's going on in your brain by kind of talking to a therapist about it and getting it on paper and kind of breaking it down. So I have this three-ring binder which is probably four inches thick of all the different classes I took, all the things that I found helpful, the different, um you know, you break down different negative beliefs you have around the world and something as simple as learning how to challenge a negative thought or negatively held belief is incredibly powerful. Um, and learning mindfulness, learning how to breathe, keeping a journal, um different things work for different people, but I would have never got better had I just stopped trying anything. And one of the things that really gave me hope about healing because you



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know, for a longest time, even when I had started being a public speaker about PTSD. Like, I kind of understood healing from combat trauma, but that was before the big assault, the big assault, okay I'm sorry.

Jeremy Lesniak:

You're laughing about it, which I think says more than, than anything else could. And I suspect that the people listening if they're at all like me, hear you applying a little bit of humor to that incident and are probably smiling. And, and happy to hear that you're at a place where you can do that.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah, it took it took a while, um, I was a mess. And I just wouldn't give up. But the other part of that is, I just, I had gotten to a point where I knew I had to ask for help. And there's something I feel like about us as Americans, where there's this idea of like rugged individualism in America, where if you can't do it all alone, you're a weak person. Well, no, that's crap. Like, from the perspective of like, an anthropologist or a sociologist like unless you have a community or a tribe, you're alone. Why is it so hard to ask for? I mean, I know why it's hard because sometimes, there's a big stigma behind getting treatment for my mental health. There's a big stigma behind counseling, people think that if you go to counseling or if you go to a psychiatrist, there's something you know, inherently wrong with you. You're a crazy person. Well, no. Because from the understanding I've gained of just a little bit of neuroscience, like when you have PTSD, when you have trauma, when you have complex PTSD, um, your brain is essentially stuck in the state of fight or flight, right? So your brain, your amygdala is what controls fight or flight. It's like your body's you know, smoke alarm. And people that have trauma or PTSD, we, it's like, we have a faulty smoke alarm. Okay. So instead of going off when we sense real danger, it's going off all the time. And it affects the way the other parts of our brain work, it actually rewires the way your brain works. It can mess with your hippocampus, it can mess with your memories. And the other part of that is, I mean, take a second, let's think about all of the things our body does when it's stuck in fight or flight at all. You sweat, you, you know, breeds more shallow, you, um, as like a biological imperative your bowels or your bladder, either evacuate, or completely bind up. A lot of people with trauma have issues with their stomach and don't know why. It's because your body is constantly in caveman mode where you are expecting the saber toothed tiger in the room but there isn't one there anymore. And the therapies that they have, be it you know, cognitive processing therapy or EMDR, they help you get to the point where you can help turn off your faulty smoke alarm in your brain. If that makes sense. Does that make sense?

Jeremy Lesniak:

It does for me, I've been pretty fortunate. I've been exposed to some some people who practice some pretty cool stuff EMDR and some similarities PDTR and some of these other wonderful therapists and, you know, going into those is probably a bit beyond the scope. But if someone's listening, and some of the stuff that you're talking about is resonating, there are a lot of amazing practitioners out there who



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can help with this stuff, just as you've experienced and, and you know, I've been fortunate enough to receive help, for some things in some of these ways as well. And it's it's powerful, powerful medicine.

Robynn Murray:

And the other thing, you know, a lot of people have a stigma around, taking medication. Like if you are depressed in your body, does not make enough serotonin. You don't just have a negative outlook on life. Your body just isn't making the proper chemicals. You know what I mean? Some people meds are not the answer, they might just need a certain type of therapy. But don't struggle alone because you're stuck. Um, and I know it's super, super easy to get discouraged but healing is possible. I for two years, thought I was just going to die. I thought I was resigned to feel like I was in hell forever. It was the absolute darkest time of my entire life and I got better. I don't know how, I mean exactly. I don't necessarily know why me, but it's possible.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Yeah. And what about now? What is training look like now? What does your your eye towards the the emotional component that I would imagine is still very much part of, if not the what, but the why that you're training? How does all that kind of coalesce for you as a martial artist today?

Robynn Murray:

Well, unfortunately, you know, since COVID, it's a bit harder to train.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Sure. We're all we're all we're all frustrated like that.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah. So there usually to be safe, I train now with one partner. Um, that's like my dedicated partner for Krav Maga, or with BJJ. Um, if we'll practice a technique, we'll, you know, practice just together wear a mask. I just hurt my shoulder last week, so I won't be training anytime soon but I really look forward to it. Usually when I train, like before COVID, I would train Monday through Thursday, and then work, you know, have a regular workout Friday, and then work on BJJ on Saturday. And when I started Jiu-Jitsu, I liked it so much for the grappling aspect, that I enrolled my daughter and I love the coaches and the owner of my gym. They're completely fantastic people. When they found out some of my backstory and why I came to train, they gave my daughter a six months like free scholarship to study at their school. It was crazy. Um I love Jiu-Jitsu for her because she's at the age where you don't always wanna teach a seven year old how to punch somebody. However, you know, if a bully comes at her, and she needs to sweep somebody bigger, she could do that without necessarily beating on them. Um, which is what Aikido did for me when I was in high school, like instead of punching some girl in the face that came at me, I put her in a wrist lock and pinned her to a locker. Um, but I I don't see myself stopping training at



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all. I had a discussion with the head coach where I go about our women's self defense program. Because they have an eight week self defense course that they usually run. Unfortunately, it's not running now. But, uh, because I love to train because I used to train soldiers, and because I know, um, you know, the stuff that we talked about about assault and who does the assaulting. I spoke to him specifically, I was like, you know what, I would really like to get involved with the women's program and he's like, I think that's an awesome idea. So thus Liz, let's go for it. I'm like, yes but we're not open for business.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Soon, hopefully, people who are listening to this in the future will will be saying, oh, yeah, that that's that COVID things already done thankfully.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

So this is history.

Robynn Murray:

Oh, I hope so.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Can't be soon enough, though. I understand.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

And so do you have any goals? You know, you mentioned you're not gonna stop training. But if you start to consider the future, and you look out, you know, a year, a few years, a bunch of years, are there things you're looking at saying, you know, I hope that I can accomplish X in that time.

Robynn Murray:

It's, it's hard, because as well as I'm doing now, um healing from trauma isn't always a linear process. Like, I, I have bad days still, where I can't do stuff. But overall, I'm doing really well. So I, through the Department of Veterans Affairs, I'm considered 100% disabled because I don't function necessarily normal. I function well, for me, but not like other people, I guess. I don't know how else to explain that. Like, I could take care of my daughter, I could do normal stuff. But I'm not gonna be a CEO anytime soon. Just because of different, you know, I can't remember certain things because even though I have had



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therapy, and I do take meds, I still have like cognitive issues. And one of my medications can sometimes cause problems with my speech. But like little goals, I have, um, I, you know, a black belt is a nice goal. I'm 35 maybe that'll happen by the time I'm 40. Who knows? Now I'm gonna place bets on it. Um and buying a house is my other one.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Nice. Two great goals, goals, that seemed to actually have a lot in common as I look at them, you know, some something that you can rely on. Something that you can reflect on and say this is a this is a grounding point.

Robynn Murray:

Yeah.

Jeremy Lesniak:

I get it. What if people wanna find you online? Are you, you on social media?

Robynn Murray:

I am, um, my Facebook is just listed under my name, Robynn, R-O-B-Y-N-N, Murray, M-U-R-R-A-Y. There's a lovely photo of me with green hair. And my Instagram is vettyranrobynn, V-E-T-T-Y-R-A-N-R-O-B-Y-N-N. So, you know, vettyran like vet-ty-ran haha.

Jeremy Lesniak:

Well we'll make sure to link those for the show notes for people. Right on. This is, this has been great. And now this is kind of your opportunity to tie it off. How, what words do you want to leave the listeners with? You know, what are your final thoughts?

Robynn Murray:

So, ah, one thing, I guess, not necessarily a goal, but a side project that myself and some women are talking about thinking of. I belong online to a women's grappling forum. And day after day, you know, not a week goes by where we don't get a story from one of the women about like assault or harassment at their schools or finding out that, you know, somebody they train with had got convicted of something and some of the other women and I got together and we are trying to think of an ethical and legal way to either discourage or ban violent sexual offenders from um learning martial arts. Like, you know, something violent that they could use to assault their next step, um, which some people think is a privacy issue, um, which I can, I guess respect that opinion. But I would really feel horrible if something I taught someone was used to make someone else their victim. But I don't know, that's forthcoming. I guess I can keep you all apprised of it. Um because since most of us working on it are moms, and we all have to homeschool now. It's not as that as fast as we had expected.



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Jeremy Lesniak:

Okay. Any, anything else, any anything you know, if, if somebody listened to, you know, just a couple minutes, you know, if we not know that we're going to do this, but let's say we, we took the, this last bit here and said this is this is it, this is the summary or the most important stuff or whatever you wanna call it like that, you know, what, what would those words be?

Robynn Murray:

It would be, you know, no matter what, where you're coming from, like, no matter what trauma you have, healing is possible. And you can find a healing aspect in the martial arts community, with the right gym and the right people. I have been in gyms where it's kind of a macho, like, prove your worth attitude. And that's definitely not the right kind of environment for for women like me who have left violence issues. But training is possible. And finding a good training environment and good coaches is almost as important as is like finding a good therapist, when you're coming from a trauma background. You want somebody that's going to encourage you and teach you techniques rather than you know, belittle you and almost victimize you further. You don't deserve that. Um, women, we don't have to be nice, and like they say on my favorite murder, you know, bluntness. You don't have to be nice, you can declare your space, you don't have to be nice to anyone and you do not have to compromise your safety, or your values, or your voice to make someone else feel more comfortable. Which we don't get to walk around being jerks to everybody but at the same time, we do not have to be shrinking violets to make other people feel better.

Jeremy Lesniak:

This was an important episode and I'm really thankful to you, Miss Murray, for coming on the show, for talking about this, for being so open with such a difficult thing. Now, I don't know how many of you out there listening may identify with parts of today's episode. I hope that if you do, however, you will seek help. I hope that you will understand that you are not alone and that you will continue to fight figuratively, or literally if necessary, to heal. It's this subject that, I think is the best example of the power of martial arts to do what seems to be the opposite of martial arts. We talk about training to protect ourselves and to use violence when necessary, and yet, martial arts is so powerful that it can be used to recover from violence, to heal, to help others do the same. It's reason number, who knows what, on the list of reasons that I love martial arts and I will continue to fight for it and spread it wherever I can. So thank you again, Robynn, for coming on the show. Appreciate your time and your story. If you want to know more, see more go to whistlekickmartialartsradio.com, check out this and every other episode. This is Episode 550. And you're gonna find photos and links, bunch of resources as well as every other episode we've ever done. You can sign up for the newsletter while you're over there and if you're willing to support the work that we do, got a bunch of options you could visit the store, whistlekick.com, use the code `podcast15` to save 15%. Might also consider buying one of our Amazon books, telling others about the show, or supporting us at patreon.com/whistlekick. And I hope that if you see somebody out



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there rockin something with whistlekick on it, you'll introduce yourself. And if you've got guest suggestions, let me know Jeremy@whistlekick.com is my email address, @whistlekick is our social media everywhere you could shake a stick, whether that be a tonfa, a bow, a jo, boeken, escrima. So a lot of different wooden tools that we use. I could get sidetracked here but I won't. Instead I will simply say thank you for your time and your support and until next time, train hard, smile, and have a great day.