**Cristina**: Hi, everyone! I'm Cristina Mardirossian. I am the founder and director of Pasadena Trauma Therapy here with great honor, with one of our trauma specialists and supervisors here at Pasadena Trauma Therapy, Kristen Muche.

**Kristen**: Hey, everyone. Thanks, Cristina!

**Cristina**: Of course I'm so happy we're able to do this. I want our audience to know who you are and all the amazingness that you're bringing to our team, and thought we can introduce you, and, like all the amazing work you do, so people know more about you and the work that you do. Do you want to share a little bit with that how you got into this field?

**Kristen**: Of course. I’m so happy to be here, and Pasadena Trauma Therapy is amazing. So, like, how I came to be at Pasadena Trauma or just doing this work at all?

**Cristina**: I mean, we can tell that story, too, but I'll let you go either direction.

**Kristen**: Sure. So I would say, as far as what I do here at PTT, as Cristina said, I’m a therapist and a clinical supervisor. The supervisor piece basically means that, for our Associate Clinical Social Workers who are getting their hours to work towards licensure, I meet with them each week just to provide support, oversee, the work they're doing with their clients, and it's an absolute joy. And then the people whom I primarily serve are survivors- I mean also all of PTT- I would say primarily survivors of complex trauma. Survivors in particular, for me, especially because it's my specialty, survivors of sexual abuse or sex trafficking any kind of sexual violence, unwanted sexual experiences, ongoing sexual abuse, anything of that nature, and also people who have experienced generational trauma-

**Cristina**: Yup!

**Kristen**: Intergenerational within the family or generational on a larger, collective scale. Also, anyone who's been incarcerated, who has been within a family who's been affiliated with gang membership, cartel membership, cult membership, any kind of like organized group abuse-related experiences, that's kind of my focus in particular. And I especially have made a point in my career to focus on anyone who's experiencing structural dissociation. So, this would be anyone who would, you know, be on the spectrum of dissociation, so dissociative identities, otherwise known as DID, or other specified dissociation, or OSDD-

**Cristina**: Right.

**Kristen**: As a way to cope with everything that they've been through. And so, it's my honor to work with anyone who's experienced those things.

**Cristina**: So really the whole trauma spectrum, right? Like you, Kristen, we can really say, is a trauma specialist. She does that entire description that she just gave, and we're so lucky to have her here, because I think the learning always continues, and I'm always learning from you, Kristen, as are.

**Kristen**: Same with you!

**Cristina**: I know our whole team here, and so I know your clients are in such good hands. That's why I'm so glad to know you as a human being, but also have you as part of our team. So tell me, you know, what are the modalities that you like to use when working with trauma survivors?

**Kristen**: Sure. So for me, as do a lot of the clinicians at PTT, I do use parts work because, hey, we all have different facets of ourselves, some of us on a more mild, some of us on a more intensive experience of that, and within parts work, I don't use any one particular parts modality. I like to draw from a lot of different modes that incorporate any kind of internal self-states all the way to working with altars in a collaborative way, for anyone who has system-mates internally-

**Cristina**: I love that term.

**Kristen**: Yes, yeah. And I think that also for me, it just really resonates with a lot of, I think, different cultural practices, too, in terms of you know, different archetypes that have been throughout the generations that may also resonate with each of us, whether that's the inner child or kind of that part that holds a lot of wisdom or part who's holding a lot of trauma. I just think parts work has been so helpful in navigating through complex trauma. So that’s one. Another one is EMDR, so Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy. I particularly practice something called Attachment-Focused EMDR, so what that essentially means is that- I mean, I know you know, but for anyone who doesn't know- the focus is very relational-

**Cristina**: Yes.

**Kristen**: We take our time, we really move through that kind of safety stabilization, getting to know the internal system. Really, you know, addressing the attachment wounds, and also attachment strengths, that are there as we move through that process of reprocessing some of those memories. I'm using the word “process” a lot which is very “therapisty”. So EMDR is another one. Another one that I practice is something called Narrative Exposure Therapy, or NET. It originated in refugee camps. It was specifically designed for complex trauma and there's a lot of different ways to practice it. I really appreciate that there's a visual component to it. But it's basically creating a timeline- a lifeline, if you will- whether timeline and lifeline of your life, looking at the different experiences that cause trauma, the other experiences that maybe instilled a sense of joy or connection and getting to process all of those, versus just focusing on the trauma. So, there's a lot of integration in terms of integrating experiences-

**Cristina**: Right.

**Kristen**: There, and we take our time and it's really helpful for anyone who likes to write, especially, or who wants to create the story of their life, a memoir. And so I really like to incorporate all of these modalities together. I'm also an artist and a huge nerd, and so I will always appreciate any opportunity to incorporate someone's like art form. Whatever they're practicing, or a show or book that they're reading and incorporate that into our work together, too. I think there's such strength in using metaphor and expression to also just digest what we've been through and, so, I like to incorporate all of these things together. It's a really long answer.

**Cristina**: Kristen. I love it, I love it. I love learning more about how you describe these things. It's really awesome for me to witness that. But I think one of my favorite parts of you is that you are nerd, and I know that one of the most connecting things, at least in me learning about you and the people you work with is that you truly are somebody that will do what is best for the client it's very subjective. So if that's our, if that's journaling, if it's a show that they're watching, right, whatever it is, you really do such a great job on bringing that in and using what works for the people you're sitting with, it's really tailored and I think that's so important, in, trauma therapy. The other thing that you've said a couple of times in that description is that this work is slow, right? Like slower, is faster in this work. So when Kristen talks about that stabilization phase, I'm so glad you're bringing it up because we can't just throw someone in. You know, jump into memories. We wanna make sure that we're equipping everybody with coping skills and grounding techniques and tools so that when they do open up their story they can manage it. So thank you for mentioned that a couple of times. Yeah.

**Kristen**: I also understand when people want to just get going quickly-

**Cristina**: Yeah.

**Kristen**: I have no patience in my personal life, well less patience in my personal life, so I do understand when you just want to get to the root of something fast so that it goes away-

**Cristina**: For sure!

**Kristen**: And I think most people can identify with that. And at the same time it's it will be more empowering in the short run and the long run when someone knows that they can stay in that window of tolerance when they are ready to go there and so, exactly, slower is faster in that case.

**Cristina**: Absolutely. And I have a part like that, too. So I know what you mean. Yeah, well, Kristen, you also do a lot of amazing things outside of our practice. I don't know if you're students know that you are gold. You are a professor, and you're students have no idea that they're learning about stuff that most schools do not learn about. So I wanted to, just, you know, let you speak on that as well.

**Kristen**: That's very kind of you to say, so I'm gonna accept that. So I teach undergraduate and graduate students in a number of programs, primarily in a criminal justice program, social work program, psychology, program and a counseling program. For my master's students, they are very trauma-specific courses, so the intersection between trauma, violence and substance use particularly just as a way to cope historically, and then also a combination of trauma and crisis counseling. A lot of my past experience has been just being on the front lines, particularly, when someone is currently or actively going through trauma or is unhoused and just has a lot of high needs which I think has really was really helpful having a social work background, because I like to incorporate the, of course, the like therapeutic piece, but also the advocacy piece-

**Cristina**: Yeah.

**Kristen**: So social justice piece and so do a lot of that with my social work and counseling courses. For my criminal justice students, a lot of what we look at are just how to support survivors of crime-

**Cristina**: Amazing.

**Kristen**: In particular, and also a class on sex crimes. And can spend an entire semester really challenging, I mean, just not just personal sort of ideas of what sexual violence is, but also the social taboos that really inform how we view sexual experiences in general, how we look at victim blaming, and also the forms of sexual violence that have just distilled been very much kept a secret because of just how powerful those those roots go. And so I really do love teaching. My students are great, and, you know, will go on to become social workers, therapists, counselors, police officers, first responders, attorneys, and so it makes me excited just to see this next generation of trauma-informed professionals, go onto the world, so that that is a lot of fun.

**Cristina**: Yeah, I mean, honestly, some of the things you listed here I never got in grad school, like these are not classes that they teach, at least back then. I don't know what that looks like today, but that's why I think your students are so lucky because you do come from such a trauma-informed lens. All of this is trauma-informed, and I think they're very lucky to have you so if they're listening here, it is rare. It is rare to have someone like you. I'm biased.

**Kristen**: That’s very kind. Thank you. I know I didn't have any of that in school, either. And so, agreed, I think when the things that we don't get are sometimes the reason why we're so passionate about doing that moving forward ourselves.

**Cristina**: Absolutely awesome. Is there anything else you want to tell the audience about like side hustles? Any other things that bring you passion, anything else that that you do that is outside of PTT?

**Kristen**: Sure. So I also contract with non-profits, not just non-profits actually, just contract with other groups and agencies to provide clinical supervision, to associate clinicians getting their hours. And I also facilitate trainings on, you know, topics like the ones that I listed.

**Cristina**: Right.

**Kristen**: I also provide consultations to clinicians who are either working with a specific population or one particular person who they just really wanna do right by and just get that extra sort of different set of eyes. And also just supervisors, looking to consult about being a supervisor.

**Cristina**: So needed.

**Kristen**: And so, I really do love doing that some of the agencies like contract with most of them are non-profits, and, so, are right there in the trenches. And, so, I really love doing that professionally. That's sort of what I've got. I also do arts, which is a big, self-care thing for me. That is another side hustle, although it doesn't really feel like a hustle.

**Cristina**: I hear you!

**Kristen**: I mean, this doesn't really feel like a hustle. And I, yeah, really, and we both really do mean that for anyone who's like, okay? And so, yeah, that's like my collection of things.

**Cristina**: Amazing. And I'm with you. It doesn't feel like work when you love what you do. You know it's more coming from such a like heartfelt place, and I know that you are all heart when it comes to this, to this world.

**Kristen**: I just I just think it's incredible that we're even allowed to do this. I, you know, for anyone who's watching, who, you know, is maybe looking for therapy, or anyone who's had negative therapy experiences, I think it should never stop being an honor for someone to do this work.

**Cristina**: Agreed.

**Kristen**: Yeah. And I know that here at PTT in particular, I think we all really value that. So that should always be the case.

**Cristina**: Yeah, my last question for you is, do you want to tell us a little bit about what you do for fun, like, what is your self-care routine? Just, what are you doing when you're not working?

**Kristen**: Well, I've used the word nerd a few times. That really plays into self-care a lot, I'm an avid reader. I love anything. sci-fi/fantasy, both books and also TV shows and movies. I think it just provides this additional fun way to process things and have adventures. Love nature. Gotta get into nature. You know, nature has all a lot to teach us.

**Cristina**: It does.

**Kristen**: Nature and animal-related, anything earth-related that really replenishes, and also, I think, provides very necessary perspective, and I think, to just like having people who not just have your best interest in mind, but also who accept the work that we do and know sometimes we're gonna need that moment of space and that sometimes we're gonna need to do something absolutely playful and childlike. I think just having those people around is really, really helpful. And you know people who also know how to play, and also know that you know, like the yin and yang of the world, that they also, you know, can balance both sides, if that makes any sense, I think just having that kind of balance support system is really helpful.

**Cristina**: Yup!

**Kristen**: Yeah. And, honestly, any type of environmental opportunity where I can physically feel small, and I mean spatially. So, like looking at that the sky, and just seeing how huge the universe is. You know, looking at the ocean and seeing it goes so far that it looks like it's an actual flat line, and things like that are really helpful. I'm a huge sense like the smell person. So any of the good smells, essential oils, candles, you know. It’s a wonder my smoke detector doesn't go off half the time, so.

**Cristina**: You have a good list there. That's important.

**Kristen**: Yeah. And, you know, got my little plant children here, who are still here.

**Cristina**: I see them keeping them alive. That's amazing.

**Kristen**: Right! I mean you have one, too, there you go!

**Cristina**: She's big, she’s growing.

**Kristen**: That’s great!

**Cristina**: The play concept is so wonderful, and I'm so glad you touched upon it, especially not just for ourselves, but the work that we do as well. A lot of the people we work, with play was not even a thing right? It's like, grow up too fast. And so I think we need to have plan our life to be able to play with. You know some of the people we work with, I will bring in coloring books and stuff on the floor and do that type of stuff with my clients as well. But I need that for myself as well, so I'm so glad that you spoke to that. It's an important part of self-care.

**Kristen**: Yeah. And honestly, also, humor, like both in and outside of session. You know my clients know I can be pretty sarcastic sometimes, and I think joking around is a huge part of healing. So, again, both inside and outside of the office, so to speak.

**Cristina**: Yes. Well, Kristen, thank you so much for your time, and being here with me so we can let everybody know a little bit more about you. And again. Thank you. I'm so happy you're part of our team.

**Kristen**: Thanks for having me, Cristina.

**Cristina**: Of course.

**Kristen**: Bye!

**Cristina**: Bye!