

# PROFESSIONAL TROUBLEMAKER



with LUVVIE AJAYI JONES

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Normalize Therapy - Episode 04

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Welcome to the Professional Troublemaker podcast! This is the place where we help you cultivate the courage, authenticity and audacity you need to use your voice, take up space and live a life that is so bold, even your wildest dreams say #goals. I'm your host, Luvvie Ajayi Jones, New York Times bestselling author, sought after speaker and side-eye sorceress bringing you thought-provoking conversations with amazing people who have taken action, and have consistently showed up with the courage and confidence they needed to become the fear-fighters they are today. Like the late, great John Lewis said, these are the kind of people who are "Never, ever afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

Before we jump into today's interview, know that this podcast is named after my second book, [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#), which hits bookstore shelves on March 2, 2021.

If you've ever listened to something I said and wrote it down, YOU WILL LOVE [Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#). If you want to commit to fighting fear, impostor syndrome and constantly finding courage in this scary world, this book is for you.

So, I need your help. I need you to help make this book a rousing success. I need you like I needed you for my first book [I'm Judging You: The Do-Better Manual](#). Y'all helped me change my life by supporting it, and making it a New York Times bestseller. And I need your help to do that again. Because this book is needed and I think it will leave a mark on you. I know it, actually. We need to become professional troublemakers, and this manual that I wrote, this book that I wrote will help make it happen. So, be sure to preorder **Professional Troublemaker** TODAY wherever books are sold, or go to [ProfessionalTroublemakerBook.com](#). You can get the hardcover, paperback or audiobook (which I narrated). So the URL is [PROFESSIONALTROUBLEMAKERBOOK.com](#). I'm so excited for you to read it.

In almost every conversation I've had for this podcast (even when it was called Rants), therapy is the self-care tool that comes up again and again with the professional troublemakers that I'm in conversation with. Having the courage to be your whole self takes work, and therapy was the thing I needed to keep that process going. Therapy is cardio for the mind, and even when things are going well, it is important. When unexpected things have come my way, when challenges rise, therapy is part of what keeps me together.

So me, the Professional Troublemaker, getting ready to launch this book on fear (which I had to write in the middle of a pandemic) embarking on this new change in my life, needing that support more than

ever - I was crushed when I learned on January 12, that my therapist unexpectedly passed away. My therapist of four years.

I was supposed to be seeing her for our next appointment that following day. I last saw her on December 29. Her name was Dr. Patterson and she was incredible. As a guide, a counselor, a therapist, she was full of insight that shifted my perspective over and over again.

It was a huge, devastating thing to learn right in the middle of a day. I had a whole bunch of meetings and interviews. And listen, I found out at lunchtime. And it was such big news that I was just like, I can't deal with this. So I like, put it in a box in my chest. And I got through a really busy day. Later that night, when I finished my last thing. I fell apart. I wept for Dr. Patterson.

Losing my therapist, losing that relationship of over four years that was so critical to my development has been something I never expected I would have to process and deal with.

I'll tell you more about Dr. P's impact on me shortly. But first, lemme talk about why therapy is so important and why I'm dedicating this episode to it.

Listen, humaning is hard. Peopling is so difficult. You have to know who you are and know what you're about, no matter what comes your way. Like you have to know what traumas you carry. You gotta know how the things that you do affect your everyday life. Even still, knowing that, you're still going to still make mistakes. You're going to do things that are out of integrity, you're going to have days where you can't get out of bed. But having someone to reflect so much back to you - what your patterns are, how you're showing up as less than yourself. How you can get through the toughest times and life setbacks - It's priceless. And the thing is that like having a therapist point out what you do to self sabotage, having them give you perspective in life, when sometimes you feel like you're drowning, that does a lot.

So who helps you process the sudden death of the person who helps you process life? That's the question that instantly came into my head. When I found out Dr. Patterson died. I mean, when I tell you stunned, I kept on feeling like somebody was gonna be like, "Psych! No, no."

How I found out she died - I have a friend who also sees her. And he's one who told me. I had gotten an email from her office that was saying, hey, very important message call us. I didn't have time because I thought it was about insurance. And this friend told me, and my mouth dropped and I just sat back in my seat like I said, like I didn't really process it in the moment, actually literally compartmentalized it in a way that I didn't even realize I could. And I set it apart for the day, but it was still coming into my head. And yeah, like once my day was done, I gave myself permission to grieve her. But again, who helps you process the sudden death of the person who helps you process life. That's one of those

things that you don't think you have to even deal with. You don't even think about therapists dying. Therapists don't die. But they do. They're humans, just like us.

One of the first things I thought when I heard Dr. Patterson died, was “Shit. She didn’t get to see that she’s in [my book](#).”

Why was that my first thought? Because she’s quoted throughout the Professional Troublemaker book, which is what it is, with all the insight that it has, because of the work her and I have done. Over the last four years, Dr. Patterson has helped me grow into the woman I am. She’s even in my acknowledgments because she has gifted me with countless moments of clarity that have shifted my world, my perspective and dragged me. I thank her loudly and publicly often. If y'all follow me on Instagram and Twitter, you know, I talk about therapy. Even though she wasn't really on social media, I was proud to tell people that I had a therapist who was helping me work through all my shit bit by bit.

I had the big reveal all planned for her, I was gonna, you know, show up in a few weeks with a finished copy of my book with the parts of it where I quoted her highlighted. Yo, that messed me up. I ain’t gonna lie. Like, when she died, I literally was like damn. She, she probably knew she had influence on me. But she didn't get to really see how much.

Dr. Patterson is the reason that I speak so openly about the value of therapy. For the last four years, she's been there for moments of crisis and helped me see my way out the fog. You know, in some of my lowest moments, she's given me more a-ha moments that I can count. She's led me to answers I didn't even ask questions to. She was so kind, even if she was dragging me for filth. She made big problems feel small, not because she didn't take them seriously. But because she would always calmly say, “We'll work on that,” or, “Let's unpack that.” She was so reassuring and affirming.

Again, she wasn’t on social media. She didn’t have nobody’s IG presence, and she was so removed from the world of digital, which I loved. She wasn’t a therapist with a brand and I wasn’t sitting in her office as someone with a platform. I actually don’t know if she ever read anything I wrote and I think I preferred that because I’d go in there talking about how many people said what about me and she’d tilt her head in this way that kind of looked like, “Ok, so?” It always calmed me down because in her office and in her sessions, the world got quiet. Nobody could reach me.

I remember one session, I was really stressed. And she could tell I wasn't focused at all on the work that we were doing. I was like, multitasking while she was talking to me on Zoom. And without judgment, she told me, "We'll try again next time." Judgment free permission to drop something and try again later. Like she was just like, it's cool. It's fine. We will try again next session.

In our last session, Dr. Patterson saw my book advance copy over my shoulder and said, "Oh, I see the completed book!" And I say "Yes!" Because in March 2020, as my book deadline was looming, she'd check in on my progress during our sessions. And when I'd tell her I hadn't done much writing, she'd pushed me to figure out what was standing in my way. Like we talked about how my procrastination was a form of self-sabotage. What did I not believe about myself that caused me to delay this thing that was significant? What was I afraid of about my possibilities that made me afraid to complete this manual on fear - this book that I know is not just going to change my life, but other people's lives.

Yo, Dr. P got me together countless times, she was like a life accountability partner. So when she saw the finished book, her excitement was real. And we talked about if I prepared for it, if I felt prepared. I didn't tell her that she's mentioned a few times through it, and that I thank her at the end of it, because again, I was gonna surprise her with a final copy in the beginning of February and tell her "Look! You're all up through it!" Our last session was that session where she saw the book behind my shoulder.

Dr. Patterson helped me make some sense of my habits and patterns, and she helped me name my traumas. When the world shut down because of COVID. And I found myself pouring all my anxieties into my work, like I was just doing the most. I was being hyper-productive. And she, we talked about it in therapy, and she checked me in the best way. Like, I was on hyperdrive, doing 1000 things at once. Because I was like, "Oh my God, how am I gonna make money? Like how's my company gonna make money? I'm a speaker. You know, what happens now?" You know, a lot of us were nervous about what was happening around that time. We knew nothing. Shit, we nervous now!

And Dr. P said, "So why do you think that is?" I said, "I'm not letting myself be too still, because rabbit holes are real." She said, "What do you think is behind that? What is the fear?" And I said, "Well, I know in times of crisis, people either sink or swim, and I don't want to sink." And Dr. P looked at me and said, "Do you have to sink or swim? What if you just float?" Let me repeat that. "Do you have to sink or swim? What if you just float?"

Yo, she dropped that mic, dragged me all the way and back with such kindness, and no judgment in her voice. But it was a real question - What if you just float? That wisdom has guided me in the past four years. But that particular piece of wisdom, when she dropped that on me, I posted on social media. And everybody was like, "Yo, why your therapist just drag me too?" That's the power of having a great therapist when you're trying to show up as your full self to do the work that you're meant to do in this world. That's the power of somebody who can cut through all your insecurities and ask you the question you needed to hear? What if you just float?

She wasn't family. She wasn't my friend. She wasn't my colleague. But she was absolutely someone whose loss has shaken me. I didn't know her, but she knew me better than anyone else because there

is an intimacy you forge with the person whose purpose it is to see under what is surface. It's a different type of loss, because she served as a true safe space. Our relationship was one-sided. I went in, told her my problems, and she'd guide me to realizations. I paid her for her time. Yet and still, the person she was, the training she had, the kindness of her smile and her voice. She was whole. She was here. Now she isn't here. And I feel that loss.

This is different. I'm still stunned about it. Like, how are you supposed to feel if your therapist passes away, and it's unexpected? She'd probably tell me "there is no one way you're SUPPOSED to feel. Tell me how do you actually feel?" And how I feel it's kind of like, untethered a bit. I've had a few weeks since she's passed where I've been like, dang, I really needed her input this week. But I really wish I could hear what questions she would ask me right now. It's wild. It's weird and wild.

So I did what, you know, a lot of writers do when they need to process things - I wrote about her death, a day after she died. I wanted to share this thing because it was important. When we talk about therapy, we talk about therapy in this abstract way. For me, she was a real part of my life, and a real significant part of my growth. And I think she gifted me with the enthusiasm for therapy, she gifted me with - I just couldn't help but talk about what I was learning from her. And over the years, many people have said, "You are the reason why I started therapy. And I'm so glad I did." So when she passed, I felt like I had to share it too, because this is a real part of life that a lot of people don't hear about, that we don't talk about.

And when I shared that Dr. Patterson had passed on social, I got so much kind, I just got so much kindness, like so many people responded on Twitter, in the blog, on Instagram, on Facebook. And what people did was they shared, they also had lost their therapist suddenly, some people lost their therapists to COVID. Some people lost their therapist to cancer. Some people actually got ghosted by their therapists. So it was affirming to know that the loss of a therapist is not - you have to grieve it, you have the full right to grieve it. And I was so proud of all of us who shared this deep type of loss, especially publicly because I hope it served to show that you're not alone. There's no one way to feel about any one thing. And for me, my therapist, Dr. Patterson changed my life. And I won't ever forget her, so I'm sending so much love and light to her family and friends, and I hope she rests with like all the peace in the world.

One of, one of the comments that I got on my blog posts from her brother, I didn't even know she had a brother because again, in our sessions, she doesn't let you ask questions, she asks you questions. And the mark of an amazing therapist who has amazing boundaries is one who you actually don't know much about at all. I didn't know anything about her. But now I know she has a brother. And he said, "What an amazing tribute you have written for my sister. I want you to know that hearing things like this about my baby sister will help keep her memory alive. We are all still in a state of shock and tremendous sadness due to her sudden passing. Life is not going to be the same without my baby

sister, she had such a bright light that followed her everywhere. I am filled with joy that she was able to share such a brightness with all of you. We know you will find peace and guidance with the next therapist you choose to share your life journey with. We also hope that your book is a huge success, just like Dr. P.”

I am doing this episode because I am hoping that in talking about therapy openly that somebody who's listening to this decides that the thing they've been thinking about which is therapy, that they finally take action on it. Let me talk about, like some reasons, three, three to five reasons why I think everybody should get therapy.

The first, to deal with our traumas. We all have dealt with traumatic things, whether big or small, and you don't have to have gone through a war for it to be considered trauma. We're all carrying baggage of some sort. So how do we learn to put them down and heal? Therapy helps with this tremendously because we have to know our shit to be able to know that we're bringing that shit into a room. How does it affect how we're reacting at work? How do we, how does it affect random things that people say to us? How does it affect the way we wake up?

So, yes - the biggest reason I think everybody should go to therapy is to deal with your own traumas. And you have one. Oftentimes, we think, "Oh, my life has been okay, I haven't had nothing too bad happen." We have paper cuts throughout our life, that become gaping wounds, even your paper cuts deserve to be addressed. Okay?

Another reason I think you should go to therapy, and why everybody should go to deal with everybody else's trauma. Everyone around us is dealing with all sorts of pain. So how do we handle being in the world of hurt, and people who are also hurt, who will bring their hurt into everyday conversations to situations. You can't control other people's actions or words, but you can figure out what your boundaries are, how you will interact with other people's traumas and the actions that result. There's that meme that goes around that says I'm in therapy to go to, to deal with people who are not in therapy, that's real shit. That's real. So that's a big part.

Another reason - to give you coping skills when life throws you curveballs. You don't need to become a worst case scenario person and plan for every single possible negative outcome. But it's really helpful to have a set of skills that are at your disposal, when something unexpected happens. Like when you run into a former friend at the grocery store, or a global pandemic breaks out, or people storm the US Capitol, or your therapist dies. I think Dr. Patterson has actually given me some skills to better cope with grieving her. I think I tapped into what she would say to me, what questions would she ask me? How do I show up when I'm not sure how to feel? So, and that's because of therapy. I think I didn't, I only compartmentalized it for like, the seven hours it took for me to get past it. I didn't bury it deep,

deep. I cried. And I wrote and I talked about it. And those are coping skills that I think five years ago, I might not have had in that way.

Another reason you should go to therapy, to give you a perspective you might not otherwise have from friends and family because it's an objective third party. Our family of friends will always tell us what we need to hear, you know, they might want to appease us so when we go to them, it's from with a lot of bias. They come with a lot of bias. And sometimes the people we love are actually the trigger to our traumas. Sometimes they are the causes of it, okay? Or sometimes they just become unhelpful enablers. A therapist is an objective party to reflect life back to you. They have nothing to win or lose, they owe you nothing. So this is where you will find real answers - often for yourself.

And then, a really important piece for why you should go to therapy - as a true safe space. Social media is not a safe space. Some of your group chats are not safe spaces. A Facebook group is definitely not a safe space. But a person legally obligated to listen to you and never share anything they learn? That is the definition of a safe space. That is why I want you to go to therapy, start therapy. If you're nervous about telling a stranger all your business, know that therapists are legally bound not to tell your business.

Someone on Twitter said something, I can't find it. But they said, one of the most painful things about losing a therapist is that the things that were no longer secret are now a secret again. Many of us who are used to being vaults, opened up to our therapists. And now with that person gone, the things that we opened up about, are now back to being covered. Nobody else knows about them. And that's tough. So this is why the journey must continue. So we no longer keep our pain in vaults. I will be finding a therapist again soon. But today, if you're listening to this, I have three assignments for you. Three, all right?

The first one is to tell your therapist you appreciate them. If you have a therapist, thank them, tell them how much they've done for you how much they've changed your life, how much they've shifted and allowed you to grow. And if you are a therapist, listening to this. Let me say thank you, THANK YOU. You might not ever hear from each client how much you changed their lives with every hour that you spend with them. But please know, you are doing world shifting work as you do your job.

I've gotten so many messages from people who have taken the time during their therapy appointments in this last couple of weeks to thank their therapists because I first put this call to action on Instagram. So many people mentioned that they hadn't even considered such a thing happening that their therapist could die.

And so many people are processing this along with me, like some people are even going to therapy sessions talking about what happened. I just want to say thank you, to therapists, because y'all stand in

the gap for people, you stand in the gap. And all of these messages have been moving to me. And I hope therapists from all over the world, moving forward, hear thank you on a regular basis from their clients, because the things that we take for granted, including the presence of our therapists we cannot take for granted.

Did I thank Dr. Patterson? I think so. I think so. But I'm grateful that her family knows how much she meant to me. Tomorrow isn't promised to any of us and to take the time to let our counselors and trusted folks hear thank you is important. So do it today. My first call to action. Thank your therapists. Alright?

Number two. If you've been thinking about starting therapy, I want you to stop thinking about it. DO IT NOW. Get it done, start now. If it's been on your mind for a while to finally do this thing, consider this the confirmation you need. Consider this, the push that you need, because now's the time. I don't want you to keep wasting time or coming up with excuses. So let me give you some resources to use if you're wondering how to find a therapist. Alright, because you're fresh out of excuses. I want you to start today.

I found Dr. Patterson on [PsychologyToday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com) years ago, they allow you to sort providers based on things like insurance, specialty, location. it was important and still is important that I see a Black therapist, it's a preference of mine. So I can feel seen without feeling like I need cultural translation. So you can go on [PsychologyToday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com) and do a search and you will find some options.

Then, there is [Therapy for Black Girls](https://www.therapyforblackgirls.com). If you're looking for a culturally sensitive therapist, check out their database at [TherapyForBlackGirls.com](https://www.therapyforblackgirls.com). You can search by location, and even search by whether they offer virtual appointments. And the founder Dr. Joy Harden Bradford is brilliant. She's amazing. And she has tons of other resources on the site. There's also a [Therapy for Black Girls podcast](https://www.therapyforblackgirls.com/podcast). Tune into that - all right?

Then there's [Open Path Therapy Collective](https://www.openpaththerapycollective.com). They provide affordable in-office and online sessions for anyone who is in financial need. Because therapists often accept payment on a sliding scale. They serve clients who lack health insurance, or whose health insurance doesn't provide adequate mental health benefits. And members get their choice of affordable in-person or online care from a vetted mental health professional, I actually donate to [Open Path Therapy Collective](https://www.openpaththerapycollective.com) every year.

And then there's [The Loveland Foundation](https://www.lovelandfoundation.org). Loveland Foundation removes barriers that affect access to treatment by offering grants. So the Therapy Fund the [Loveland Therapy Fund](https://www.lovelandtherapyfund.org) provides financial assistance to Black women and girls seeking therapy. And we'll link all of these resources in the show notes so you can get the help you need. There's also apps like [TalkSpace](https://www.talkspace.com), and [Better Help](https://www.betterhelp.com) that you can



sign up for that allow you to, you know, see a therapist, even well they'll assign you a therapist, but it's in your phone, so you can do that too.

And then number three, if you are the person who hasn't thought about starting therapy, I want you to start thinking about it. And then once you start thinking about it, do it. We're really good at repression and burying pain, but scars are there whether you are looking at them or not. But not looking at them doesn't erase them or give you any type of help. And I think through therapy I learned why I am so risk averse sometimes, why I'm afraid of change, why sometimes I deal with what I deal with by going deeper into work. I realized that my hyper independence is trauma-based. I've just learned so much about me. Going to therapy has made me a better person, wife, writer, dreamer, it's made me a better me and I'm still growing.

Therapy has a bad rap. There's so much stigma around in. People think, "Oh my God, you're going to therapy, that means you're in crisis!" Or they've even put judgments like you're being crazy. Listen, therapy is a tool, and to my Christian listeners, you're thinking, you might be thinking, "Well, how can I go to therapy, and I'm a Christian?" Because prayer is nothing without work. Some of that work is therapy. The same God who you pray to who we all pray to, is the God that gives us tools like therapists to be able to handle our problems. So prayer and therapy can coexist. Because I also want you to understand that your pastor is not your therapist. Right? Your imam is not your therapist. Your Rabbi is not your therapist. Your therapist is your therapist, a trained professional, who is legally bound to keeping your secrets, but checking you in the best way possible.

So I want you to go to therapy, if you've been looking for the sign. I hope this is it. Therapy is cardio for your mind, start going, it's hard, but it's worth it. This pandemic has found all of us in a completely different space than anyone could have expected. grappling with fear of a microscopic thing and knowing what to do with yourself when your entire routine is flipped upside down. It messes with even the most balanced person. Job loss, civil unrest - we have been through it. If you've made it this far after the dumpster fire that has been 2020 you've got to be feeling tired. And like you need to talk to somebody that's not just your friend. You don't have to do this on your own. Make the time to talk to someone who's completely focused on you and your feelings, even if it's only one hour at a time.

So yeah, that's, that's my hope. That's my hope that you listen to this podcast and you take action. If you can't afford it, there are resources that can provide you access to therapy. Therapy should be free for all it should be free for definitely all black and brown people in the US, but that's a whole different conversation. I want us to be better. I want us to get help, even when we don't think we need it. I want us to not allow stigma to stop us from seeking the life that we need to seek, which means a life where we're healing some of our biggest scars, a life where we have outlets, a life where we understand that depend on somebody like a therapist does not make us weak actually strengthens us. I am much better

than I used to be, I can deal with people better. I know when I'm projecting my, my anger or my whatever my shit is on other people. And I thank therapy for doing that.

So yeah, this episode is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Yvonne Patterson, my amazing therapist, who I hope understands wherever she is that she's leaving a legacy of love. And that her work is going to be kept alive through me through the work that I do out in public through the woman that I show up as.

Therapy is mind care, because self care is mind care. Therapy is cardio for your mind, it's so important that we do it. I go to therapy to stay happy and whole. I got to talk through random things with an objective third party. And I go to therapy to make sure whatever baggage I have is not carried into every room and every conversation I'm in. I hope you go to therapy. I hope you start. Feel free to Tweet me, to send me messages on Instagram, about whether you're starting therapy, about what therapy means to you.

So yeah, let's normalize going to therapy. Let's normalize talking about it. And let's normalize thanking our therapists. See you on the next episode.

Thank you for tuning in to another episode of the Professional Troublemaker podcast. If you loved what you heard, make sure you're subscribed to Professional Troublemaker in your podcast platform of choice. And share it with people. Let them know it is dope.

Also, order my namesake book, [PROFESSIONAL TROUBLEMAKER: The Fear-Fighter Manual](#) anywhere that you buy books. I especially love when you buy it from independent bookstores. So go to [ProfessionalTroublemakerBook.com](https://ProfessionalTroublemakerBook.com) for more. Because this book is game changing, and I'd say that even if I wasn't the one who wrote it.

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Until next time, have the courage to speak your truth and show up as yourself. Create good trouble.