

GMSB 253

[00:00:00] **Antony Whitaker:** Hello and welcome to today's episode of the Grow My Salon Business Podcast. I'm your host, Antony Whitaker. And as always, it's great to have you here with us today. And whether you're watching us on YouTube or listening as you walk the dog or driving the car or running on the treadmill or whatever you're doing, I just want to start off by saying thank you for being a listener.

[00:00:23] **Antony Whitaker:** Our podcast is growing and we need your help to continue growing because we want to get to as many people as possible. So if you're on YouTube, give us a thumbs up, subscribe to our channel and share it with your friends. And if you're listening on your favorite podcast app, then give us a five-star review and a follow.

[00:00:40] **Antony Whitaker:** And that would be very kind of you and very much appreciated. So with that said, on with today's episode, our lives are a journey and like every journey where you start out and where you end up is what makes life so interesting, whether we're talking about where you are geographically or where you are in your career or where you are financially.

[00:01:04] **Antony Whitaker:** Everything on that journey is all part of a story, your story, that evolves from one day to the next. Now sometimes it evolves through the choices you make, sometimes it's through the people you meet, and sometimes it's just part of your preordained destiny, or perhaps it's the hand of a higher power that's guiding you.

[00:01:24] **Antony Whitaker:** Now, my guest on today's podcast is Tracey Woodward and she has an amazing journey on every level. So in today's podcast, we're going to discuss the importance of looking like you belong, the importance of asking for help and not being afraid of getting it wrong. And oh, so much more.

[00:01:43] **Antony Whitaker:** So without further ado, welcome to the show, Tracey Woodward.

[00:01:49] **Tracey Woodward:** Oh, Antony, Thank you for having me on your show. I feel so honored to be here. So I'm really looking forward to

[00:01:54] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. No, thank you for putting the time aside to be here because I know this is going to be a very interesting conversation. I've never sort of gone down, uh, the path that we're going to go on, uh, while we're talking. Uh, but I'm really excited to do that because I've heard you talk about some of these things that we're going to cover before.

[00:02:15] **Antony Whitaker:** Um, I'm going to sort of introduce everything by, by sort of saying, that there's a quote. I think it's by Tony Robbins. Um, and it is your past does not equal your future. And I love that quote. And I do love nothing more than a, a good reinvention story. So when a mutual acquaintance of ours, Debbie Webster from Sassoon told me that, I should have you as a guest on the podcast.

[00:02:41] **Antony Whitaker:** I did a bit of research on you and you do have an incredible story of survival and courage and, you know, personal reinvention. And I know that you're happy to share it. And importantly, I know that you're happy to share the lessons that come with it. So it's not just about shock factor. And, and I think that that's really, you know, good for our audience.

[00:03:03] **Antony Whitaker:** So I I'm going to sort of pass it over to you because I want you to start at the beginning. And, and by that, I mean the very beginning, because that's where your story of survival and reinvention starts. And I will just sort of jump in, uh, when, and as I feel the need to.

[00:03:22] **Tracey Woodward:** Okay, um, no pressure then. Um, so I suppose the beginning, I was conceived, uh, my, my mum and dad, my dad was 21 and my mum was 18. It was the first time she ever had sex. Um, she in a caravan, um, on the Sussex coast and she, uh, discovered she was pregnant at Um, she was always very slim, very, um, Uh, beautiful, and, um, I don't know how she, she didn't discover, but, discover it, but she didn't.

[00:03:55] **Tracey Woodward:** And then at 26 weeks, she gave birth to me at, uh, via cesarean section. They actually, um, perform a cesarean section because my mum was hemorrhaging. So, you know, I, I don't know what went on there, but of course, when you don't know you're pregnant, you know, she was doing recreational drugs. She was partying.

[00:04:13] **Tracey Woodward:** This was the sixties after all, this is 1966. So I was born at 26 weeks, weighing one pound, 13 ounces in 1966 and put in an incubator for six months. And the whole family were told, um, including, you

know, my dad, uh, who I didn't actually meet until I was 47. But, um, my dad was told to. Uh, that, uh, that, uh, my mom that I probably wouldn't survive.

[00:04:39] **Tracey Woodward:** So not to get too attached and, um, and so I think the person that came to see me the most frequently was my grandma, but my, uh, my mom just went quite quickly back to her, her life, you know, discovering you're pregnant, you're 18, you're pregnant at 20 weeks. You have a baby at 26 weeks. I mean, I'm sure you just want to run away from that.

[00:05:01] **Tracey Woodward:** And, um, and they thought that I would have brain damage or other disorders. Uh, and I didn't, um, but I spent, I always think that my strength and my resilience probably started. Then from my fight to survive. So that's where it all began

[00:05:18] **Antony Whitaker:** So really deeply ingrained, literally in your DNA that life's a struggle. I'm a fighter. I'm going to survive.

[00:05:26] **Tracey Woodward:** I think so. I think so and they say that and they don't know why yet, but babies premature babies rarely cry. They rarely, you know are emotional They're quite tough. They're quite hardy. They're quite resilient and and I think that the resilience comes from probably just that need to survive. Like all humans, you know, our bodies are, uh, conditioned for us to live.

[00:05:52] **Tracey Woodward:** It will do whatever it takes to keep us alive. And so I think that, uh, that might sound sound harsh for, for others, but, you know, no one wants to get too attached to a baby that might not live. So my grandma, my, my dad told me that I was hardly held, hardly touched because I was so tiny. And then everyone was so scared that I wasn't gonna make it

[00:06:13] **Antony Whitaker:** I've, I've seen a baby that was born at, I think it was 21 weeks and I have never seen anything like it. Just his, his hand. I remember this, the baby's mother, it was our next door neighbor, was able to put the baby's entire hand through her wedding ring

[00:06:30] **Antony Whitaker:** so it just, it was so small and anyway, this, this young boy, he did live, but that, that is the cutoff point really, isn't it?

[00:06:40] **Antony Whitaker:** 21 weeks. Cause that's when the lungs is being formed or something.

[00:06:43] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah. So, so, you know, I spent a lot of time as a sickly, uh, child. I've got a huge scar on my ankle where all of the fluids and everything that went into my body, because that was the widest part. Um, and from there I was quite sickly and at age or almost, uh, four, we were evicted from our family home because suddenly my grandma who looked after me, um, Died of cancer.

[00:07:09] **Tracey Woodward:** She had, uh, uh, uh, gynecological cancers that that metastasized and my granddad had been having an affair with a woman younger than my mom. So there was no way that we were going to be able to stay in that environment. And so we were evicted from the family home. We stayed with friends. We moved into one room.

[00:07:29] **Tracey Woodward:** And that's when everything changed. You know, my life, I think, before then was very secure. You know, I had handmade shoes and a very nice life. My granddad was very senior at Tesco. I, again, lived in a family home. My mum used to come and go. Um, and suddenly I was propelled into this environment where I became my mum's friend.

[00:07:47] **Tracey Woodward:** We were both trying to survive together. And life was very difficult then in the in the late 60s, early 70s for women, you know, there was not much support for single mothers. And so she was very, very dependent. And she'd always loved a bad boy. She'd always loved. Um, I'm not saying that my dad was a bad boy, but you know, it's close.

[00:08:09] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, she'd always loved that type of person. And she was very, very beautiful. She was nearly six foot tall. She always used to say to me as I was growing up, don't worry, you're going to get better looking as you get older. Like, you know, because she was, she was this, you know, she was this gorgeous, glamorous woman that lit up a room.

[00:08:24] **Tracey Woodward:** You know, she'd always loved to party. She loved music. She loved dance. She loved alcohol. You know, she did speed. I mean, she just did everything, but she always looked immaculate and slowly our life progressed into this kind of, you know, uh, bad men, bad male choices, lack of food, um, criminal activities. And then we just kind of went through different, different stages.

[00:08:47] **Tracey Woodward:** And then she met this guy called Chris, who she fell madly in love with. And I think that they were together for about two and a

half years, and that was probably the most stable my life had ever been. Um, and then they split up, and then, you know, she went straight to a bank robber. You know, so there were guns and drugs and parties.

[00:09:05] **Tracey Woodward:** And then, you know, from one to, you know, one relationship to another. But had this, you know, um, desire to survive. And I always say to people, um, That, you know, I went from my brother was born at nine. So we, I have a brother and a sister, um, and, uh, We all have different fathers. so I went from being a childminder at nine to a shoplifter at the age of 12, you know, so, and my mom would say, I'm going out for a packet of fags.

[00:09:34] **Tracey Woodward:** I'll, I'll see you in an hour. And, you know, we'd, she'd go out all beautifully done up and we'd see her like two days later and I'd have to find the means to survive.

[00:09:42] **Antony Whitaker:** Can I just jump in there, for our American a packet of fags means a packet of cigarettes.

[00:09:49] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah, yeah, there you go. Yes. Yeah, so that's what she would say. Going out for a packet of fags. Yes, you're right. A packet of cigarettes. Um, and she used to smoke 40 of those a day. So, um, but, you know, she was in all of the London clubs. Uh, there was parties at our home continuously. We never had much food, but we always had

[00:10:09] **Tracey Woodward:** stuff. Um, and so it was a very, very strange life and a unique life, but because I never went to school, I mean, I was quite sickly. So, um, when my mom was married to Chris, you know, I had a, he paid for a physiotherapist to come in because, you know, You know, I couldn't clear my lungs properly because I still had, you know, I had tuberculosis as a child, I'd get chronic pneumonia, and then, you know, I had to kind of recover from that after he left because it was a little bit more, uh, I was more isolated.

[00:10:43] **Tracey Woodward:** And I think that what a lot of people forget that being hard, but from the 60s to 70s, but in 1976, a woman couldn't open a bank account in the UK without a man's permission. So previously, I believe that they would have to get their father or their husband's permission to open it. And as soon as my mum discovered that, she had false identifications made in every man's name that she'd ever dated, showing that she was married to him.

[00:11:09] **Tracey Woodward:** So that was, uh, you know, uh, a marriage certificate, a passport, whatever, whatever was required. And she opened bank accounts all over. all over the town, all over town. Um, not one town, many towns, um, districts, uh, with all different banks and basically cleared the bank accounts out. Um, and by that, I mean, went out shopping with cheques, cashing cheques, getting money.

[00:11:31] **Tracey Woodward:** So creating more debt for the bank, but obviously giving herself cash. And so she suddenly became independent in that sense that This was how she was going to make a living, you know, she would go into, uh, cleaning, uh, jobs and, uh, take a cleaning supervisors role because she could walk the talk and then fire everybody.

[00:11:51] **Tracey Woodward:** And then her and me, and, um, and maybe a couple of other friends would clean a whole block, an office block, and she would go into the office, make up the names, put in the wage slip, put in the cash, and then bring all of that back home. And we'd unpack them all, you know, she was very, um. I suppose

[00:12:12] **Antony Whitaker:** Street smart.

[00:12:14] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah, she was streetwise and it was what, what, what have I got to do to survive? You know, she didn't have a mom. She couldn't, she couldn't, uh, go back to her father. Um, she occasionally saw her sister and never spoke to her brother again because her brother didn't offer any support. So I think, you know, from my mom's perspective, she had, she was let down by men her entire life.

[00:12:37] **Tracey Woodward:** And I think that it was very, very. You know, normal, uh, in, in certain levels of community. Um, it was, you know, if you were higher up, you were perhaps more controlled of the woman, and if you were lower down, you were less regarded. Um, but she was definitely a fighter, and I think that's where I learned.

[00:12:55] **Tracey Woodward:** You know, I, I live, I can relate my whole life to music because I didn't learn to read and write. You know, one of the things that I had is I, I learned by reading people, you know, by looking at people's body language, by the way they looked at me and by the way they behaved as to whether or not I was actually gonna be safe.

[00:13:11] **Tracey Woodward:** And I did go through violence, neglect, and abuse of many kinds. Um. And, you know, I have to forgive my mom for that, because I think that she went through a lot of that herself, too, because we were like friends. And so, it's, you know, it's not, it's not that it's difficult to talk about, but it, you know, because I do talk about it.

[00:13:33] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, and, and, you know, for reasons we'll probably go on and discuss at some other point. But I think the fact of the matter is, is that, you know, you discover so much about yourself when you have to intuitively, understand how you want to protect yourself, how you need to protect yourself from difficult

[00:13:52] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah.

[00:13:53] **Tracey Woodward:** And, you know, the conversations I'm pushing forward to 12, 13 now, where, you know, we would go out shoplifting and she would say to me, you know, and not, and, my mom would shoplift to order. We're not talking about, you know, a couple of books and, uh, and. uh. You know, a few bottles of wine.

[00:14:11] **Tracey Woodward:** I'm talking about fur coats, duvets, beautiful lingerie, cashmere clothing, sweaters, cardigans. Um, yeah, there'd be more than us. But, but the thing is, if my mum used to, uh, still for a group of prostitutes, high class prostitutes, and if they wanted, um, something and my mum and I could steal it together, then we would, we would go, um, and, you know, either I'd be lookout, or I'd sort out the sizes, or, you know, and she'd always say, I mean, this is the time when there were, you know, no, no real cameras, right, there were store detectives.

[00:14:50] **Tracey Woodward:** No store detective ever caught my mum, and they were desperate too. They, you could see them following her, you know, and she'd kind of leave and go somewhere else. Um, but, uh, yeah, so, so, you know, if it was a, if it was a big order, and we could do it by ourselves, then we absolutely would, and if not, she would bring in her little crew, and they'd, you know, they'd get a lot more stuff.

[00:15:10] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, but, you know, I've, I've worn 2, 000 pound and 10, 000 pound fur coats and walked out with them on. Um, I still believe today that half the fur coats that are chained up in London was because of my mum in the, in the seventies.

[00:15:25] **Tracey Woodward:** Because, yeah, and she always used to say to me, if we get caught, you go into care. I go to prison, you know, so we can't get caught.

[00:15:32] **Tracey Woodward:** We have to look like we belong. And so, you know, that we have to look like we belong. I think of that every time I walk into a room today where I kind of feel like I'm a bit unstable, you know, or I'm not sure about the audience here. But I think. I think like I belong. And so, you know, and I connect to people in that way.

[00:15:51] **Tracey Woodward:** So, um, you know, there have been so many life lessons around doing these things that, you know, it's definitely not academia, but doing them and then reflecting on what they mean to living a more safe life, a more assured life, a more, um, you know, uh, normal life, whatever normal is, but definitely a non-criminal life.

[00:16:19] **Antony Whitaker:** You, you mentioned that you barely went to school and, uh, I don't know if you've mentioned it while we've been talking now, but I know that you have said that you were illiterate, that you just couldn't read or write because you never went to school when no teaching you, uh, until you were 14.

[00:16:38] **Antony Whitaker:** So tell us about that.

[00:16:39] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, so basically, I never went to school because we used to change our names all the time because remember, you know, different, you know, Moving from different properties, um, not having much money. And my mum took on every, uh, boyfriend's name that she ever had. So, so, you know, in those days it was called the ILEA.

[00:16:57] **Tracey Woodward:** I'm sure you remember that, that group that looked after the education system. Everything was, you know, you know, paper and pencil almost. So I was kind of, a lost, a lost child in that because I went, you know, I had loads of different aliases over the years. And I think that's why today I still have the name Tracey Woodward, because that's from my first marriage to my husband, Dave Woodward.

[00:17:18] **Tracey Woodward:** And, and I have never changed it since, because it was the first time that I could have a name that was actually my own

[00:17:23] **Antony Whitaker:** literally, before that, your name is changing every five minutes.

[00:17:28] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah, all the time, every few years. So, and so, you know, I was living under all these different pseudo names like a, like a, like a runaway. Um, but yeah, that's how we lived.

[00:17:39] **Tracey Woodward:** And now when I look back and I think, God, how did my mum, You know, manage all of that, you know, live with that fear and trauma and, you know, just totally that must have been with her every minute of every single day. Am I going to get caught out? Um, and I suppose that's what haunted me so that I started to work with charities.

[00:17:59] **Tracey Woodward:** But getting back to the illiteracy. So I got a job in a chemist because I wanted to earn some money. I wanted, I knew that that life wasn't for me. I didn't want this criminal life. I didn't want to, you know, have the high days and the low days. The days when, you know, you're eating a roast chicken and then the, you know, the next week you're lucky if you've got a boiled egg.

[00:18:19] **Tracey Woodward:** I didn't want to live like that. You know, I didn't want to live like that. I didn't want to sacrifice um, my, my life or give myself over to that. I didn't want to, you know, have lots of different relationships, which is probably why I've had very few relationships over the years because, you know, my mum loved sex.

[00:18:37] **Tracey Woodward:** She loved dancing. She loved drinking. She loved You know, living on the edge. She was definitely an adrenaline junkie and a hedonist. Um, and I kind of have never bought into any of those things. Um, I think, I mean, I don't know. Some people might tell me different. I love music. I certainly love dancing. But so the read, the reading and writing and getting the job in the chemist.

[00:18:58] **Tracey Woodward:** It was an aha moment for me because I used to unpack the boxes, clean the shelves, talk to the customers, and I'd been very upfront with the team and it was actually a friend, a young friend, that saw how desperate my life was, whose sister worked in the chemist that actually got me the job. And, um, cleaning.

[00:19:18] **Tracey Woodward:** So they, I think they almost begged him that they, you know, they needed this support.

[00:19:21] **Tracey Woodward:** so, you know, I was talking to everybody.

[00:19:24] **Tracey Woodward:** I talked to the, to the old ladies and the old gents that would come in and queue for their prescriptions. And, and then I suddenly discovered that the girls that were on the counter taking the prescriptions were earning. 50 P a week more than me. And all I kept thinking about was I need to buy a washing machine.

[00:19:41] **Tracey Woodward:** I need to buy a cooker. I need to get a flat. You know, I'm going to start saving. I'm going to buy secondhand things. I'm going to, you know, and I'm going to leave my mom's home and start my new, new beginnings. And I just kept thinking every penny mattered, every penny mattered. And so I went to the pharmacist and I said, you know, they're earning more money than me and I work really hard.

[00:20:00] **Tracey Woodward:** And he said, um, okay. And I used to go in on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, so like afternoons, mornings, and then half a day Saturday, and he said, Tracey, you know, you can't, you can't read, so you can't repeat the prescription back, you can't confirm the address, you can't do any of those things. But I'm so surprised because you're so, Great with the customers and talking and you have so much confidence.

[00:20:25] **Tracey Woodward:** And of course he didn't know, I mean, there's no way he would have hired me if he knew that, you know, outside of this, I'm out shoplifting with my mom. Right. And, you know, and, and, and the thing is that I would never actually physically steal something in my personal environment yet. When I went out with my mom, I turned into a different person and just went on, autopilot to, you know, cause that was, that was what we did to survive.

[00:20:48] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, and, um, and, and so he said, you know, get someone to teach you. And so I went over to my, um, uh, she became my, uh, uh, grandma, although she wasn't my official grandma. She was my. My brother's grandma, uh, nanny Mary I used to call her. She worked as a, a bookkeeper and I used to go to her on Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

[00:21:12] **Tracey Woodward:** And, and sometimes I used to go back because I used to take my brother there Friday nights, um, and, and pick and bring him back on Sunday or Monday morning. Um, he too never went to school, but, you know, for different reasons. Um. And she taught me how to read. So I went from reading Janet and John books to Jackie Collins and Judy Cooper and watching Dynasty.

[00:21:34] **Tracey Woodward:** And I suddenly thought to myself, I'm just going to be like Alexis Colby. And as soon as I learned to read, I kept what I call a cosmic shopping list. Don't ask me where I got that word from, but it was like in a, I bought a Lex diary and every year I would write all the things that I wanted to achieve.

[00:21:52] **Tracey Woodward:** And, you know, first of all, it was like food in the cupboard, my own flat. a washing machine, you know, a fridge, a cooker, um, because we used to go to the launderette, so I, you know, I hated doing all those things. Um, and then as soon as I hit 16, I rang the council, the, um, London Borough of Lambeth every single day.

[00:22:13] **Tracey Woodward:** every single day for two years until they gave me a flat. And they gave me, they said, you've got three options. Um, you need to take one of these and we never want to see or hear of you again.

[00:22:24] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. Let,

[00:22:25] **Antony Whitaker:** let me just ask you this question because You're at that age, very vulnerable age, and you can go one of two ways. You know, it is sink or swim time. You can either be like your mum. When I say be like your mum, uh, there's lots of great things about your mum, but you could have either taken the, I can't even think of the right way to say this, you know, the dark side or the follow the good, the good side, or, you know, do you want the red pill or the blue pill?

[00:22:54] **Antony Whitaker:** Do you know what I mean? you were at point in time. What I want to ask you about is. What do you think? Because I know from a little bit of research, and I know you're happy to talk about this, that your brother perhaps went down the other path and that he's, he's no longer with us. And yet you had the same upbringing, the same, you know, mother, the same sort family situation.

[00:23:17] **Antony Whitaker:** What, what, what is the sort of the trigger or what was the trigger or the catalyst or whatever it is for you so that your direction in life took a different path to in this case, your brother's direction in life?

[00:23:33] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah. I think, I think some of it was the abuse and the violence and observing, because remember I was, you know, nine years older than my brother, so I saw a lot more of what happened. Um, I saw my mum fight, and I at times had to fight back too, um, and I would do everything I possibly could to protect my mum, um, um, so I think that, uh, you know, some of her boyfriends were.

[00:23:55] **Tracey Woodward:** Absolutely vile. They would tell me that, you know, they would call me horrific names. They would say that, you know, I'm never going to, I'm going to end up with 10 children by 10 different men. And I'm going to live in a, you know, excuse it, uh, the language, but like a shithole, you know, I'm going to live in some horrible place and I'm not going to amount to anything.

[00:24:13] **Tracey Woodward:** And I, I must've heard that. At least 10 times a week, you know, and I was stuck in that violence. And so I think that I was fueled and refused to accept that that was going to be my life. I, I, in some ways, I think maybe being born premature gave me a little bit more, um, you know, independence in a crazy sort of way.

[00:24:35] **Tracey Woodward:** And my brother, um, you know, equally loved my mom, um, and sought her approval constantly. and took a similar path. And I think that, um, you know, and again, complete hedonist, Um, I think there is actually, uh, he was on the news for driving across, uh, Stansted's, uh, runway with his ass out the window and his bum.

[00:24:59] **Tracey Woodward:** So, you know, he was a complete, he could free run before free run was even a sport. I mean, he could get away from the police. The things that he did was just

[00:25:07] **Antony Whitaker:** Driving across the Stansted Runway. Right,

[00:25:11] **Tracey Woodward:** yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. yeah. So, so, you know, in the late eighties, early nineties. And I think that, You know, the

fact of the matter is, is that, you know, my mom was like that, like my mom would say, we've got to jump, you know, and we'll jump.

[00:25:26] **Tracey Woodward:** And so, and I think that that's innate. And I think that, you know, biologically, we all have this balance or imbalance, and we can use that energy for whatever we want, right? We can use it for fear. Fear does you no good. Fear stops you from moving forward. We can, we can use it to propel us forward in a, in a positive way.

[00:25:48] **Tracey Woodward:** I used fear for many, many years. Like if I stay here, this is what's going to happen to me. I have to keep moving. And my brother didn't want to move because actually he got high out of it. It terrified me. So we had a very different view. And as soon as I could, you know, as soon as I could get away from that, I just thought, you know, it's going to be easier for me.

[00:26:11] **Tracey Woodward:** It's going to be easier for me. I'm going to be free. So I would, I felt safer alone than I did in the environment that I lived in.

[00:26:18] **Antony Whitaker:** so, now you're 15, 16, and you've learnt read, you're still working, you're working in the chemist shop, unpacking boxes and stuff,

[00:26:27] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah,

[00:26:28] **Tracey Woodward:** so until I was nearly 16, and then my mum had a brilliant friend who is like my second mum. Um, she kind of did all the things that my mum didn't do. Um, uh, and her name's Tracy too, and she's, she was, uh, she's 15 years older than me. So, again, my mum always had a lot of fun. Young friends, but Tracy was very stable.

[00:26:47] **Tracey Woodward:** She was, you know, she came from a loving home. She got me my first proper job in a cash and carry. She took me for my interview for Clinique in her shoes. I wore her shoes, a size three. I'm a size six. I wore a borrowed dress, you know, they were slingbacks, by the way. For any woman that's listening,

[00:27:05] **Tracey Woodward:** So, you know, um, but the fact of the matter is that she was always there. She would feed me when I was really hungry growing up with my mum. If there was a fight and I ended up getting hurt, I

would go to her and sleep the night. So, you know, there was a lot of violence in our home, a lot.

[00:27:22] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, sometimes, you know, my mum, sometimes the boyfriend, but it was always there. There wasn't a day without an outburst because of the highs and the lows. The natural highs and lows. So, um, or being told that you're never going to amount to anything. And so I used to stay with her, so she took me for that job.

[00:27:41] **Tracey Woodward:** And what I recognized, as soon as that pharmacist, well, as soon as my friend helped me get that job, um, because we lived on the same housing estate together, as soon as she helped me get that job, and then the pharmacist spoke to me, and then Nanny Mary taught me how to read, and then Tracy protected me from like 13 to 16 as best she could.

[00:28:01] **Tracey Woodward:** So, um. And got me my first proper role and took me for my interview at the Westbury Hotel with Clinique. I realized that there were good people out there that wanted to help you

[00:28:11] **Tracey Woodward:** Whereas growing up as a child, I was left by the people, you know, I was kicked out by the people that were supposed to help me and look after me and love me and protect me.

[00:28:21] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, and my mum felt that loss too her entire life. Um, so I think that. You know, that's when I learned the power of what I know today, or, you know, in my 20s to be, was a mentor, to ask for help, to seek guidance, to seek support. And I think that, you know, young people today, it's one of the biggest problems.

[00:28:44] **Tracey Woodward:** People don't ask for help. They feel that they should know everything. No one knows everything. No one can navigate. If you feel that you have an idea to be someone or you want to reinvent yourself, it's not a problem. And you can ask for help because by nature, most people are good. So my advice would be, you know, to any, any, Person that feels lost, seek help, seek, you know, even if it's a smile, even if it's a cup of coffee, even if it's, you know, just chatting to somebody, seek some support, because you cannot do anything in life that is going to help your development totally alone.

[00:29:26] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay. Um, wow. Uh, I need to take a breath for a minute. the job at Clinique, um, I mean, obviously, you know, skincare,

cosmetics, beauty, et cetera. What, what was it that drew you towards the beauty Was it just by chance that you happened to be working in a chemist and the girls in there all look pretty and did their and whatever, or was it deeper than that?

[00:29:52] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay, so tell us about that.

[00:29:53] **Tracey Woodward:** it was way deeper than that. So, uh, Alexis

[00:29:55] **Antony Whitaker:** Right. Okay. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:29:58] **Tracey Woodward:** you know, the music, the vibe, the energy. I thought, I want to be Alexis Colby. Who looks like Alexis Colby? When I'm in the West End, which wasn't really my place to be, like, I always felt like I shouldn't be in London doing the things that I'm But the women that inspired me were the women on the counters with the hair and their makeup and they smelt good and they looked good.

[00:30:17] **Tracey Woodward:** And it was, you know, I was never going to be an air hostess. So that would have been my second choice because I could barely speak proper English, let alone another language. And so, um, and so from, from that perspective, I just saw these women as, you know, so vibrant and in control of their life and looking beautiful.

[00:30:34] **Tracey Woodward:** Remember, I'd seen my mom look beautiful to, you know, to be able to engage in crime, to be able to seduce people, to be able to, you know, she used it in a, in a very different way. And yet these, the, the women that I saw, they were using it to talk to people and sell product. And I thought, oh, I can do that.

[00:30:53] **Tracey Woodward:** That's what I can do.

[00:30:55] **Antony Whitaker:** Okay.

[00:30:56] **Tracey Woodward:** And so that's my inspiration. And, um, and I just never really looked back as soon as I got the clinique job. Um, um, and it was a point of learning for me because working for clinique in Debenhams of Croydon, you know, I was, I would talk to these women, I would know where they were going on holiday, I would know whether or not their husband was having an affair, I'd know what, you know, car they bought, where they, when

they were buying new curtains, what events they were having, christenings, weddings, going to the races, and so I befriended them and they opened up a whole new world to me.

[00:31:30] **Tracey Woodward:** I never knew any of this. I was learning from my, from, from the people that I was, you know, putting makeup on or testing their skincare and because I was chatty, because I always had that confidence. Remember, you've got to look like you belong. Um, and, and I was a good listener because I wanted to learn. I wanted to understand.

[00:31:46] **Tracey Woodward:** I mean, I was completely, You know, my tone of voice was as, as common as muck, you know, I learned how to, to, you know, to not drop my H's, you know, I kind of, I, I, I, there was loads of things that I discovered there about how I would reform myself, you know, so, you know, get ready to cop my

[00:32:07] **Antony Whitaker:** I was just gonna say, can you dip in and out of that?

[00:32:11] **Tracey Woodward:** Oh, every now and then

[00:32:12] **Antony Whitaker:** No, I mean, like, like now, could you or not? Not really. Because that's what I was going to ask you about. Was it?

[00:32:18] **Antony Whitaker:** Right.

[00:32:19] **Tracey Woodward:** yeah, I reckon I could just turn a bit common quite easily. It's like, yeah, it normally comes out when I'm really cross. You know, it's, it's

[00:32:28] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah, I was going to say that people listening to your story and your upbringing, it's, and this is the effect that had on me when I first listened to it. Um, but it's not a fit with the person I'm now talking to. Like I'm talking this very elegant, very sophisticated, very knowledgeable, very charming, very, you know, um, well spoken, clever, educated woman.

[00:32:54] **Antony Whitaker:** And it's like trying to, how did, how did she do that? Like it was one thing being taught to read at 14 or 15, but, but that really is almost just a, a sort of a. A visible symptom of everything that had gone on in your life in terms of neglect, like emotional, educational, blah, blah, blah,

neglect. But we haven't even started yet talking about your career trajectory from that point.

[00:33:23] **Antony Whitaker:** But so, so I suppose I'm doing, I'm asking the question to you, which I think our listeners are probably asking to themselves, and you've touched on it already, which is, Well, what education did you get along the way? Because I know you didn't go to university, you didn't go back to school or whatever. And you're talking about, I was inspired and educated by the people that were sat in my chair.

[00:33:42] **Antony Whitaker:** And you know, the people I was doing makeup on, the people I was selling to, and just, is that, is that it? You've just got this, you're intelligent,

[00:33:49] **Tracey Woodward:** And, and being curious.

[00:33:51] **Antony Whitaker:** and you've got the education of life. Yeah.

[00:33:54] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah,

[00:33:55] **Tracey Woodward:** yeah, definitely the school of life. Definitely. You know, I kind of, I would consume books as soon as I learned how to read. I was reading a book every week. You know, I would consume books. I would follow paths. I would ask questions. I would continue to be curious. I knew that if I wanted to get my, Yeah, clients to open up.

[00:34:10] **Tracey Woodward:** I would have to ask them questions and, you know, and hope that they would be honest with me. I never, ever talked about my life. That was kind of, you know, hidden away. Um, but, but, you know, every time I got a role, I mean, I remember taking the role at Travel Retail and asking, you know, Uh, the HR director, why did you hire me?

[00:34:29] **Tracey Woodward:** Because you know, I live in Southeast London and I'm driving to Heathrow every day. Um, I have a love of beauty, I have a knowledge of beauty, but can I just ask what, what made you choose me instead of other people? And she said, because you had fire in your belly. You had this drive and this need to succeed that I saw.

[00:34:51] **Tracey Woodward:** And that statement that she gave me fueled. The next part of my career, it made me say yes to things that I would never

have thought I was able to do. I mean, even I'm not, I mean, I don't know, shame on me. Maybe I'm not driven by money. It's not the thing that, you know, I want a nice life. I want to be safe and secure, but I also have always tried to live in the now, right?

[00:35:18] **Tracey Woodward:** Because, you know, growing up, the next day could always have been so much worse than the day that I was in. And so I spent a lot of time living

[00:35:30] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:35:31] **Tracey Woodward:** You know, if I got to the end of the day and there was no violence and I'd had something to eat and I managed to sleep, that was a good day. That was a good day.

[00:35:40] **Tracey Woodward:** And so, so I think that very early on, I've kind of, you know, not given my life over to fate because I've worked hard, but I've accepted, you know, there are good days and there are bad days, and you just have to take each day as it

[00:35:54] **Antony Whitaker:** Have you, have you ever read a book? You just made me think of it. I can't get out of my head. So I have to say it, uh, called the, I think it's called the conative connection. Well, apparently, I've read it, but years ago, 25, 30 years ago, connation, C O double N A T I O N means the fire in your belly. And this woman wrote this book, probably in the eighties called the conative connection And it's a, You know, from memory at the time the time, I thought it was a really interesting book because I often look at people and go and I've already asked you that question about you and your brother. Why does one person go one way? The other person go another. mean, I've got five brothers and

[00:36:34] **Antony Whitaker:** four brothers, four brothers and two sisters, and we're all very different.

[00:36:37] **Antony Whitaker:** And I often wonder about what is it that separates one from the other. And sometimes it is that fire in your belly sort of thing.

[00:36:44] **Antony Whitaker:** Do you know what I mean?

[00:36:46] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah,

[00:36:46] **Antony Whitaker:** it's a, it's, it's the difference that makes the difference in so many ways, but the other thing I want to get back to because it's such a good line.

[00:36:54] **Antony Whitaker:** That your mother used to say, if you want to succeed, you've got to look like you belong. And that certainly stood you in good stead along the way and you knew how to, how to use that. And we haven't, you haven't really touched on your career trajectory, but I, I wrote down some of the. The companies you work for, I mean, obviously, um, after Clinique, I don't know in what order these come, but you know, Clean Beauty, Aveda, Urban Retreat, Aromatherapy Associates, uh, Marks and Spencer, The Refinery, Donna Karan, Estee Lauder.

[00:37:27] **Antony Whitaker:** And they're just the ones that, you know, were sort of obvious to me that I could sort of find. And when I say you work there, I don't mean you just work there behind the counter. You ended up running these companies in,

[00:37:38] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah.

[00:37:39] **Antony Whitaker:** degrees. So that's a huge leap of like that sort of trajectory. Like, you know, coming back to the education thing and mentors talk to us a little bit about that journey.

[00:37:52] **Tracey Woodward:** Well, I suppose, I mean, I went from Clinique to Estée Lauder, back to, uh, Clinique, then to, um, uh, to Alders department store group. And then from there to Travel Retail, from Travel Retail to Donna Karan. So I, Travel Retail, I, you know, significantly increased the business. Because in, in the, uh, early nineties, Travel Retail was the biggest.

[00:38:16] **Tracey Woodward:** Uh, beauty retailer. So Terminal 1 would sell more than 20, 000 bottles of Chanel No. 5 a week, and there was no one selling that. Um, and I started at Terminal 4 and did such a great job, and just basically took standards, disciplines, and procedures from, um, what was happening when I was a department manager.

[00:38:34] **Tracey Woodward:** into the travel retail and then was promoted to Terminal 1 where I had 10 shops. So then I became very, very visible to the

international market. And so I took, um, I was offered a role as a brand manager at Donna Karan and, um, and spent most of my, you know, day crying initially because I thought that I would be driving.

[00:38:56] **Tracey Woodward:** You know, sales and looking after a team, and actually I was running the company. But prior to that, when I was at the Alders department store, I suppose that's where I needed to learn a P& L. And what I discovered at Alders department stores through the contractor was that I got an extra 1% of my bonus up to 40 percent of my salary based on every 1 percent additional growth over gross profit that I delivered.

[00:39:18] **Tracey Woodward:** So I was off. I was like breaking things down. I was doing a tester night. I was doing all sorts of things that you probably couldn't do today, but I definitely did them then, you know, with that kind of, you know, genius, non genius way of thinking to drive profit. But it was actually the clerk there that taught me how to read a P& L. You know, from scratch, um, because we all had a, each department had their own individual clerk that would help shape the P& L, log the sales, you know, manage the stock process from a GRN, Goods Received Note basis. And that's where I learned it. So every time I took a role, there was someone that would teach me.

[00:39:55] **Tracey Woodward:** At Donna Karan, I reported to the vice president in New York, um, Cynthia Ahern then, who was an amazing leader and visionary, um, and, and put me under pressure to deliver success. And at that point, I didn't understand how everything worked. So I reached out to, the lady that did our PR was a lady called Caroline Neville.

[00:40:15] **Tracey Woodward:** Who I went on to join her board of cosmetic executive women for nine years. And she looked after Donna Karen. She looked after the Gucci family. She looked after Ralph Lauren. So she kind of had this refinement that I so admired. Daniela Rinaldi was the head of, uh, beauty at Harvey Nichols. She had a genius vision.

[00:40:33] **Tracey Woodward:** She found the. The next big brand, Daniela always had her finger on the pulse. Um, and then a lady called Hilary Dart, who was, uh, the head of Selfridges buying. So I had two major thought leaders in the beauty industry and one that was strategic in, uh, Marketing and PR and they became my mentors and when I didn't understand something or I needed to navigate something I, I would, you know, I would work with them.

[00:40:59] **Tracey Woodward:** I mean, I was going backwards and forwards to New York. I've been upgraded to first class. I mean, I've never even been on a plane. Yeah, I've been on a plane to Ireland. That was it. Prior to taking that job. Um, uh, actually I did. I'd gone on a honeymoon with my husband, but we used to drive to Spain mostly.

[00:41:14] **Tracey Woodward:** Um, yeah, I, I'd never, um, you know, I'd never experienced this life. Suddenly I had a catalog of clothes which were showing the runway shows and it was 70 percent off and 20, 000 a year to wear on clothes, you know, to have this type of clothes

[00:41:31] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah

[00:41:32] **Tracey Woodward:** uh, outfit that I didn't have to Nick,

[00:41:34] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah.

[00:41:35] **Tracey Woodward:** but you know, I didn't have to steal was like, whoa.

[00:41:37] **Tracey Woodward:** And it almost felt like the bar was constantly being raised for me to step up on and I step up to, and I just kept doing that. And it was relentless.

[00:41:46] **Antony Whitaker:** Were you pushing yourself?

[00:41:48] **Antony Whitaker:** I remember you said at one point you said something about, you know, fear that something could be taken away was always your motivator. So was it you sort of going for the next big job or was it, or were you being headhunted or like, how did that work

[00:42:01] **Tracey Woodward:** yeah, no, I was being approached. I, I, I've never used a headhunter for a role in my entire life. I was being approached by people. Um, and, and, you know, one of the things that I learned quite quickly, hire people that are smarter than you, you know, hire people that know, and I wasn't intimidated by that because I was never conditioned in the hierarchy.

[00:42:21] **Tracey Woodward:** Uh, process, you know, it didn't, that didn't apply to me. So at Aveda, I look for people that were way smarter than me that were really exceptional at the job and embrace that. And I loved my time

working with George Hammer, who was, you know, a brilliant entrepreneur and became a very, very dear friend. And so, but I always seem to be with the right brands at the right time, doing the right thing.

[00:42:42] **Tracey Woodward:** And I was constantly learning and I, and I never denied that to myself or to anybody else.

[00:42:48] **Antony Whitaker:** Mm.

[00:42:49] **Tracey Woodward:** I don't have all the answers, but what I do have is the ability to turn over the stones to find the answers. I'm not scared of that. And I think that a lot of people won't do that because they don't know what's underneath.

[00:43:00] **Antony Whitaker:** Mm. I remember, uh, you know, reading something about you, uh, and you were telling a story. You just touched on it before when you said you were at terminal one in charge of that fragrance or duty free, whatever it was. And you were saying

[00:43:13] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah,

[00:43:13] **Antony Whitaker:** 20, 000, uh, did you just say 20, 000 bottles of Chanel number five a week?

[00:43:19] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah, yeah,

[00:43:20] **Antony Whitaker:** a lot of Chanel number five Yeah. Okay. And, and somewhere connected to that, you had said about, um, how you reduced the, or you increase the profit or you reduce the shrinkage or whatever, because there was so much product being stolen and the way you reduced it. Was by making sure that the sales assistants weren't allowed to take their handbags onto the floor.

[00:43:47] **Antony Whitaker:** Have I got, have I got that right? If I made a complete mess of that story?

[00:43:53] **Tracey Woodward:** No, no, yeah. And, and being watchful of everybody. So basically what I did is I gave everybody Ziploc clear bags where they could bring, you know, their cigarettes, their, their change, their food

pass, their ID, and everything else went into lockers. And that happened for the whole business

[00:44:07] **Antony Whitaker:** yeah. So that's a little bit like where your upbringing sort of really served you well, wasn't it? It's like, you know, you, you can't get one over me. Anything you've, you've thought of, don't worry, I've already

[00:44:18] **Tracey Woodward:** Oh, yeah. I mean, I've, I've, I can spot a shoplifter even

[00:44:22] **Antony Whitaker:** Really?

[00:44:22] **Tracey Woodward:** from a mile off when someone's getting, cause I know that fear. I know that sense. I know that, that adrenaline rush that you get from doing that. I mean, I caught loads of shoplifters in the, in the Delhi that I had with my husband. Um, and even at urban retreat at Harrods.

[00:44:36] **Tracey Woodward:** You know, the wealthiest people, you know, would still, you know, take products. It's just, and people are not so wealthy, of course. And so, you know, it's, um, it's just how it is. And I think that That's the other thing that we don't focus on is we don't encourage people to be intuitive, to listen, to observe, to be.

[00:45:02] **Tracey Woodward:** And when you can't, you know, when you can't read and write from a very, very, very early age, you spend a lot of time dreaming. You spend a lot of time listening to me. I mean, I can kind of, my son says that I'm the best Shazam. I'm actually better than Shazam at identifying songs. I can get it, you know, first beat in because I have, you know, I've nurtured my, my, my art, my senses in that process, because that's all I had.

[00:45:27] **Antony Whitaker:** Yeah. Very interesting. Okay. Uh, listen, we're going to need to start wrapping up this, uh, episode, but, um, I'd love it if you'd come back and do a part two, because we've really been talking about your history. We're not really talking about what you're doing now and the person you've turned into.

[00:45:44] **Antony Whitaker:** I don't want to shortchange what you're doing now because what you're doing now is amazing and that the direction your career is taken, etc.

[00:45:50] **Tracey Woodward:** I just, all of the time I've been growing and evolving. I haven't, um, I haven't beaten myself up for not knowing stuff. And I think that that's, you know, that's the conditioning of the education system.

[00:46:06] **Tracey Woodward:** What you don't know. Oh, therefore you must be a bit thick. You must be a dunce. You must be stupid. I'm like, I don't know what I don't know. And still today, I don't know what I don't know. And I remain curious. And even when I take my last breath, I'm sure that I will be still wondering what, you know, what that person's thinking or doing, you know, and, and I think that.

[00:46:27] **Tracey Woodward:** it can be a scary place to live, but it can also be a very exciting place. And I think that's what's fueled me and that's what's given me my energy. At 58, I still don't know what I don't know, and I will continue to live my life like that.

[00:46:41] **Antony Whitaker:** um, that is a that is a perfect place to start wrapping up this issue Uh, or this episode I should say, um Tracy, where else can people connect with you on Instagram or other social media channels?

[00:46:54] **Tracey Woodward:** Yeah, I mean, I, I, again, so when I learned to, how to read and write, Antony, the first thing I did was buy a diary, as you know, and I used to keep everything in a diary. I had diaries, diaries, diaries everywhere. So, you know, I started burning them all not too long ago. Um, And, and, and, and,

[00:47:10] **Antony Whitaker:** That sounds like a

[00:47:11] **Tracey Woodward:** but, but yeah, yeah, yeah, well, also, I kind of think that, you know, you reflect on them, you know, you know, that I'm in the process of writing a book about my life, and yeah, hopefully it will be, you know, a TV series of some sort, but, but, but, you know, the fact of the, the, the matter is, is that, My Instagram is now my diary.

[00:47:32] **Tracey Woodward:** I do not post for anybody but myself. I put my thoughts down, my feelings. I've talked about my cancer journey. I've, you know, I mean, you know me, but you don't know me. You know, you know my inner thoughts, but you don't know, you know, you don't know if I'm in a relationship with somebody. You don't hear me talk a lot about my children, but you do hear me just blur out what I think.

[00:47:55] **Tracey Woodward:** Tracy L. Woodward, Tracy L. Woodward is where they'll find me on Insta

[00:47:58] **Antony Whitaker:** Right. Well, I,

[00:47:59] **Tracey Woodward:** Or, or, or LinkedIn.

[00:48:02] **Antony Whitaker:** links, uh, in the show notes for today's podcast. Um, and you've just touched on a couple of little things there, which, uh, are a perfect segue into, um, A follow up episode about where you are now and the direction that your life and your career has taken you because, you know, there's been a lot of life lessons and what you've been speaking about for the last 45 minutes or so.

[00:48:24] **Antony Whitaker:** And I think in our industry, you know, I mean, obviously, like any industry. You get people from lots of different backgrounds, but I think that your background, your story, your upbringing and the person you've turned into is very inspiring for lots of people, regardless of at what stage of the journey they're at.

[00:48:42] **Antony Whitaker:** So, uh, so thank you for, for sharing all that so openly and so honestly. Um, so if you're listening to this podcast with Tracey and have enjoyed it, do me a favour and share it with people who, you know, would also enjoy it. And don't forget to subscribe and leave us a rating and review on the Apple podcast app.

[00:49:01] **Antony Whitaker:** So to wrap up, Tracey Woodward, until next time, thank you for being on this week's episode of the Grow My Salon Business podcast.

[00:49:09] **Tracey Woodward:** Pleasure, Antony Thanks for having me.

[00:49:11] **Antony Whitaker:** Cheers.