Introduction and Guest Background

Welcome again to the Sleep Deep Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Audrey Wells. Today, I'm really excited to speak to somebody who wears many hats in the personal growth and development space.

I'm talking about Fleet Maull. He has a book called Radical Responsibility, and we're going to touch on what that means in the context of sleep. Dr. Maull, it's great to have you here.

Welcome. Thank you for having me. I wonder if you can start off by telling the audience more about your background, especially as it pertains to sleep problems.

Sure. Well, part of my back story is that I spent 14 years in a federal prison on drug charges between 1985 and 1999. I am of the baby boomer generation, and I was one of that person of that era that went headlong into the counterculture of the time.

But I was also always a spiritual seeker and interested in personal development. So I had this kind of mixed up, twisted life, so to speak, in Baltimore.

Craziness also, and some good things. And by the time I earned my way into a federal prison sentence for drug trafficking and that that really arisen living as an expat in Latin America and just falling into that as a way to continue to support myself and kind of live outside of society.

And just applying that with a lot of other sources and thinking that I was caught up in back then, having become really alienated from my culture, from really our society culturally and politically back in the sixties and seventies.

So at any rate, by the time I arrived in prison, I had a completed a three year master's degree and a deep clinical psychology psychotherapy training program that was very contemplative oriented, integrative, bulk butcher Buddhism, Western approaches to psychology and psychotherapy.

And I also trained in the Buddhist tradition for about ten years already. So I came into prison with a lot of skills, and at that point, all the craziness stopped.

And I was able to take those 14 years to really work on myself. So sleep was a major issue in prison, as you might imagine. A lot of people had difficulty sleeping in prison.

I had difficulty at times incredibly noisy environment, a high stress environment, a lot of violence and ever present danger. And I've been I was released in 1999 to a halfway house where I really struggled with sleep during my time there.

And and, you know, a lot of residual trauma from that experience. I mean, I have my share of childhood stuff. I grew up in a basically decent family, but with alcoholism.

And that created a lot of childhood stuff. And I've had a lot of significant losses in my life. So since coming out of prison, really, and a number of some very significant people and partners in my life that have died of cancer and and also the loss of my son.

And so these combination of things, combinations of things have at different times created sleep issues. For me personally, because my experience during my prison years of of working with my fellow prisoners, I was very involved in, and I led a meditation group there for 14 years.

I was teaching school for 14 years. I helped out with the Texas hospice program in a prison anywhere in the world

and then developed a national organization to support that and also support prison mindfulness work.

And so I was working with a lot of prisoners in lots of different settings, and sleep issues were incredibly common. There. So then over the last 22 years or so, I've been a business and organizational consultant and and generally become a personal advisor to the CEOs of the companies I work with and have worked with a lot of people dealing with sleep issues and access more.

The coach, you know, I'm not a medical provider, but in the sense of being in a coaching consulting relationship. So that that's kind of my background with it.

Using Breath and Meditation for Sleep

And so having done a lot of work to support others and developing healthy sleep patterns and then doing a lot of work to develop that for myself. Yeah, I, I like that you pointed out that, you know, as human beings we sort of accumulate these layers of stressors, of grief, of loss and you know, going through a life just kind of presents challenges that can culminate when you're lying in bed at night and it's dark and quiet.

I identify with that personally. Even as a sleep medicine physician, I have gone through periods of insomnia and I like to kind of bring that up in conversation because even with all of the academic expertize that I have, there's nothing about that that makes me immune to the challenges of insomnia or poor sleep.

And I struggled mightily for about ten years with loss and grief. And, you know, sleep was a big hurdle for me to get over. And the truth is, when you're not sleeping well, it impacts your ability to self-actualize.

It impacts your decision making, your ability to sort of sit with yourself, to grow and become more of the person that you know you can be. I wonder for you, what was it that sort of got you past difficult nights with trouble sleeping, I think?

Well, when I find myself in that situation, there's lots of things I do now and have been doing for a long time, so I don't find myself in that situation.

But when I have found myself in that situation, it's generally been a combination of various meditation techniques and breath regulation techniques to try to downregulate my nervous system.

Often when we can't sleep are nervous. System is too upregulated. We have we're too much as most. Most of us probably know, there are two branches to our autonomic nervous system.

One branch upregulates, the other downregulate. So sympathetic branches upregulation and we need that just for alertness. And, and when we get to upregulate that touch to move into the stress response fight or flight, most people have heard those terms.

Then we have the parasympathetic branch, which is about downregulate. And so when we can't sleep, often what we have is too much sympathetic branch activation, too little parasympathetic branch activation.

So we find ourselves involved in rumination and we just feel awake, we can't sleep and a lot of cognitive activity and rumination and so forth. So if we can engage a parasympathetic response, we can all up and move ourselves into a landscape within our nervous system where it's easier to fall asleep.

And one of the easiest ways to regulate our nervous system is through through regulating our breath, because our in breath is connected with sympathetic branch activation and our out breath with parasympathetic tract activation.

So by doing very simple breath exercises that emphasize the out breath, we can engage the parasympathetic branch and gradually move into that relaxation response and rest and digest to rest and recovery spots.

It can be difficult to do sometimes when when what's sort of triggering the the over active, sympathetic branch

response is some real deep concerns or some, you know, present stressors in our lives.

Some some things that we're really worried about or concerned about or where it's the activation of some kind of trauma or or where it's something like a loss, which has been so destabilizing to us that we're kind of in a sense of of shock and, and, you know, kind of just our whole sense of self as disabled life itself.

So it can be very difficult in some situations, even using effective breath regulation techniques, also meditation in general, simple mindfulness, the body mindfulness of breathing, where we're not particularly regulating the breath, but we're just bringing our attention to the body and the breath can be quite helpful.

Although a it can also stimulate wakefulness and alertness. So we have to kind of learn to work with that and also practices like what's called a body scan where we bring mindfulness to the body and gradually move our awareness through the body, perhaps beginning at the soles of our feet and working our way all the way up to the core of the head, down the arms and so forth, and focusing not only on the sense of touch externally, external sensations on the surface of the skin, but everything we notice and feel inside the body.

Internal sensation, often a gentle effort to do that, will gradually move us into a nervous system landscape where it's much easier to fall asleep. Yes, to your points, you know, these are activities that a person would engage in during wakefulness, even during the day.

One thing I like to remind people of is, you know, how you spend your day affects how you spend your night. And especially for those who have trouble with getting to sleep or getting back to sleep, I find that when you're lying there with your thoughts and feelings, it can kind of be in three categories not enough.

There's some component of scarcity, not safe, some sort of fear or agitation by the sympathetic nervous system, as you describe, and not congruent. I'm not living in integrity.

Something's out of alignment. When I looked at your book, Radical, Responsible Party, I loved that title of the first chapter, There's Nothing Wrong With You.

And for me, this brought up the notion that you know, your brain, which is responsible for sleeping, is going to react in a particular and predictable way.

If you don't support what it needs to sleep.

Daytime Mindfulness and Radical Responsibility

Can you delve into more about what you do during the day, especially with meditation and mindfulness, to kind of promote that sleep state at night? Yeah, I think that's very important because when we find ourselves unable to sleep, we wake up in the middle of the night, we're not able to go to sleep to begin with, or we wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep.

But it's already too late in a sense, although there are certainly things we can do. And I've been successful in using breath regulation or sometimes just getting up and reading for a while.

You know, people have lots of other home remedies and things to do. So there are some things you can do, but really in a sense it's too late. It's the preventive work that you want to do.

And it's really even not just preventive, it's really a whole lifestyle issue. I mean, our sleep patterns and not only staying asleep, but then the amount of restorative sleep we get, the amount, the percent of the time of sleep that spent in deep sleep, in REM sleep, the quality, in other words, the quality of our sleep is really a reflection of our overall health and well-being and mental health and well-being and lifestyle and all the rest of it. So you brought up those those three areas.

But if I can remember and I'm not I think maybe the last one was congruence, that sense that we feel aligned with

our values and mission in life, that we feel a sense of well-being and purpose.

We're like we feel like we're on track. And and another one you mentioned, I think was the sense of safety and a camera. What was that third one you mentioned?

Something's not enough. There's a complete scarcity, right? Yeah. Right. So the way that we can create an abiding feeling of workability and. Okay. Ness, you know, safety can sometimes be a loaded word because, you know, ultimately we can't make life completely safe.

We can't live in a bubble, but we can create relative safely and a sense of workability, a sense of basic competence about our lives. We can certainly deepen our sense of being up and having enough, a sense of fundamental kindness.

And I think the most profound way to do this is through meditative practices where we're able to drop beneath all the noise of all of all of our conditioned reactivity to life and the cognitive and emotional activity and even some of the physiological activity and dropping it all, that into a profound stillness at the depth of our being and even touching into that for a moment can be profoundly healing and nurturing.

And any time that we spend there in the stillness of the depths of our being, we're actually reorganizing our brain. The brain is learning how to return there and how to have greater access to that depth through our being.

And when we are resting in that, it's absolutely unmistakable that we're not broken, that we don't need fixing, that our are unconditional, basic goodness, unconditional worthiness is truth, and that all the lies we've received all our entire life, we have a whole consumer culture is based on the message you're not enough, but if you purchase this, you might be at least for a moment.

So we've been getting these messages in the culture. There is no one to blame. In part, it's the human condition. But we've been getting these messages all our life.

But there there's some part of our being. It's always known that that's not true. And we can tap into that through meditative practices and have developed that experiential competence in our own innate wholeness, our innate worthiness are innate goodness.

So the level to whatever level where, you know, you know, it's not an all or nothing, but to, to, to whatever level we begin to develop that it radically changes everything in our life.

It affects every aspect of life and then how we lead our lives. And it also increases the sense of basic safety and confidence about it, like the workability, about life.

So all that profoundly helps us to have ease of mind and peace of mind, which generally is going to allow us to sleep better at night. So I think having a there are many, many things we can do.

I think many, many practical things we can do in terms of our lifestyle and really getting into the nitty gritty of how we organize our day. That's going to set us up for quality sleep.

But I think for me anyway, a foundational one is having some kind of contemplative practice, some kind of mindfulness practice or meditation practice that we do on a daily basis.

And then having established that, being able to bring that into the way we lead our lives throughout the day, like continually coming back to moments of spaciousness, coming back to the body, becoming more embodied, coming back to the breath, bringing more space into our lives.

You can be a very busy, professional person, but learn to infuse your activity with more of the meditative mind and more mindfulness and and then this this all supports good restorative sleep.

I love what you just said, because to me what you're describing is improved in your relationship with yourself, like really examining different, different needs, different states of mind in order to achieve that peace that you need when your head is on the pillow and you need to sort of fall into sleep, one of the things that you talk about is the ability to choose.

You make a choice for yourself and you take responsibility for your choices. And I want to relate this to experiences that I see often for people who have been diagnosed with sleep apnea and they're prescribed a treatment like CPAP or auto pap therapy, which is currently the gold standard for treatment of obstructive sleep apnea.

In my experience, people have an internal resistance to the idea of sometimes the diagnosis itself, but often in the idea of using a treatment like this in order to get their sleep apnea resolved so that their sleep becomes healthy.

And I wonder if you can speak to the idea of sort of making that choice for yourself, that here's my diagnosis. Well, I accept it or not. Here is the treatment that that's been recommended to me.

Will I accept it or not? And how to sort of actualize on that? Yeah, I would like to just say, well, to begin with, I just wanted to come back to the meditation for a moment.

So, you know, dropping into the depth of our being is easier said than done, right? So I just want to let people know there are many meditative techniques and practices and I don't think there's any more powerful way to change our relationship with ourselves, to truly defend ourselves and forgive ourselves and and develop a really positive relationship with ourselves and really have beyond doubt the experiential competence that we're not broken, that we don't need fixing.

There's nothing wrong with us. I don't think there's any more powerful way than dropping into the depths of our being. But that's, as I said, easier said than done.

Which is why I teach a very embodied approach to meditation that allows people, even beginners, to have that experience, but also those many specific meditation practices around self-compassion and self forgiveness and self-acceptance.

So some people self-compassion practices is the classic loving kindness practices. So there's a lot of different practical ways that people can follow that path of gradually shifting their internal landscape to be one that's much friendlier and self compassionate and self accepting and developing that.

So it's not an all or nothing thing. I just wanted to say that now to the extent though, and this it ties these two things together to the extent that we lack that, we tend to operate in life in a relatively fear based way with a kind of survival fear and survival focus.

This is the human condition. Until we develop the capacity to live from a place of that kind of unconditional competence. And because of that, it's quite natural that we tend to feel life is happening to us.

And also the importance of being able to regulate our own nervous system because we're not regulating our own nervous system means everyone but us is regularly our nervous system.

We live in the interface between our childhood conditioning, which for most of us is a mixed bag. And we got most of that before we seven years old. So we had no choice in any of that.

And then the world around us now if we had a really benevolent childhood and we live in a really benevolent world, it may be okay to live in that space somewhat relatively unconsciously, but most of us don't have that kind of benevolence in our childhood or the world we live in.

And so we're kind of getting pushed around by life, and it does feel like life is happening to me. But so it's a combination of developing these self-regulation skills, which are actually part of meditation and part of being able to drop into the depths of our being and shift that internal relationship.

We have with ourselves, that we can begin to relate with life, that that is based on choice, that we realized we have a lot of self agency and that our real personal power is in choosing to live a choice, because otherwise we're choosing basically and maybe unconsciously it may not feel like a choice, but we're living with a kind of victim mindset where we feel like life is happening to us.

So I can well imagine that someone that suddenly gets a diagnosis of sleep apnea or really any other diagnosis then can get that. Why me really? You know, why me? Why do I have to deal with this?

Life is hard enough. I don't want to deal with this. It feels like a disability of some kind. There's expand suggestions that you know a million reasons why this is uncomfortable. I don't like this and this is happening to me and why is it happening to me?

And, you know, and we're all kind of than culture at it in many ways to embrace that kind of victim mindset, which also part of having been kind of acculturated into the consumer mindset, which is really a very disempowered mindset.

So learning to live a choice, I mean, the idea of living, learning to live with choice has been in all cultures throughout human history. But unfortunately, it's really not the dominant voice we hear.

So learning to develop our capacity and have competence and our capacity for self regulation and self agency, we're much more in a mindset when an issue arises.

It's kind of like, Oh, okay, well, this is interesting. How do I work with this and what are my options here and what is the most creative way I can respond to this that's going to move me forward and in a very beneficial way for myself and for other people in my life, those that are important to me.

So we really relate with things in a much different way. We don't have that kind of initial reactivity of, you know, again, life is after me, life is happening to me, I'm being victimized.

It's more okay. Life has all of the challenges. And, you know, I realized that if I'm learning to live a choice, that these are simply choices and challenges and the place to focus.

Choosing Treatment and Self-Agency

My energy is on what can I do? So we call that the name of my book is Radical Responsibility. We call that question a magical radical responsibility question because no matter what's going on, no matter how much I'm stewing and feeling aggrieved or feeling victimized by something or put on, I can simply remember to ask myself that question, okay, I don't like this, and what can I do?

The minute I do that, I've shifted out the mindset of limitations and victimization into the mindset of possibility, because always a million things I can do, right? So.

So then when maybe we start doing some research, we self educate and we find it in this case with sleep apnea, maybe the choice of a CPAP machine really makes a lot of sense, whether it's an ongoing situation or maybe it's a temporary thing that's going to allow us to make some lifestyle changes to where maybe we won't need it anymore.

But it's it's that spirit of living from choice that really changes everything about how we approach our lives. Totally agree with that. And I think that coming at it from a place of curiosity, with some willingness to accept discomfort, sort of having a balance with how you look at the pros and cons of treatment or not treatment, and then kind of leaning into that choice for you is something that I encourage people to do, because the truth is that even if you're prescribed a treatment for any medical condition, it's still up to you whether you want to move forward and take that treatment or not.

It may be 100% effective, but it may not be right for you. And so really taking control of that choice for yourself is going to make it a lot easier to move forward and a lot easier to sleep.

I think that when you're lying there feeling like the treatment has been forced on you, then that's incompatible with sleep and it only adds to the problem.

Absolutely. I wonder you mentioned the idea of, you know, dropping into your deeper self and kind of the practice that it takes to get there for anyone who is maybe wanting to start trying with meditation with breathwork, what can you advise them as they start out and give some perspective, if you can, on what sort of practice this entails and how long it might take to see some results?

Well, I mean, see, John, neuroscientist, who's done a lot of research with veterans and my plus in her recent book review, I don't remember the exact title but held to a focus and she determined that the minimal effective dosage was 12 minutes a day.

There were 12 minutes of practice. You can actually move the needle now. Practicing more would obviously be very beneficial, but it doesn't take a lot of time if the regularity, the consistency is what's important.

And, you know, either you miss a day, you just you always start again, right? Even if you missed all week, you just start again. But I think the important thing is getting good instruction now.

There's a lot of instruction out there today and I personally teach meditation in a very embodied way because a lot of people, when they begin learning to meditate, are doing the practice sort of from the neck up.

You know, they they try to pay attention to the body of the breath or word or some focal point, maybe they're even using an app, or maybe they're listening to music or using bass tools that are out there.

And they just find themselves continually distracted, their minds very busy. They find it very difficult. They find it kind of boring. It all it involves sitting still.

So they feel restless. It's hard to sit still. And it really it can just feel very difficult, not not very pleasant. And and I think it's really important to receive good instruction to bring the body into it, because by bringing the body into it and developing a deeply felt physical presence, the deeply felt anchor of the body, it makes it so much easier to do the practice.

And people have a lot of misconstrued notions about meditation. It's about stopping our thoughts or getting rid of thoughts. This is not the case at all.

We don't really need to struggle with our thoughts. And many people spend years in meditation, basically struggling with their thoughts because they haven't received effective instruction.

When we focus on the body and develop a deeply felt physical presence, we're making a shift from one of the neural networks in our brain that is related to that continual discursive ness that that overstressed as Kirsten, as humanization.

It's called the default mode network, which is overactive in most human, modern human beings. And by focusing our attention, synchronizing body and mind, we deactivate that and activate something called the Stars Positive Network, and they're mutually inhibitory and therefore we just find the mind naturally quiets down.

We don't need to struggle with thoughts. And a basic approach to meditation is creating a spatial, nonjudgmental awareness in which we can allow our our complete experience to just be as it is so thought can come and go.

All our scent perception can come and go. Emotional experiences can come and go. Memories can come and go. And if we're not resisting it and we're not getting caught up in it, there's a gradual kind of emptying process.

And that's what allows us to drop deeper and deeper into the depth of our being and experience, that stillness. But the body, the body for me is critically important.

Embodied Meditation Practice

The body is the portal and very few instructions out there really emphasize that. And so I think people spend a lot of time in ineffective practice. Now, there are some apps out there that can be very helpful and a lot of people like using apps.

There's a lot of guided practices. On my website, I have a lot of guided practices for both meditation and self-regulation that are completely free available on the website.

And they're I think they're listed under resources. We had a lot of resources that we put up there during the time of the pandemic and the lockdowns. And so but there's many places, but I would just look for someone who's teaching mindfulness in a very embodied way, really emphasizing the body, because that's going to make the the practice much more effective.

I'm curious if you can say more about embodiment, just to make sure that I understand that embodiment is sort of an awareness of the body movement of the body and honoring of the body as it is sort of the portal to the world.

Can you describe embodiment practices. Her and you know this is really key to quality sleep as well the more we live our lives throughout the day in a embodied way, the the the better the quality of our sleep will be, for sure.

So I have a friend who says in modern Western culture, our bodies have been relegated to being nothing but brain taxi's, that just something to carry around a supercomputer that's, you know, up on our shoulders.

And so embodying that practice, is there anything that brings us back into the body, feeling the body actually being located in the body? Now it's quite natural that we get located up here because we're very visual in order to really oriented, we have this overactive, intellectual, cognitive brain and so we tend to be focused up here.

So we have to consciously drop into the body. We can literally do exercise. We could do at any time throughout the day if just feeling where, where am I kind of oriented.

I'm looking around, I'm hearing, I'm focused, I'm trying to, you know, read something on the computer. So I'm I'm up here, okay? Just let myself drop down through the neck to the shoulders, the upper back to church and just all the way down to the soles of my feet.

So anything we can do to feel present in the body now, the sense of touch. And that's what we're talking about. Physical sensation here. We have two forms of it.

We experience the sense of touch on the surface of the skin through what's called external perception or external perception. And that goes to a particular set of neural networks of the brain that's highly myelinated and therefore very efficient.

And so we're very sensitive to touch. And those sensations quickly travel to the brain, whether processing we experience them as what we feel as touch internal sensations within the body, go through a different set of neural networks that are less myelinated, so they tend to be subtler, although we can certainly experience extreme pain in the body.

Now, our capacity to feel the body from the inside out, so to speak, is called intro ception, which is short for internal perception. And the entire body is a living organism all the way down to the bones, including bones, even the marrow, the bones, all containing neuronal cells connected to the central nervous system.

But we tend to ignore that whole internal landscape, except when there is discomfort. Now everyone in your audience is very familiar with introspection, even if they haven't heard the word because it's how we know them.

We're hungry or thirsty. It's how we know when we need to use the restroom, when we're sleepy and so forth, and certainly when we experience internal discomfort like a headache or indigestion or muscle pain.

So this is all the internal landscape of our body. So imbibing the practices or practices, you know, the problem is absent that kind of discomfort, we tend to ignore that internal landscape completely and our focus tends to be mostly up here.

So embodiment practices are practices where we consciously bring our attention back into the body, not only feeling the body externally, which is an important part of it, but also feeling it internally.

And of course we can do this through any body mind practices. We can do it through hot yoga, we can do it through martial arts. We can, you know, people with various forms of dance we can use mindful walking, might well hiking, mindful stretching, or we can do exercises like the body scan that I referenced earlier.

We can practice meditation and even just sitting still in a deeply embodied way and really train ourselves to open up that internal landscape with this vast universe of sensate experience and, you know, the world of somatic awareness is really this kind of untapped universe that we can explore and we can do that even sitting still.

And we can. And then as we do this, going out in nature and being out in the woods or out in the forest or out in the mountains or out of the water, and learning to practice embodiment.

It's the more embodied we are, the more we connect with the world around us. Some of the same neural pathways involved in enhanced introspective awareness and embodiment are also involved in our ability to connect with the natural world, but also to connect with others to create safety and connection with others.

So all you know, all these things that we can do not only will improve the quality of our sleep, but they improve our overall health and well-being, they improve the quality of our relationships and so on.

And it's all interconnected, obviously, you know, having quality relationships impacts the quality of our sleep. So all these things we're talking about, it's really about lifestyle.

I have a colleague that talks about lifestyle as medicine. I love that term and it really is an overall lifestyle issue. That's one of the things that attracted me to sleep actually, is that sleep affects everything you do.

It affects how you're able to function in the world. And I like the idea of looking at the whole person as I'm assessing their sleep now. I want to kind of go back to something you mentioned before, even in your own personal experience, and that's the idea of trauma.

And I think I'm a believer that the body keeps the score. I think that we hold our trauma and it affects us in subtle ways and not so subtle ways. And in my experience, the ability or inability to sleep is one way in which unprocessed trauma comes to the surface.

Are you able to talk about how embodiment and meditation practices can help with trauma? Yes, absolutely. And I like the way Stephen Porges, the founder probably vagal theory, talks about trauma, that our nervous system gets locked on into a fight or flight response because we're in a situation that overwhelms our coping skills.

But that doesn't mean that it completely stays that way. But there's a pattern that develops that our nervous system that then can be triggered by a memory or an association, something familiar.

And and so it's like there's it's not that, you know, our entire nervous system remains locked on, but there is a stuck pattern in there that if that gets activated, suddenly our nervous system locks into that fight or flight response.

Right. And so anything can trigger that and, you know, associated similar anxieties or fears or memories or all kinds of things can can trigger that kind of response.

And so how do we heal that? I think one way to think about it is to think of our our our nervous system and our entire entire body mind, heart kind of system and spectrum.

Think of it as flow and process. Think of it as flow and process. And what does beautiful flow and process look like and feel like? And then what happens when when you get tangled wires and broken wires and broken circuits or, you know, the highways and the pathways, the infrastructure is breaking down, you know, or, you know, waterways are obstructed.

Trauma, Flow, and Restorative Sleep

Right. So there are things that interrupt that natural flow and process and and that's really what trauma does. So how might we allow are nervous system our whole body mind heart system which is that has its level of being quite physical from the very tangible physical to the immaterial.

So the whole body mind spectrum which could include spirit as well, is all a cohesive system and trauma are like these knots in there and these blockages and these places where we get locked into maladaptive responses.

So how what what might allow that to heal? Well, I think if you imagine just spending time when you're in the most relaxed state possible and you're inviting a palpable sense of flow is what's going to allow the nervous system to naturally kind of untangle itself.

Right. So there are many things that can release trauma or activity we can release trauma, meditation, can release trauma, relaxation. All these body mind exercises that we've been talking about can really some of course, there can be therapeutic work that combine those things and maybe some kind of, you know, talk talk therapy and recovering stories and narratives can be part of the process.

But even at a physiological level. So one of the reasons that I teach, I think meditation can be looked at through two sort of paradigmatic, paradigmatic windows.

One is that of healing and the other is of awakening. So human beings have been engaging in contemplative practices for millennia to awaken and to awaken whatever the ultimate qualities of being human are, and what my people might describe as spiritual liberation, enlightenment and so forth.

And people meditate for the purpose of healing. And my view of what creates healing in the body is twofold. One is that over time we're learning to cultivate a space of nonjudgmental awareness, and we simply allow our experience to be as it is.

We train ourselves because we have a lot of self critical judgment going on and opinions, and we have a natural proclivity as a human condition to be judging opinions, dicing and dissecting.

So over time we train ourselves to create an environment of nonjudgmental awareness, and we simply allow ourselves to be, which means we allow ourselves to be physiologically, emotionally, cognitively, in terms of our thoughts.

We just allow things to be a nurse. This gradual emptying and emptying can be cognitive emptying. It can be emotionally emptying, it can be emptying narratives and it can be a physiological emptying.

The other part of that is this practicing in a deeply embodied way. The more deeply we go into the body. And when you think about it, you just close your eyes and feel the body for a moment.

How physical is that feel? Suddenly, what we think of as very physical is feeling more like mind and starts to be very subtle. So we're already in that body, mind and even spirit spectrum.

And the deeper we go into the body and the subtle levels of sensation we're able to tap into and feel in the body, we're really going deep into that body mind spectrum.

And as we do my experience and experience of contemplative and yogis, but also what's being studied in neuroscience, is that all the internal systems in our body, which all have their own way frequency, you know, we

have our heartbeat, we have our brainwaves, but all the internal organs, all and the glands and so forth, all have their own internal way frequencies.

And these begin to cohere. And the deeper we drop into our being in a most relaxed way, we begin to really touch into and feel this palpable coherence, resonance, coherence and flow that's very powerful.

And to me, any time we spend in that state of flow is healing trauma. It's allowing our nervous system to untangle itself, and it's actually rewiring the brain itself to heal trauma.

So I think it's a combination of developing this capacity to cultivate a very non-judgmental space of awareness and really shift our relationship with ourselves in that way, having vehicles for emptying whatever they are.

And this could be therapeutically in conversation. It can be through exercise and activity. It can also be through the stillness of meditation, but also very importantly for me, spending time and flow.

And I mean a deep physiological and actual physiological flow, which also includes emotional and cognitive low. But to me that's one of the most profound ways to heal trauma and also one of the one of the more profound ways, I think, to set ourselves up for really restorative sleep.

Fantastic. I thought that was a great explanation. And as you're talking, I am more aware of myself in body. And it's it just seems to me that being in that stage of acceptance, of emptying even is entirely conducive to getting to sleep or getting back to sleep.

Is that something that you do at night? Absolutely. Well, I do it throughout the day and I spend the first two and a half hours of every day doing a whole set of self-care and meditation and breath regulation and exercise and stretching practices to set my day up.

But throughout the day, I come back to that. And then when I lay down in bed, I have a very brief routine. I'm able to fall asleep pretty quickly these days, but I really try to move into sleep in in that way, in that manner.

And, you know, we can use our bodies all sensory experience arises across the spectrum, from pleasant to neutral to unpleasant, from comfort to discomfort, pleasure to pain, everything in between.

And that's just the way it is. Right. And we're pretty hardwired to chase comfort and avoid discomfort. Right. And that keeps us locked into a very mechanical way of being.

It's actually embracing the totality of our experience and just being willing to feel, you know, so many things. I mean, we have the worst opioid epidemic in history because people don't want to feel so many things that are going wrong in our culture.

And our society has to do with the way we've been acculturated to not feel and to not want to feel so we can train ourselves to be willing to feel the full spectrum.

To make a conscious choice, I think, is one of the ways we reclaim our dignity as human beings is I'm not going to live addicted to pleasure and comfort and terror of discomfort and pay more.

I'm just going to embrace the totality of my experience as a human being, and in doing so, the whole thing becomes much more workable. But even though there's always going to be discomfort and there's always going to be forms of suffering, and we're all going to grow old and die at some point.

Having said that, the body is really designed to experience bliss and really being in the body absent some cause of present discomfort, being in the body and feeling the full aliveness of being really awake to the body from head to toe inside now and then, being connected to the natural world is an incredibly blissful joyful experience.

It's how we really become alive. I love that. I think that one of the reasons people want sleep is to be awake. And

when you're awake you feel alive. And I think the discussion today was so powerful.

I want to thank you for your wisdom. Thank you for sharing your experiences. And I wonder if you can tell the audience where they can find you. Sure. Well, you can go to my basic website Fleetmaull.com, and then if you're actually and then you if you're interested in my courses and all the online summits we do, you can go to Heart Mind Institute, which is heartmind.co, heartmind.co.

You can also get there from Fleetmaull.com That's great. Thank you so much. Dr. Maull. It was a pleasure to see you today and thanks for sharing your wisdom.

My pleasure to be with you. Audrey.