Can Spiritual Care Belong in Modern Medicine? Transcript

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Introduction to the podcast and guest

I think it's like, to me, it is this foe that you're talking about or this dark side or the destructive side that, yeah, maybe it was always around the foal, you know, in this realm of life for us and through history.

And yet, he needs more balance. You know the path of light, the pathway of healing, and the pathways of wisdom. needs to grow right now to balance it out.

It's not that that's how we're going to conquer the foe. And it's never going be rise again. I like Lord of the Rings, you know. They're gonna take them down and they're probably trying to come back one day stronger than ever and it'll be another round.

But we are trying come out of that. You know, the times were such that the greed and everything had a little more latitude and people kind of forgot how bad it could get.

if we just give ourselves over to that and indulge in that, and romanticize that. Welcome to the To Curious MD podcast. I'm Dr. Ali Ahmed. And I am Dr Surya Ravan.

With the wisdom from holistic, alternative and these conventional medicines, we are here to challenge the status quo. We're curious about the connectivity and complexity between diverse fields of knowledge as a relief to consciousness, chronic illness, mental health, resilience and beyond.

learning more about the art and science of healing, or listening to stories of extraordinary healing. You're in the right place. Let's dive in. Welcome to the To Curious MD podcast where medicine is more than science.

It's story, art, connection. And we are here today with Dr. Joe Tufour, and Simi is going to introduce him. I'm so excited to have you on the podcast, Joe.

Thank you for being here. Thank you, Elia. Thank You, Saraiya. It's wonderful to be here. Yeah, thank you so much. Today is April 19th, 2026, exactly two years to the date.

April 19th DEA exemption and UCLA return

That is significant in your life and we'll be discussing that. So it feels like a very full-circled moment. Today on Two Curious MDs, we are incredibly honored to welcome a guest who truly embodies the bridge between modern science and ancient wisdom.

Joe Tafour MD is a family physician, a researcher, and an author who has spent decades exploring the frontiers of spiritual healing. Since his seminal work, The Fellowship of the River, Joe has been a leading voice in the psychedelic renaissance, particularly through his non-profit, Modern Spirit, where he works to demonstrate the value of spiritual care in modern healthcare.

He joins us today to discuss his newest book, Medicine Song as Spiritual Healing in The Psychedelic Renaissance, and to help us navigate the complex landscape of psychedelics medicine in 2026. We are those dorks, Joke.

We read your book. Key points that we'll go through. So really wonderful to have you. And as you mentioned, I think we'd start right with April 19th, because that's a day of significance for me personally.

It's my son's birthday and he was born 24 years ago. As I was reading, Ryan, finished your books, both of them, in fact, The Fellowship of the River and this one, and it's assigned coffee for my audience.

I'm so happy and proud to sign coffee. But April 19th, as we were discussing in the intro, tell us about that date in April, 19, 2024, which you allude to in a book when you're UCLA at the conference and you got that email from the DEA.

What was that moment like for you? I think in the book I talk about how I just happened to wake up very early that morning. I went to college at UCLA and I did family medicine at the UCLA.

But to be on the campus where I go to the college, they have a hotel now on campus that wasn't there when we were in college. Very close to like the student center and all that stuff.

Student Union. And so I was in the hotel and I woke up like at five or something and i just checked my email and got a message from the DEA that we had gotten our exemption, for we'd given a couple licenses for our spiritual community in Arizona, the Church of the Eagle and the Condor.

which had been in a prolonged lawsuit with the U. S. government to ask for religious protection for our ayahuasca ceremony, to work with ayahusca, sacred plant medicine from South America, and sacred ceremony that would be respected under the religious freedom protections in the United States, as there were two prior churches that are Brazilian-based churches, the Santo Daime and the UDV.

That was like 2009 and 2006, so it had been a while since anybody had got through with any kind of exemption for working with ayahuasca or any sacred plant medicine with the DEA.

And so we had been through a process and settled with the government and signed the settlement with The Department of Justice over our lawsuit to withdraw our law suit in exchange for a couple things, a number of things including having to pay for our legal fees, for infringing on our rights.

but also to receive DEA licenses to import ayahuasca and manufacture ayahusca, and distribute through this protection to also be allowed to distribute it in ceremony.

And so we have this settlement, we had the lawyers, the Department of Justice, We had all this exchange going on where we signed the documents, but there was no like, you don't know when you're going to hear about it and nobody knows and there's no guidance and no one to call.

to say, like, oh, you know, there's no one to call, to ask, hassle or bother. And so it was, I think it's in February where we kind of initiated, that I'm think signing the settlement somewhere around there.

So it had been a couple months and you're just in limbo and I happened to be there at UCLA right around that time, which for me is a special time because also one of our like holidays that we're trying to promote as a spiritual community is Earth Day, you know, which is this upcoming week, Earth day, and it's around the, following the equinox and for the Christians and the Catholics, the Easter that, we just went through and a Passover and all these other, that the Equinoxes, in all the spring, And then Earth Day being potentially like a global holiday that somehow the Earthlings could all come together around.

We're very interested in that. And so for it to hit me that morning when I wake up and I happen to be on campus. So I talk about how I go, since I was there, I'm going to go to the Botanical Garden on-campus because I know it's still there from when we were in school and it is a special place.

Just go out there and kind of have my moment and pay my respects to nature. and to the spirituality. And so I had that moment, you know, and then I got back and Ryan and I, our mutual friend, I was lecturing at USC thanks to Ra'el, my old colleague who's in the book as well, who we both just, the reason I'm in San Diego right now is because both of us were invited to present the books and the ideas from the at our medical school, you know, almost like 27 years later in a school where those things were seen as, they were so radical that the idea that we would be accepted back to talk about my work and his work that he's doing research on mindfulness and psilocybin at USC in LA.

And so I happened to be there speaking at USC and was able to announce it to the crowd that this is what's happened. So it was beautiful, I know. Yeah, so I'm really curious how it was to go back to your medical school after all these years as physicians.

We know that, yeah, the risks that both you and Raelle early in medical careers to do the work that you did and the research that brought with it some of that stigma that's attached to psychedelics, and I wonder how that felt now.

Well, and this week, by the way, so I guess yesterday, right, our dear President Trump signed his executive order to, I haven't read the details, but somehow to accelerate approval of psychedelic treatments in the United States.

That happened yesterday from executive orders from the President. And so earlier this week, Monday, was when we presented at the medical school. But, you know, I went to medical from 1999 to 2003. During that time, Raelle, my friend, had started HiMed, which was the humanistic and integrative medical, like, medical-school interest group.

Yeah. That community of Heimd actually helped seed what later became the Center for Integrative Medicine at UCSD. We know a lot of the people that have been involved, faculty, etc., that took shape and gave rise to what became this Center For Integrated Medicine.

The prior director was there and is a friend of ours, and then the current director who was also a front of bars, who's a very open-minded individual, integrative oncologist.

with a big career at UCSD and in San Diego area. He was a very spiritually oriented person who often happens to be Argentinian background.

Psychedelic medicine, epigenetics, and healing science

And so he invited us and hosted us. So we're being kind of like brought back in with open arms from something that we were And a part of at the beginning, you know, Raoul started out as one of the members, just a founding member just going to the meditation classes with Raul.

So to see it kind of like take on this life and kind as a paradigm shift and a changing of times, which is part what the medicine song, the book is about.

is that there's this very interesting shift in the paradigm happening. In all of us, it's so concerning and so worrisome the way things are going. When you go from the 1990s to the 2020s, a lot has happened and a aot has changed.

And so despite, you know, some of the very kind of scary things that are developing, there are this upswell of a lof of other things. And so where we get open arm, you know, welcome, then at the beginning, we talked it down a little bit.

And there's a discussion of like, okay, well, were hoping that this makes it onto the website of the university. So let's try and not, don't go crazy here.

Let's keep them coming over. Got it. Don't talk about anything illegal. Et cetera. Or maybe spiritual, let's be careful or be wise. So then we got into the discussion and eventually the questions.

I think it's going to make it on the website according to them and they were happy with it. But I thinking eventually, the conversation did become very open-minded and really rooted in patient care and healing.

That's what I tell them. And I've said it many other places. is that what's driving this, let's say this open-mindedness towards psychedelic treatments that now Donald Trump and others are now getting behind, is not some kind of woo-woo mind wake-up.

That's not what is driving it. It's the suffering of the society. That's reason that this thing has become a national

priority is because the current system is somehow involved in driving things into the ground.

And so we need to figure out, reflect on where we might be able to readjust. You know, because we're too much is falling through the cracks within whatever first world so-called healthcare system.

Why is there so much disease? Why there's so many illness? why is so there is much mental health suffering? And so because were trying to figure that out and the other paradigms who were so sure of themselves about how things work are coming up short.

and everybody kind of knows it. And so any kind arrogance that was coming up from behind that is losing its kind luster. So people need a little more than that, you know?

And that's what's opening the mind and then the heart of the system. That was our experience speaking at the medical school. I found them to be a very receptive environment.

And I can even ask a little follow-up to that because not only are we talking about this is not just woo, this not some ideas out of a dusty book, This is epigenetics, right?

And your work in the research on epigeneetics kind of correlates with the evidence for what we're talking here. is that something is materially changed and shifted when we're in trauma, and something has materally changed, shifted, when were healed and we can actually measure that.

And that's a very interesting space that we are heading into. I'd love to hear your work on that! Yeah, that does speak to the advances in science. You know, science is not without its merits, of course, and so now we're getting enough fine-tuned measurement capacity to explore questions about epigenetics and also explore things like neuronal networks.

What is their role? I know that Alia is using brain mapping and things even in the clinic to direct treatment approaches. So this is new kind of areas that kind are catching up to give us something to talk about from the measurable data world.

While the reality that the human consciousness is one of our most powerful instruments, within this realm that we also need to learn how to integrate and utilize in a more effective manner.

What I would say to that medical education, as we're seeing it now, the dynamic flourishing of medical knowledge or even knowledge in general, it's still intricate and we are not doing justice to what we were educating in our residents and students.

And we kind of simplistic in how we understand the human body, human mind. and not even bringing the ideas of spirituality to healing. The placebo effect, you know, is an effect.

the complexity of the neuronal networks. I can't even imagine how it is. If I was a cell in the human body, I would try to imagine what would the cell look like because it's getting all this messaging from neurotransmitters, from chemicals, mitochondria, oxygen, glucose.

from just the chemicals, the activation, this the pathways, that biochemistry, you know, we interaction is making with other cells and other systems sitting there imagining this little cell getting all these signals.

How does it even know? How is it? Even know what it means to make what it needs to shut down. It's just so complex and layered. And we're not even talking about that.

We are very systems oriented, very system, you know, cellular science, we are kind of lock related in how we educate about the body, the eye systems, cardiac, but no one's talking to each other.

The body continues to engage in all of the disparate systems and its environment and at the cellular level and the

macro level. So I know we kind of veered off into this different topic, but it's great.

It's important. I think it is important because it speaks to, again, we're talking about this, you know, consciousness or human consciousness and it role in this is that it really there is an experiential part of this, like what do we know about the cell and its activity and it's behavior, etc.

It's like, well, I mean, we're made out of cells, you know, and we are alive, so there is a huge amount of wisdom within our being. So you try to understand what in fact is going on or how does it function.

And so we are aware at some level of that, you know, down to ourselves, etc. So then it encourages us to explore as you are doing. training and understanding that is going to be more experiential, that's going open people's consciousness, whether that some meditation, you know, experience for doctors or art or storytelling or all these things, these macro level activities that are going make use of an integrated human consciousness.

that's going to be a lot more powerful. I would go ahead and just go out and say that to help people connect to that kind of understanding. And so they need those kinds of experiences, articulating out all the pathways and everything is very interesting.

It's very important. We can learn something from that. But integrating that, it's difficult at the current state of, like you said, staring at some schematic of the way the cell metabolism works.

is lost on us, you know, maybe artificial intelligence or something interacting with that around that would be somehow informative. I don't think staring at that is informative, so there needs to be something that's a little telling the full story of that that thing is alive.

Exactly. And I love how your story brings you at it from, you decided to go to the practitioners, to practitioners who have been integrating this knowledge and using this for generations and learning it through their processes.

I mean, just the process that you describe of the dieta. where somebody abstains from all sorts of external sources of different energies, like abstaining from food of certain kinds or sex or salt and spices and things like that, so that something about their body shifts them to being able to be open to a different kind of knowledge.

And you describe that so well in both your books. And then there's that moment when you're in the ayahuasca journey with Manuel Vasquez and he digs his hand into your stomach and you say, he dug his fingers deeper into my abdomen than I thought possible under my ribs, into solar plexus and around my liver and gallbladder.

I thought for sure the intense pressure would make me purge, but instead I felt a release of tension. My organs relaxed. There was more space in sight to breathe.

Wow. Yeah. Wow. Yeah, I mean, this is all happening. That's an old generation. She pure healer. Many people have had the experiences with him. And at that time was a while ago, like 2008 or something.

I know that I'm pretty sure he's still alive.

Ayahuasca ceremony, dieta, and plant intelligence

his son and so that was like you know in the early days of me going down there and experience so then you're in ayahuasca experience you don't in this ceremony and kind of a strong experience and So you go through the process of him singing ikaro to you the healing song and that journey and at that time I was you, know very altered and it was very magical and Kind of unbelievable It's very surprising to me the way they seem to be interacting with the energies within my body And then at the end of that, he, not always, but I guess when he felt called to do it, or he just, you know, say, edge update, like lay down, means like throw your body on the ground.

And so you lay it down and then, I didn't know it. He's just like, okay, yes, sir. Then he starts digging around into my guts. We started talking about, because one of the themes that I kind of weave through the book was the loss of

my father.

And so that was, I was coming there around that time when I about six months out, kind of worked through the grief around my father and had other experiences that were more difficult or more challenging.

But this one was just kind handing myself over to him without that much, a little bit of discussion with him directly, but him really focusing on his intuitive capacity, you know, within the ceremony to work on me and then to feel into my body, himself.

Also, I've been taking at least a small amount of ayahuasca to explore in my bodies. And like I said, it just seems so intrusive, as far as into the abdomen, but then provided all this relief.

And you hear that a lot about this good, at least that form of healing, this traditional people healing when they're well aligned with what they are doing, it just seems so right.

The song, the rhythm, tone, just kind of seems to be in tune with was in front of them. And so the next huge part of the training and the Dieta is about developing that.

and developing that through these particular techniques that you want to be in tune with the song or in-tune with this touch that some people may do. The interesting thing of their tradition is compared to other traditions like intuitive traditions or where people can develop skill sets through let's say meditation or mindfulness or other forms of retreat or abstinence, which we do see all over the world, right?

But in this particular one, it's guided by the plants. They say the jungle, the nature, these master plants are the ones that are going to teach you how to do that.

And it sounds so strange and wild. But then I went through that process and maybe it's not for everybody, but for me, I did gain something from that that was very surprising to me.

I mean, we're in 2026 now, even, where the perspective on plant intelligence and its kind of understanding of the scientific basis of it, We've got a lot more data now to actually tell us a LOT more about this idea of what is plant-intelligence.

When you're IN that bowl of in the jungle and with all the animals and the plants and human beings as kind-of like the intermediaries, you really are being worked upon by the plant intelligence, by intelligence that's around you in this 360 manner.

Can you explain a little bit about the Ikaro? Because when we talk about sound now, there's also a lot of research being done about how sound and our neurobiology interconnect.

We've got now a lot of interesting data coming out about, if you align TMS with music, it's more effective. That just happened. We have been using ultrasound forever for detection as well as intervention like lithotripsy where sound has been used to blast open.

So that this particular nature of sound as technology is It's in the title of your book, Medicine Songs. Can you speak a little bit to that? Yeah, medicine song and this idea of like vibration and frequency, you know, that comes up a lot and our like broader understanding.

And a friend of mine today, we were just talking to an integrative pain doctor who recommended for somebody who was really struggling with this kind of sciatica and bone spurs in their lower back, some kind ultrasound technique that was supposed to break up the tissue to facilitate healing.

I hadn't heard about that one, but it was for its actual physical, you know, effects, not just for, like you said, there's breaking stones at the kidneys.

They're now like releasing something in the tissue and also activating something through the frequency. Right. Somehow bringing the issue into a certain frequency that we understand that there would be some kind of influential frequencies within the body.

We know, we study things like the EKG and the brain waves, where the picture, the image of the frequency, that you can imagine, like, EKJ, if it was three-dimensional, and you could see this happening, right?

But imagine from here that that would a three dimensional phenomenon. that's pulsing through the entire system. And energy and magnetism and that it has its remnants further outfield and closed in.

Well, and it's direct and actually plumbed in to a blood vessel system that's flowing through the entire system. Right. So like really, really. Oh, you know, then we see like, we're just learning about like the circulatory system of plasma, this pulling water up a redwood to the top and all that, whatever that involves and the physics of it, but I'm sure that there's frequencies.

as physics and then within the physics there's frequencies and energies and harmonies that play a role and there is like coherences that happen. You hear that hard math or the brain hard coherence even the electric systems and how that would be so important And then the autonomic nervous system, and that way that's flowing in the vagal system and the polyvagal.

And so all these systems that have their rhythm and like the heart rate variability as an example of that, the truth is like I guess that the the heartbeat is controlled by kind of a yin and a yang of the sympathetic system that kind say, hey, let's speed up and let the person say let slow down.

It's the dance. between the two that's, you know, creating this ray that is fluctuating within a kind of rhythm that turns out there's kind a more harmonious type of one of those and increased variability within the, that it's not perfect but it is still on time.

Right. And there's something healthy about that in the system, and you want that flexibility and that versatility. So all those things are at play in then the biological system on top of things that are happening at the biochemical level.

And so by connecting to nature, we're talking about at beginning and trying to really kind of bring to life your own living spirit, that which is participating in that.

Yeah. You know, not that which is like observing it or analyzing it, or, you know. Huh. No, that's, like, actually I am. Yeah. That. And then within the forest, which doesn't have that pretense, you know, it's not like troubled by this like cortex that's going to be like thinking, am I doing, Am I really doing that?

Like just pure being in awareness of its pure be the animals, the plants and the ecosystem function in its own set of frequencies together in a sustainable you know, um, symphony.

And so that, that becomes, in this case for the Ikaros, it becomes the music for you to follow. So you train to see Ikaro listening to the forest because the force is loud at night around you.

You're going to come into that rhythm and use that to guide you, to make sure you're kind of, you not off, key, so to speak, to be guided by this community of nature or say the natural system, the ecosystem, there's so much we can learn from it and the forest bathing and all that kinds of stuff that is gaining more attention and any kind of reconnection and re-immersion.

And those environments can be so helpful to people in so many circumstances and urban planning that doesn't keep that in mind. a cultural dead end, I would say, waiting for to come around until I guess until the health declines in the community far enough that people wake up to say we can't leave our children in that kind of circumstance.

We need to do something about that and bring more access to that natural harmonious rhythm from the nature

back into our lives because it's such a resource.

And the living system, like I say which is existing, in this realm of, you know, with all of its mysteries and is in full awareness of the transcendent aspects of our universe, quantum matter.

The tree is completely aware as much as everything else is. Yeah. And so then the natural ecosystem provides this example, like I say, of what a loving, supportive community looks like that can create an environment for you to be safely held in your vulnerability without judgment.

And, so the forest can teach you how to provide that. That's poetry. I just felt like I saw that kind of the forest can teach you because it can show you that you can attune with it and that there is something there to attuned to.

And you have spent years in that attunement and in listening. It almost feels like as you're describing and when we talk about the quantum realm and all these kind unseen forces, You could describe how does a spiderweb accurately always build itself on this template it feels like, right?

It gets it right each time. And there's some field lines that we know that migrating birds and butterflies and migrating animals, whales follow as they're traversing our great planet.

And I feel like what you're describing is that in the Amazon, we figured out, or the people of the traditions that connect with this great life, the sacred earth, this being, somehow found their way to that alignment and then held it and developed it.

And that became who they were. That was their role in this Great Unfolding. Yes, I think there's definitely a truth to that and a beautiful shining example from the Amazonians and many other indigenous traditions or ancestral traditions that are connected to sacred spaces and places that interrelated with nature all over the world.

And it's also kind of a testament to the reality that we're all like tuning to our environment. So that's part of the apparatus of The Human Being. And so just as we kind of get tuned in and can drive home on autopilot and not even remember where we went or just go through our routines in our house, we're communicating with our environment at that level, at intimate, in-depth level and we are heavily influenced.

You know, influenced in a strong way by the environment. And so it's something for us to consider.

Sound, vibration, and the role of nature

That's why I say, you know hey, it is so nice for to think about bringing more of that natural influence into our environments because it can help us tune to a more physiologically harmonious frequency.

And I'm very aware now that we do ketamine therapy that one of the things that let people know after they've had a psychedelic experience, let's say with ketamine, is that they're going to be more sensitive to disharmony and harmony.

And people notice that, right? It's like, don't go out in traffic right after. People don' like traveling in our home because by then the nervous system has gone back to that same set point that it needed to to able to resist So I feel like sometimes what we're learning from the nervous system is that it's reacting to and coping with and yeah, a living in a disharmonious rhythm kind of in this way in our modern life.

And that is kind at the baseline of our ailments if you want to talk about it on that frequency level in some way. Does that kind of? Yeah. No, that's true.

It's been like, you know, the sum of the, like I said, because it's maybe not as holistically minded. So that in other words, they would take into account these realities of that, although they may be subtle and maybe people may not notice until they're on ketamine or coming off of mushrooms in some cases, some people maybe more sensitive and struggling with the current situation more than the others.

but the system could get a little bit jaded and callous to this. And so it's a factor. So then what is it adjusting to? And then because the considerations of, let's say, the development of the city were too abstract, that they were to abstract derived from ideas around just like, You know, some of them are very practical.

Some of em are maybe overly materialistic and denying the influence of some these other subtle things that we're talking about. And so then you dig yourself into a hole, paint yourself onto a corner.

where you've created an environment that doesn't take into account the kinds of things that maybe now we can measure. They said, oh, that's nothing. And now you can't measure it down the road.

Oh, this is hard on people. That's hard. On people, This is art on People. Yeah. So we're kind of like waking up and trying to find the balance. There's some balance there because you could have the kind of new age movement or maybe claiming more than it has evidence for or somehow saying things in a way that somehow is not gaining the traction with a larger society.

And so that's why I say, well, let's start focusing on the health and well-being. Let's use the Health and Well-Being to help indicate to us, are we out of alignment?

that would be key. Yeah, absolutely. I love how you call this word greed rot. Is that what you're referring to in the book? Yeah. Greed rot would an example of that, of exactly this, where the driving force is something that is unhealthy, openly unhealthy in its origins.

We know that. Everybody knows that but then to really illuminate it in a way that's like, well, what is it actually? So then right now we're going through this thing where we've been, you know, like so many areas in the world, putting on a pedestal, the most greedy.

And, there's one thing to be successful and to ambitious, but there is another, and so then that is fine and be able to produce and make things happen and job creator, et cetera, etc.

But then there was this level of greed, learned about in all the spiritual traditions around the planet. And then in the case of greed where we could say, okay, at what point does this look like some kind of emotional disturbance?

And in a same way like any other form of addiction, So we're learning more and more about addiction and learning that this addiction to alcohol or to other substances in many cases is kind of rooted in trauma, rooted and some kind emotional instability or disequilibrium or problem that within the system seeks to get out of how it feels and wants some kinda mood altering experience to happen.

So it goes to food addiction or it go to drugs and alcohol or gambling or the thrill of material wealth. And so we see in the associated thrills that you would have access to.

Okay, in the case of alcohol, where, you know, as a doctor, there's a criteria when you're going from, drinking alcohol as an adult to problem use, to addiction or disease, mental health problem.

Yeah. And there is a criterion that involves having trouble at work. you know, having trouble with your family, getting in trouble, with the law, lying about what you're doing.

You know there's this sick criteria that kind of indicate, oh, this is actually not like, you are not just a fan of wine. you could have a little major trauma issue that needs some help or you have mental health problem or a major emotional disturbance brewing inside you.

And so when we see people do that with their greed, I would say we should very clearly be able to indicate that that is exactly that kind of problem. When they start poisoning the water where their children drink, when they started harming their own families and their communities, you know, recklessly, then that's a sign of a deep emotional problem, and so I call that greed rot.

I love that. to pray to that, to the greed raw, something becomes grotten. Yeah. And this is such a great word for our time right now. It's a sign of trauma.

With the increasing inequities, it's the absolute just greater and greater kind of wealth accumulation and just this lack of empathy that comes from that.

Yes, absolutely. It brings disease, clearly. It bring disease when we talk about frequencies and energies and everything you're talking about, it brings diseases quite often.

The person suffering with Greed Rod has to take a pill to go to sleep, has take pill, to wake up, hasn't take the pill. To do this, do that. You know, everything is pharmacologically supplemented because the system is great.

And you know, our plants teach us this, right? It's like if you have a plant that's adapted to the desert and you water it too much, it will rot. It is out of balance with this ecosystem.

That plant, that body, movement of minerals and nutrients and water and when it's unbalanced. Parameters. And that's what you're talking about here is that that happens in humans when our greed, our need for material goods becomes pathological and then substance abuse problems are kind of a layer on top of that because that is just a symptom of the disbalance.

Yeah. That's how they come to light. But that disconnectedness that is at the root of it is that disharmony. It's like I, as a being, don't feel harmonized with everything I'm in, and therefore it starts a process of searching, grasping, needing.

And that becomes a personality. That becomes the way of life. Well, that's culture. which has happened in the Western world. So that's kind of correct.

That's the kind culture that would create an urban planning scenario that will leave a lot of people in unhealthy circumstances. Right. Does that make sense?

That makes sense absolutely. Because someone is supposedly making money off of that. To supposedly make them happy because they bought a boat. And it turns out they're not happy.

No, because that is not even part of what's making them unhappy. It's not really working out. Too disconnected, as you said. Exactly. And what we're noticing in psychedelic healing is that time and again, we are seeing people becoming more nature-connected, more connected to themselves, and more connect to their communities.

And so you're right in stating at the beginning that we're coming to this opening up to psychedelic medicine through suffering, because that's how big change happens in human beings is we have to be humbled.

And now we are at a place where we kind of understand how it's working. Back to your question though about coming full circle. Right, where we're coming full circle to your historical past, to you father's story.

Tell us a little bit about that experience that you had with your father on the bench on that sunset view and the dream that had and why was that important to every moment in your life?

It's kind of like a little bit of a thread through the book, you know, and I love my father. I have come from a very supportive family in general. And so, I'm grateful in not trying to overly criticize him or anything, but just the honesty of what it's like to be alive and be a human being and the different things that might impact us or affect us.

So I opened the books talking about my big car accidents, right, when I was 16, 17. and got ejected from a rolling car and had this big kind of spiritual opening.

And my dad was a psychiatrist. He's a doctor and spiritually oriented. But anyways, it was just my circuits were kind blown and surviving that and getting taken away in a helicopter and coming to the hospital that way and come into

a hospital where my daddy used to work.

and where he was given some room to, you know, walk in and talk to people and tell people what's going on and then trying to imagine in retrospect like his shock, of receiving the phone call of your son was just ejected from a car and helicopter and he's at the hospital.

Why don't you come? And him trying to, I guess, compose himself through that, you know, and then coming in and just being overwhelmed. And then the care was incomplete that I had.

There was a bunch of glass and my leg under my shorts that no one saw, that he discovered.

Greed rot, imbalance, and modern suffering

Then, he's angry with them over that and protecting me. So coming out of all that experience and going back to the car with him, being released from the hospital under his care, and walking with crutches with some stitches to the car and just him being angry.

I guess he's overwhelmed with his emotions and doesn't know until the night of me shutting down a little bit in that state and maybe in other circumstances.

Who knew what to do in the time? I didn't think about how that was affecting me. and just having to put that away. Whatever that experience was, as open-minded as my family is and was but nobody really knew what I went through.

So there I was with that and then having go back into normal rhythm of life and having anxiety from accident and different things and like, whoa, just your system is a little fried.

I'd been in a few car accidents before that as a passenger, so it was just like strange lump. It was intense. Then going all the way to the end of the book, where I talk about having a ketamine experience after all these ayahuasca ceremonies and so many healings from this ship people healer and many others.

And then having psychotherapist caring for me while I'm on ketamine and having her pull on threads in me as if it was like the e-cuddle and feeling it that way and experiencing it.

That way, and her just and me working, working on my relationship issues and then she says, I think there's a hurt in your heart that you haven't you know, healed.

And it's not that that was the only hurt in my heart, but that's what came up. It's a layer, right? It was more complicated, and it was not all my dad's fault.

But it is a, it a layers that I had not addressed. The layer was, It took me back to that moment of just feeling the shutdown that happened when I was like, And so reliving the way that we walk people through it and ayahuasca ceremony that I've been part of many times where you're having people in a spiritual realm, you know, reparent themselves or do provide what, our family was not aware of or capable of providing in that time.

and just like holding myself, you know, like the way I wanted to be held the, way, I hope my dad held me. That was my experience. And just the lacking layers of kind of anxiety just shed, in that moment and those experiences.

So it was just kind, and then it went into other things, but that was a big deal. It happens to me, what do you mean? And it was a big kind of scare and I really felt like, well, something shifted.

I was able to shift something. And so it's a little while later and so in the book I talk about the way dreams are, you know, similar portals to some of these psychedelic experiences, some people's deeply spiritual experiences.

And that a lot of people have contact with deceased loved ones, even in Ketamine. You know, I've seen it happen

many times, in ayahuasca for sure. And then in dreams, you know many people describe this.

So it was like in the wake of that, of like, where I was, like oh I wish my dad was able to be a little more touchy with me. Yeah, it held you. I could have used more of that, like I think I didn't realize that because that's not the way we were.

So then to have him come to me in a dream after all that when I'm sleeping out in the desert next to beautiful hot springs and among beautiful people.

Yeah. And just have them come visit me and put his arm around me, and lean on me. I get it. And sharing that was a nice, it was beautiful thing. I think when my mom read it, she was like a little bit like, oh, did we screw you up?

No, that kind of thing and then she's like no, no it's good. It's honest. People, they need to hear it And so I was like, yeah, it was a layer. You know, I tried to say that in the book too.

It wasn't the whole story, but it an example of the kind of healing that happens. And it for the art of storytelling, you know a way to full circle. So that's what that dream was about.

Yeah, so much of this kind of work or psychedelic work, or even our own healing work and healing what we see in others is in those moments of connection, when we make connection either with the song, with that hummingbird that you described as well in the book, and with what nature has to tell us and the connection that it's speaking and in a connection of our past and a connexion of the people and even that spiritual connection for people who have passed.

I think I've also witnessed this many times over with patients, particularly with ketamine, of course. Primarily, I have most experience with the ketamines.

And when we're talking about integrative and the circuitry in the neuronal network, is there something particular about ayahuasca and ketamin that hits that memory circuit?

It's a good question. I would say that it happens with other substances too. And so then I talk about it in the book, I throw that out there and just for fun, that there was, you know, my friend Ryle is a neuroscientist and EEG researcher and, and I've met Robin Card Harris and circles and these people who are the big like neurosciences.

Then you see I was in University of Texas, Austin and the guy that guy's trashing the default mode network research. You know, you hear all these different perspectives, but I think up to that point and what I was exposed to in that knowledge, there was a theme of this default mode network that there, I would say that, networks.

Networks. And the networks being these kind of functional patterns in the brain that are kind magical rhythms and part of the reality of these magical liveliness, vitality that we were talking about.

You know, the spirit for us is like the way you're sitting in the forest and also something scares the birds and all these birds. These things are happening within us like that, you know in different ways and their patterns and things that can be overly conditioned from the past.

and that can be so kind of cut in loops and vortices that are not able to flow with our present experience. And so that disconnectedness, that lack of coherence, interconnectedness that may be a scar or something, you know, of the past.

It's very interesting the type of memories that do come up in that particular moment. Right. Why would that particular memory or dream experience come up for you in that very subconscious altered state of consciousness?

Why? That's still the question I don't think we can ever answer, you know, scientifically, I think. Well, and the scientists can sit there and just argue with each other about it for a long time, as long as they'd like.

And meanwhile, we're there helping people through that. Yeah. You know, so I don't ask them why. I want to know what comes from that, because the spirit is talking.

That's how we talk about it. So it's like somebody tells me the other day, I was in ketamine, ketamin retreat, and somebody brought up how it took him on this memory chain about their grandfather, that he had died when he was very young.

He didn't have a lot of contact with his grandfather. And so it just made him, because he there was something he trying to reconnect with and his sense of being with himself.

and he just said, you don't know that's who came up for him. So I said, you know, another perspective again, because these are great mysteries. So like I say, they can argue the same arrogance we were talking about earlier today.

It's like, not that impressive. Like, I'm not impressed by your arrogant attitude about how the brain is working or why these certain memories come up or you told me that it's the computer, the computers shutting down and that's why I see the white light and go through the, okay, that is about as solid as anything else anybody else just said.

completely house of cards. So we can, you know, relax, so then in that environment where I've been around these people healing and we're using that to guide like why we would say something or why would we talk about something and I said to him, You know what I see sometimes at the ayahuasca and and i see it happen with the ketamine too sometimes.

Sometimes when you shut down these networks like this, like we were just talking about, and we see with the psilocybin research that it's so common that they would have these mystical experiences when the networks are affected in this way by these certain class of medicines that I guess are working through different receptor systems, but they all seem to open up this mystical access in some kind of related way in its effect on the network among other causes.

But that's part of it. And so when you open those with this, the GABA or this one or the, you know, IBA game, it's all the receptors involved. And then, but then the DMN or networks, things shift and then woo, there's some kind of portal that opens for some people and that allows for this different kind access, that maybe other people can have access to just in their waking state.

With this guy having that, I said to him, you know what happens sometimes with ayahuasca or what they say, what I witnessed in the traditional kind of way of thinking?

Sometimes when we all do that and do it together and we open these, it's like a beacon. It's a like beacon, and then… It seems like permission, if you'll…

Not just permission. I would just throw this out there for the fun of the conversation that it called the spirits. Yeah. And I said, I think your grandfather's looking for you.

You know, because when you see something open, it's something you met, oh, my grandfather. We say, like in Spanish, we say like, if I dream with my grandmother, We don't say I dreamed about my grandfathers.

Sonieco mi abuelo. I Dream with My Grandfather. We found each other in the dream world. So I said, He's looking for you. Go look for Him. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe it's nothing, you know, Maybe it is just something to say.

But to me in my heart and soul, I have a responsibility to share what I feel. And so I tell him, I think, you know, tell us about him. Where does he live?

Where did he go? What one is you lose track? Go see what that is. So sometimes there's messages and of course there can be charlatans and there so much room to confuse ourselves and project into that space.

And we have to be skeptical and we're wise to skeptical. Yeah. There's more than we are aware. there is a mystery that we were a part of. I think this is a concept in medicine I wish we had more of.

And we talk about a narrative medicine than having narrative humility to the story that we think we are interpreting. It could be a whole different story and it could a different feeling for that person or that experience.

and how we need to be always in check with that in any kind of practice and especially in psychedelic medicine. I think there is this danger of interpreting and forcing our projections of our own experiences in the medicine while the person is in medicine, which is a very, very delicate balance.

In this case, this was the next day. This was during a conversation and it was just a suggestion of maybe you should find out more about him. But you're right, it is very delicate.

It's a delicate matter. And I think you allude to it when you had that conversation with your mom about not feeling connected with our spirituality and we're losing that sense of spirituality in our daily lives.

As we used to live, we still really think about in all practices, you pray five times a day. You're in constant in check with. that reality that you are nothing in front of the bigger being of things.

Fatherhood, grief, and ketamine healing

And there's a reminder, there is a ritual, but so much of that is being lost in so many ways in our culture, in all of those things that we have to do in the daily struggles.

And that's really why we're seeing this epidemic of mental health and this urgency for something to connect us back to that. And psychedelics and the psychedelic renaissance is very much driven by that factor, I feel.

Yeah, I would agree with you. I'd say just that the modern society, so that's why we're trying to, and I'm saying the psychedelic renaissance may be helping to illuminate a more universal spirituality.

And so there is the capacity for a universal more spirituality, which is about what you said, coming into that reverence to feel and be nourished by that interconnectedness.

and that wisdom meant to help open us to greater humility and again, wisdom and guidance versus being a springboard for religious war. That would be usually greed rot.

I would go ahead and say 100% driving that. Yeah. But I have to say that that is my, and the weather force, but there's a major red flag of like, oh, is this greed out of control?

and now we're doing this in the name of spirituality. So then, because of these kinds of religious traumas that so many of us have been through and that people, you know, the separation of science and spirituality and all these things have come to try to open a door to a more universal kind of thing that has been thought of up to now, I guess, secular.

But the secular is going to rise to this. So the psychedelic clinical renaissance has, following medical treatment of human beings, has given rise to this reawakening of an interest in spiritual healing.

Yeah, which is I think the commonality that all psychedelics have is the ego and disengaging with the eagle mind or the Eagle being for a period of time however long that is in that state and having that sense of awareness to something else.

And as we talk about the mystical experiences, you know, the external internal unity, this sense empathy and connection that seems to be the communality in what we see in this work.

And I would also say it's not just medicine, you know, breath work, the other ways of living, other way of just being

in nature and just be in awe. I mean, just being in awe of a simple looking at the flower and just think I'm just, I just can't imagine how beautiful this is.

And I think those are the small psychedelic experiences we're having all the time. Yeah. What a wonderful, wide ranging conversation. I want to just allude to this idea that I we've been getting at is the beauty of the human spirit and spirit itself.

just how precious it is is something that our patients really wake up to sometimes. You know, you mentioned that some people can feel that with the medicine.

Some people feel it, with different traditions and things like that. But all along throughout history for hundreds of years, that human spirit has been co-opted, monetized, ravaged the Watiko, the cannibalism.

This is not a new place to be in that way, this is an old foe. Right? This a fo that's been around for generations. and it's so deeply embedded into our systems that we may not even be able to see it because our culture tells us that everything is okay, but we feel it, right?

Our nervous systems feel that greed rot. And so, when we're talking about this mental health crisis, this is a being, a spirituality, consciousness that feels misaligned with itself, its body and its kind of way of living and the way not where they should be, and yet here we are.

And sometimes when I talk to people like you, Joe, who are on the front lines, you put your body in front of the courts. You didn't shy away from that.

you didn' back away putting your foot on that and saying, no, this is the line. This is where we stand. In medicine, I feel this way in which our ancestors are looking at us.

and are smiling, are seeing where we are right now with a sense of pride, because I can't imagine what it must have been like for those hundreds of years to go through the absolute decimation.

of our kind of indigenous ways of being, like the hundreds of thousands of people, the traditions, we are just trying to hold on to the remnants of it right now.

A lot of is faded. The Amazon is under threat. We are not out of the woods yet. And so as we're kind going into this 2026, this book that you're taking around, I'd like to maybe leave you with our final question.

It's like, what are you curious about? What is driving you? what is bringing you to the fight again and again? And because it is such a generational, such an ancestral, like at least for the three of us, i know for a fact we resonate on this.

I came to this work and I felt my grandfather's hand guiding me in some way because he was a healer. You know, we feel these spirits through us and we heeded not knowing where they're going to lead us, right?

I'll leave you there. Yeah. I think to me it's this foe that you're talking about or this dark side or the destructive side that, yeah, maybe it is always around the foal in this realm of life for us and through history, and yet it needs more balance.

The path of light, the path healing, needs to grow right now to balance it out. It's not that that's how we're gonna conquer the foe. And it's never gonna be rise again.

I like Lord of the Rings, you know. They're going to take them down and probably try to come back one day stronger than ever and it'll be another round.

But we are trying to out of that. You know, the times were such that the greed and everything had a little more latitude and people kind of forgot how bad it could get.

If we just give ourselves over to that and indulge in that, and romanticize that. And then you learn the hard lessons and then the wisdom kind of gains more traction again.

So we're part of that force. You know, and so for the sake of the earth, for each other, the children, our own lives, that even if we don't save the world, when we lay down to die, we can examine our lives and that also makes a big difference to people.

What did you do? What were the circumstances of world for Buddha or these other individuals? It wasn't all worked out. There was a lot of chaos. But, you know, the ecosystem was definitely healthier.

We can say that, we can agree on that. So trying to find some more opportunity for life to thrive, that's what we seek and for the health and wellness of our world.

And even if we save it, even if it's over the edge, then the legacy for the survivors is still something that interests us. So, I don't know, back to the Lord of the Rings.

I really enjoyed Rings of Power on Amazon Prime. No one cared, no one seemed to pay attention. But I think we talked already to Ali about it. It was all about the rise of Sauron, you know?

So they go back, but now the Havel, the Mordor, now we're ready to take them on. He's been sitting there too long. When did it start? How did he get up that high with all these elevated beings and the elves and everybody and all their wisdom and their connectedness?

And you see, it was this ego thing, right? It was a diabolical ego, thing to deceive people, to let people fool themselves into this isn't what I think it is, this is good.

I know this looks bad and it feels bad, but there's, I'm sold. And so you go for it. And then there's a scene where now the big elf, Alinkaladriel, who's so ashamed that she sold out.

She fell for it, to the great deceiver, and turned him, gave him the keys to The Kingdom. And now she's in so much shame for destroying her world. Now she is confronting him directly.

Like, now I know who you are. You're Sauron. He's doing what he does, which is the bluff of you're never ever ever going to be able to beat me.

Mystical experience, spirituality, and the fight for balance

Never. I am the most powerful being that exists. And you know it's true. You know, that's his story. Yeah, yeah. So she says with her, whatever she has, she's the good people of Middle Earth will always resist you.

Yeah. So it's not gonna, we're not just gonna roll over. Yeah, you know, never, that's never ever where human beings on this earth, everybody knows that.

I think that the struggle will always be there. People want to have a good time, people want live something healthy. That's a human being like a tree that grows.

I love that, because you mentioned that it's the fear of how susceptible we are, vulnerable we, are to somebody who says, I'm the most powerful and you can't get past me.

And then the reality, which is we're people and we'll humans and will always try harder. We will go towards wholeness and justice. I was in New York and there was a display that I saw in a museum.

It says, we are the 99.9 percent. We are, the ninety-nine point nine percent, so we have power. And to somebody say that they have a power over you is them asserting their power you.

You don't have to accept that. So we have the situation just to finish it off for whatever it's worth. Thank you. Where they say that in the United States that the Big Farm Mom, you know, for example, will never allow certain things to happen, because it is against their greed rot or the business interests of certain entities that are unfortunately a little bit lost in that.

You know we can have compassion for these people that is going to live down this life span. And this is what I did. And so while we don't know, and some of it's good, you know?

And some it is helping. But still there's this part that they said, oh no, they're not going to let this happen. So the MDMA went up for approval, FDA.

They said no. After I was part of the MAPS research with epigenetics thing that we did, hearing very closely about their interrelationship with the FDA, every step of their ways, phase one, two, three, how much communication there was.

to try to put everything in order to their liking, at least negotiate it, and then to have it turned on them was really kind of a shock. They have their argument that people can kind run with that argument, or they could inject the social media with a counter-argument, as we see so commonly in today's world.

And so then that's what happened. And then they shut down all this momentum of the psychedelic movement and a lot of venture capital people pulled back.

I forget this. These guys don't know what they're doing. They don' know they are up against, they don''t know how they''re doing and they can't do this, you know.

So then Australia says, nah, that''s pretty solid evidence. We're ready to move forward with MDMA. But not because we care who's what or you're a writer, because, we have people that need help.

And this is very powerful, it looks like, to help our people. So we want to start exploring this. Canada as well. They say, oh, like you never ever, you are never, ever going to be able to go back to your medical school and tell this story.

It's the suffering that has brought us here. of your mom, of you child, somebody that breaks your heart. That's why we're here. I didn't come because I want to talk to you.

Oh, that's it. And so then that was happening. The thing is, you didn't even know your heart was broken until you saw it broken. Until you opened that wound and you said, oh my God, this was the one that hurt me.

Yesterday, the regime that we were so concerned about said you know what, we're going to say okay. Whatever the FDA said two years ago, I don't know, We're not so worried about that anymore.

We are going ahead and tip the scales. Because like Rick Perry, the ex-governor of Texas said at the MAPS conference a few years ago, there's nothing about this psychedelic stigma that is more important than these people's lives.

Right. Well said, well stated. You know, so that's why, that is the spirit that keeps breathing. And such a modern spirit you have, Joe, I love this. Yeah, you do have a Modern Spirit.

I know that. Modern spirit. We are demonstrating the value of spiritual healing in modern healthcare, modern spirits. In modern health care. Oh, beautiful.

Absolutely. How can people reach you? MarronSpirit.org is a big thing that we're promoting, you know, that's our big comma forward thing. DrJoe2First.com has some things on there.

We're trying to get people to read the medicine song, look at Fellowship of the River now that these things are

more and more okay. And it's available on audio.

It's on audible. Yeah. Nice. I haven't put it on Spotify yet. Okay. But I'm giving it more time. Well, it is a very, very good book and I read it three fourths of it.

After our meeting and after I, I wrote three-fourths of and it took me about two, another month to finish, but you know, read through it and was such a beautiful read.

And I really, I'm going to post my review as well on this, and I feel like this really speaks to so many people. And I do look forward to having you coming to our center to do a reading, And we'll make that announcement to audience as Well.

Simmi, I hope you to be there as. Wonderful. Thank you so much, Joe, for being here today. Thanks for joining us on the Two Curious Andy podcast. We hope today's episode inspired you To ask new questions and explore fresh perspectives.

We challenge you to ask us those unasked questions that you're curious about in your medical practice, condition, health and wellness. If you enjoyed the podcast, don't forget to subscribe, share it with somebody just as curious and leave us a review.

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