Introduction and shared passion for nature

Welcome back to ADHD, Autism and Chronic Disease Parenting Summit. I'm here with my good friend Rob herring, who is the founder of Earth Conscious Lake.

We've worked on a whole bunch of projects together in the past, from our previous summit to his amazing film. And I'm working on a bunch of new films at this point.

But we love you, love soil and nature and all the things about the earth. So, you know, thank you for being here and I'm excited to talk about nature.

Yeah, it's a pleasure. Thanks for having me. Doctor Joel, I'm always excited to to geek out a little bit about the science that, you know, reminds us what's really intuitive is that we are nature.

We're part of the ecosystem. And that the health of the ecosystems and that relationship that we have to the outdoors, as simple as that, really does have a profound impact on our health, the health of our kids, the health of our families.

So excited to dive in with you. Yeah, I think, you know, we both walk the walk when we're talking about this. I mean, you know, for me, I still live in LA.

But I moved out, you know, into the middle of the mountains where there's a lot more nature. And it has made a big difference for me in terms of my mental health.

I always knew that, like, you know, being in the middle of, you know, the Valley and where there were just noise and cars was really very difficult on me for my for my sleep.

And I know for you, you know, you always had mentioned that that being similar as well. So could you just maybe start by talking about how important nature really is and how we are part of nature?

Because I think it's funny. Like we forget about it. We're like in these little boxes and we forget that we're part of the world.

Why humans need nature and natural rhythms

Yeah, in some ways it seems too obvious, but I feel like looking back at natural systems and how they operate can you can really apply it to almost everything in your life.

You know, when we're talking about things like agriculture or gardening, there's a study called permaculture and many people may have heard about this more and more these days.

And the permaculture principles is really about looking at how nature does things and using that as a blueprint. And some people are taking that those permaculture principles and applying it to human health.

But I've really found that these, these analogies of how nature does things is it's across the board. So, you know, like you said, just exposure to unnatural noises.

We're learning about the actual science of things like exposure to birdsong and what that does to your mental health. I mean, really profound. In just a few minutes of hearing birds chirp, it kind of recalibrates your nervous system.

We're learning so much more about light. It's becoming more and more popular now because we're all exposed to this blue light. People are hearing, well, blue light blocking glasses.

But as you dive into the science on something like that, you remember that our species evolved with the sun rising at a certain time, the sun's setting at a certain time.

Other than fire light, which is also that amber color, like a sunset or a sunrise. We weren't really exposed to light at night. So this concept of blue light, you know, our kids are being exposed to screens ad nauseum at this point, and many of us are reaching a point where we're feeling that disconnect.

We're feeling the dissonance, something, you know, this can't be me feeling my best. So I think we're going to see more and more of a movement of returning to, well, is that natural?

Now just because something's natural, some people will dismiss that. Is that woo woo or is it science? It doesn't mean just because something's natural, like a snake Venom's natural or poison Ivy's natural or getting.

You know, Lightning's natural doesn't mean these things are all safe for you. The point is, was it in our nature as we evolved as human beings, so we weren't evolving to be exposed to some of the other things that just exist in the outdoors.

But the things that we did evolve with, which meant, you know, sunrise in the morning, exposure to those red wavelengths, sunset at night, exposure to the same color spectrum, and what's happening in between sunrise and sunset.

And then when light goes away. So light is a fascinating one. But I've really found the pillars of the elements to be a great way for us to think about it.

So air, earth, water and fire. And where do the each of these fall in those categories? Everything that we do in our lives can come back to somewhere within in those elements.

And then what's the closest way that we can get to nature? Because we're not all going to go back and live in a cave and shut off all of our devices. You know, we're on a computer screen right now.

Everybody watching this or listening to it is using a device, but how can we get back to it as close as we can? Right. It's just like any sort of rest and restoration we need, we need to be conscious.

So yeah, no, I just have been there for a second before we go into the elements, because, you know, what you said is so profound in that we need to be thinking about the way that we evolve.

It's not that modern medicine or science is bad. It's not. It's amazing. I mean, we can cure things that we would have died from a few years ago. Like you said, some things are bad and in nature, and some are not good for us at least.

And some things are are very good for us. But we've moved so far away and we're so disconnect from it that yes, we're, you know, better at treating a pneumonia.

So that can keep you alive. But we also are seeing an absolute explosion in chronic disease and mental health. And anybody who's paying attention at all, anyone who's in integrative health at all, anyone who's knows anything about health at this point knows that all of this stuff is connected.

And and yes, you can have some sort of genetic disorder. But mostly what we're seeing these days is just lifestyle.

Air, green space, and the healing power of outdoors

And we're so disconnected and miserable because we're living a life that we were not used to and we're never

meant to live. And so it's like it's not throwing away all the new stuff that we've learned.

It's just coming back somewhere closer to balance. And for you, that might mean, you know, moving to the middle of nowhere. It might mean that it might mean moving to Iraq. I mean, people do it.

I know people that had health issues and they moved to, you know, middle of nowhere Hawaii or they moved to the middle of the country in America, or they moved to, you know, European country, Portugal, Iceland, wherever they they'll go somewhere to be more a part of nature.

And that worked for a lot of people. It might not totally work for some people and that that's possible. But at the same time, you know, if you are going to live in a city, well, maybe you don't live in the middle of the city.

Maybe you live somewhere on the outskirts, maybe you plan to garden. Maybe whatever. There are so many things that you can do to kind of bring bounce back for yourself, right?

And that is what needs to happen. I think it just needs to happen at this point. I think we're we're we're past the point where it should have already started happening.

And instead of moving this way, corporations have kind of brainwashed us. But hopefully people start to wake up and then we start to build more community gardens and, you know, other things like that that are pretty simple, that could be done.

We could we could find a middle ground here, I think. Yeah. The irony is that some of these technologies have advanced. It enables some of us to move further away from the city and still be connected from the career standpoint or, you know, being able to face time with our families, even if we're not in the exact same area.

For me, too, you know, I lived in cities for 18 years, New York City and Los Angeles, you know, the two biggest cities in America. And after moving to a place with a lot more nature within that first week, it was, you know, really a breath of fresh air, both literally and metaphorically, because, hey, I wasn't exposed to the actual contaminants in the air.

So literally the air is being filtered. It's not being polluted as much, but there's there's richer, cleaner air, which is such a pillar of our health.

I mean, when we look at food and water will air as and when we can't live without for just a mere few minutes. So we always want to start with air. And that means opening our windows as much as humanly possible.

Even in a city, the outdoor air is unless there's, you know, something like a, a fire or a big contamination is always healthier than the indoor air. There's so many pollutants inside.

So getting air filter, it's got to be step one. If you don't filter it, you become the filter with food, water, air. But within that first few days, you know, it really, you can feel your nervous system relax, but you can also accomplish that in a city in a green space.

And that could be something like a community garden. I remember when I was living in the city, and we would spend time on community gardens, and you could really notice, and I believe there are studies that have shown this physiologically that your heart rate, your blood pressure, and things are more regulated when you're in that green space.

Even if you hear the sounds of the city outside and the cars going by, or the people you know going by. But something about being, nestled again in a natural setting has a real physiological impact.

So it's not just, placebo effect. We've seen studies where patients in the hospital, when they are exposed to living things like green flowers or plants, they do have a better recovery time.

So there is something really important about sending flowers. People in the hospital, it's amazing that we're in this technologically advanced society.

And still our hospital settings are really not using the most cutting edge, surroundings of environment food. It's terrible. Food is is obnoxious. And the, you know, the the lighting and just the scenery in there is not always tailored to to healing.

Even sometimes it's this was wild that, you could actually have a picture of, of a beautiful nature scene in a hospital and that apparently increased healing just by having that as opposed to an empty, you know, sterile wall.

So there's something hardwired into our brain and there's this concept called biophilia or biophilia. That is the idea that we all are hardwired to be nature lovers and that our brains really evolved with, with this exposure to nature.

Grounding, soil microbiome, and immune resilience

And so as we remove ourselves from this, you know, technology is moving so fast that we don't we forget that we're living in an experiment now, each generation.

But at this point, it's almost each year, right? Look at the advancement of AI or the next technology that people are going to start adopting. You know, the world has changed since the smartphone.

It changed with the internet. Now it's changing again. With AI, all of these things are experimental. We don't know when the same way that the society didn't know what smoking was doing and when.

Everybody was just kind of doing it unconsciously thinking, you know, what's the big deal? So I think it we're, we're it's going to get a little bit harder to, to figure out where's your boundary and what are your boundaries with your family.

But one way that you can counteract this is to just be really conscious about getting outside and spending as many hours. There's a great movement called 1000 hours outside, you know, started.

When I was on their podcast. It's so good. Oh yeah. It's it's yeah, it's really good. Great. Great group. And the idea is, you know, are the generation of kids now according to polls are spending less than half the time outdoors as their parents.

And you know, that's a very real impact. Some, some people I think the author is Richard Louv, who's written a book, that he coined, Nature Deficiency Disorder.

And that means, you know, seeing the right colors, the light that we were talking about briefly, the air exposure. But there's also things that once were considered a little bit out there, hippie dippy, like grounding, connecting actually to the Earth's electrical field.

And when I first saw this live, it took away a lot of my skepticism. And you can use grounding technologies that you want to make sure you test it and make sure your house, outlet is, is properly set up before you just do this willy nilly.

But most of them are. And it's that third prong on the outlet is the ground. And years ago it was that you would get a lot of static, going through the electrical line.

They realized that they could add something down to the ground, so dissipates a lot of that electrical noise, like the static that you might see on a on an old school TV.

Now, when that is tapped into the ground, it dissipates and eliminates all of it. So the Earth is actually exchanging free electrons back with you when you go skin to skin.

So that can mean literally hugging a tree, right? Touching a tree, touching a plant. We're actually grounded in the shower because most of that water that comes through your shower is actually grounded.

When you get into a natural body of water, you're, of course, grounded into a lake or the ocean. But just going barefoot, for for even minutes a day is there.

There are many studies on this that show that it decreases inflammation and helps heal, but when I saw live was that we took blood samples from a number of people in an audience, you know, several hundred people raise your hand if you have pain right now. Okay.

So we took the blood samples live and showed them up on the on the projector. And you see the blood clumping these blood cells now, healthy blood is supposed to be flowing, free flowing as much as possible.

And now that makes sense because it's moving oxygen. It's moving nutrients. Now, when the electrical, health of your body is compromised, you can think of magnets that are supposed to be repelling like two magnets of the same force.

Right? They push each other apart. Our blood cells are supposed to have that potential where they're like bumper cars, so they can continue to flow. When they start to lose their electrical charge, they start to touch, because when things are connected, they share their electrical current.

So the blood cells start to clump up. So when you get your blood drawn, if you have someone do that type of analysis, it's if it's like kind of static and not really moving around a lot, that's not optimal.

It doesn't mean a major health issue. But when you ground free electrons flood your body instantly, all these blood cells immediately become charged properly and they start to flow.

So after grounding, people live for 45 minutes. We looked at their blood again and it was like night and day, these clumpy, sludgy, swampy, blood samples to a free flowing river and, I when I feel like most people haven't seen that.

Right. So you don't see really the science behind it. And it's such a profound image that it reminds you that these simple things are really often overlooked because they're free, they're accessible.

We think, you know, it can't be that big of a deal because it doesn't it doesn't give you, it doesn't change your life overnight. But in reality, it is changing your blood within minutes.

And adds up. I mean, this is, you know, basically the the root of my message always is like, it's the little things, right? It's it's not. Yes. Like sometimes the medication can save your life.

That's great. But realistically, like all the stuff that you've talked about, it's these are the little changes of lifestyle factors being in nature that over 20 years or 40 years or 50 years, it makes a difference.

And there's I mean, it's so obvious at this point why we have such a high chronic disease rate. It's because of these things that like eventually your body just can't handle it anymore.

And if your blood is clumped like it's not supposed to be, if you are slowly eating some sort of chemical over years and things are adding up, if you're not getting the right nutrients that you need, you know, whatever, whatever it is, and eventually your body can't handle, that's there's only so much that it can do.

We have magical, amazing bodies. I mean, we can detoxify, but only to a point. And I think we're just at this stage of humanity where the toxins are too great for most people, and we're doing things that we just were never meant to do.

And that change was just so fast. I mean, probably if we lived down there, you know, half a million years or something like we would adapt if this was the way that that life was and, and those people would survive.

And then, you know, we'd be fine living the way that we are. But this is, like you said, it's changed over a few decades, you know, really rapidly. It certainly over the last couple hundred years.

And we haven't changed genetically very much, if anything, over that short amount of time. So we haven't given our bodies a chance to live in this new world because it changes every day.

Yeah. We're seeing the physical structure, the the tech neck that adults have just in their, their posture. So what? Yeah. It's it's so common now that our necks are actually the opposite curvature, as is, as we were designed for.

So, you know, to, to a degree, of course, we can adapt like you're saying, but we also have this free resource, and it depends where you live and what your access is to green space.

But going out of your way to, to get you and your family out into, into the outdoors. And it doesn't have to be a grand adventure into a national park.

But there is a reason that we all feel drawn to these settings, right? Getting up to the the top of the mountain, what does that do for us and our mental health?

Why are we drawn to to nature's beauty to see the waterfall? Well, it's because they're they're healing and our bodies are craving, well, what we evolved with.

But what's really cool is as you learn about things like negative ions and exposure to moving water, what, what these how these really have impact on our healing potential.

Wound healing, depression, anxiety, blood pressure.

Practical ways to get kids and families outside

So spending time outside is not just to feel better, but it really does give your body a, a breath to to to calm back down and bring the stress levels down because we know stress is is a factor in almost every, every element of chronic disease.

So I like to look at those things like the negative ions and to dive into that research. There's concept called force bathing or was once coined in in Japan as shin rin yoku.

And as you look at what are the real physiological changes by spending a little bit of time in a forest. Really fascinating. So we're exposed to these things like called fighting sides, which are essentially, the aromas or the essential oils that come from plants.

So this idea of like stop and smell the roses is, is, you know, you're really breathing in things that are anti carcinogen, and promote healing, reduce inflammation by smelling the smells of the outside.

There's a bacterium called, micro bacterium VK that's in soil. And when you touch soil, when you get your kids in the garden and their hands or in the garden, or when we think about we would have eaten food that had a little bit of soil still on it before we were pasteurized and sterilizing everything.

These bacteria are beneficial. Bacteria are supposed to be in relationship with us. So any time that you can go out and have you and your kids are actually touching trees, you want to make sure you're obviously not touching, you know, something that's going to give them a rash.

But other than that, you know, getting exposure to the microbiome of nature is a way to restore our own internal microbiome. And as this term has become really popular in the last couple of years, because the science of it is so profound and our relationship to our immune system and our mental health and, you know, as good as anybody the the science on, you know, sterilizing your home a whole generation of people thinking Lysol the countertops spray this chemical.

Not only are we exposed to those toxins, but when you sterilize, you're not building you and your child's immune system. So the kids that are raised on the farm, wow.

Why are their allergies so much lower than than kids that are raised in, you know, these ultra clean environments and everything comes back to, oh, wait a minute.

We're not supposed to be decimating, you know, the the information, the very rich microbial environments that may be invisible to the naked eye but are so critical to our health and the health of our species.

So we're we've seen a dramatic loss. I mean, like cataclysmic loss in our society's microbiome, the gut diversity. And like you said, we're so resilient that we can continue to live even when that's been compromised to a degree.

But it's it's a major role in, in removing ourselves from natural systems. And the effect is that we we have problems. And I think we have to look at these things as the, the feedback mechanism is to say, well, if this isn't working, if I'm not feeling my best, if I'm experiencing these symptoms, something has to change, right?

We you know, we use them, but we don't use that feedback. Then that's that's the big mistake. There's no shame in in creating the conditions for these chronic disease.

Epidemic. It's that we have to then take on the role and the responsibility to say, okay, well, the writing is on the wall now, what are we going to do about it?

Because if we just continue to ignore it, you know, which, we are doing a disservice. Which we are, which we are, and it's not okay. Everything said it's not.

None of it's rocket science. It's not like that. You know, that complicated I mean, maybe, you know, we're getting better at understanding the microbiome or the bacteria or whatever, but I mean, at the end of the day, it's like very obvious that if you just get out into nature, that's good for you, especially when we're so nature deficient these days.

It's like just just touching a tree. It can be helpful for you, which, you know, if you lived in the forest, probably it wouldn't be, you know, overly helpful for you because you're just always there.

But because of where we are at the moment, I think that like, those simple things can make such a big difference. And it's simple, but it's profound. And if we don't do it, I mean, we're just going to continue to see a slide in the wrong direction.

So, you know, just to finish up, I like to finish on a positive note and just kind of, you know, what people can do today or this week to, to see a change.

I think, you know, the answer for you is kind of get down to nature. But what do you what do you think that that somebody could do today to kind of boost their families resilience?

And be a little bit healthier? Yeah. The good news is that even though we're declining and our time outside, when in almost every poll that is done, when asked about, you know, do you think it's an issue or do you long for more time?

Everybody intuitively almost 100% like 96% or more. And in many polls are people that they know they want to spend more time outdoors. So there is a long and it's just about listening to that, carving out the time and not thinking that that's wasted time.

Rob Herringu2019s films and Earth Conscious Life

And as I've practiced this forest bathing technique, you know, one thing that I would love to pass on is that that time is really productive, and letting children, especially play and be imaginative in a space outside is incredibly

important to their childhood and their development.

Mental health wise, but also all these physiological things that we're talking about. So when we get outside, don't feel like you necessarily have to do something.

What if you just do some of the forest bathing, you know, principles and just relax there? You don't have to necessarily even hike. Of course, going on walks and going on hiking, that exercise is great.

But sometimes just being there, slowing down, listening is a little bit of a meditation. And for kids, giving them the freedom without your rules to play and let them come up with something instead of, you know, we're walking over here, we're doing this, we're taking the dog, we're doing it. It's like, what?

Let's just see as an experiment, you know, what game would they come up with? Or what imagination story would they come up with in the forest? And those things, like many of us, depending on how old we are, we're really important, growth opportunities as kids to have that play.

So that's that's what I, that's what I would say is, you know, find a nice, safe space. Of course we want, you know, we want to be safe out there, but letting it be a time for play and, to really pause and it'll be beneficial for kids, but also certainly for us adults for the stress that we're carrying.

You couldn't agree more. And, can you tell people where to find you, maybe a little about your films or I don't know what you're working on these days, if you can talk about that, but if not, at least the films from the past.

Sure. Yeah. There's there's a movie that, I'm most known for called The Need to Grow, and it's about soil regeneration. And so it's the health of the planet and the health of people and how that comes back to our agriculture and food systems.

So that's called the need to grow. And you can find that at the niche Procom narrated by Rosario Dawson. We've been fortunate to screen that all over the world.

And then my company is called Earth Conscious Life. So it's everything that we've been talking about. The overlap of human health and planetary health and Earth conscious lwf.org is where we release a lot of other solution focused short films, and we're working on some other feature films and our our newsletter that that focuses on solutions for both of these things.

I love it. Well, well, thanks for being a part of this and always great to chat. You're a beacon of light for for everyone. And, you know, keep keep helping everybody get out into nature.

We need that. We need a lot more of it. So thanks for being here. And thank you everyone for tuning in. Thank you so much.