Introduction to Caitlin Thompson

– Hey everyone welcome back to The Medicine of Mindset Summit. It's Jana back here with you for another amazing conversation and our special guest in this episode is Caitlin Thompson. Let me tell you a little bit about Caitlin.

She's a smart cookie, she's a neurobiologist and active combo practitioner. We're going to learn more about that. She's an advocate and an educator. She is also an independent researcher and currently conducting the first human combo studies Caitlin's personal journey, which I find that on this week's medicine and Mindset summit, every single person is doing what they love because of something that happened in their life that put them onto this pathway. And Caitlin is just exactly like that.

She lived with chronic illnesses that encompassed Lyme disease and other autoimmune symptoms and it really was this that led her down an integrated path of anthropogenic medicine and science and marrying these two passions to bridge the gap.

Her previous work focuses on psychedelics and I'd like to get into that a little bit as a novel approach to autoimmune conditions and the microbiome effects of Ayurveda curbs.

So we have lots to unpack here with this lovely human being.

Personal Health Struggles and Healing Journey

So Caitlin, thank you so much for joining us today. – Thank you so much for having me. I was thrilled when I got the invitation to talk about some of my favorite things with you. So thanks you for inviting me.

– You're welcome. You're welcome. And so can you share pieces of of your story? I feel like it's really going to frame our conversation today. What were you experiencing in your own body?

What you know what obviously was not working, that you were like, I got to figure something out here, Lead us through that. – Yeah, totally. The truth is that I was kind of born into this life sick, but I didn't know until I accidentally started getting better um in my early 20's, so I was so used to suffering from fatigue and malabsorption and chronic infections, and you know, frequent colds and things like that. Joint pain, dry skin and eczema, that I actually didn't know there was any other way to exist until I started experimenting in my maybe like third or fourth year of my undergraduate degree with different dietary things and different supplements and such, which started to create some cons contrast and I discovered, like, wow, this is actually how other people maybe feel on a regular basis.

And so that gap began to get wider and wider, which gave me the ability to view the contrast and to see like, oh wow, I was not doing well for pretty much the beginning of my life without even realizing it, because it had become my normal way of existing.

And so when I started to investigate more, you know, went down a lot of rabbit holes in scientific literature, but just in trying to really understand what was going on with my body in particular, eventually I got, you know, a Lyme disease diagnosis and, you, you know, I had chronic fatigue syndrome, definitely had depression and anxiety, a lot of joint pain, a lot of food allergies that I had been unaware of for most of my life, different infections in the gut and probably also the nervous system and other areas of the body. And just like an overall lack of thriving and luckily I was studying neurobiology in my undergraduate degree and I became sort of obsessed with trying to solve this puzzle of understanding my body and my health. And once I had a peek through the veil that like, wow, it's possible to feel differently and to be more functional, to be more happy to be pain free. I became obsessed with that and it ultimately is what led me down my path of of healing and offering opportunities of healing for others and just being totally obsessed with the whole umbrella of of healing modalities and tools.

So that's kind of the short version. – And so the title of your talk is healing through intent, intentional ritual.

Intentional Ritual and Ceremony in Healing

Let's talk about that that a bit. And why you feel that ceremony has become such an important part of the work that you do. – Yeah, so I'll first credit the world of psychedelics for introducing me to the idea of ceremony. So, in the beginning, when I was exploring with psychedelics when I was a young adults in college at first they were just curious experiences, but as I started using them more and healing with them sort of even unintentionally. I realized there was a lot more there and that brought me to doing Ayahuasca when I was 21 years old in Peru in the Amazon. And Ayahuasca along with other psychedelic medicines can have a very rich and intentional ritualistic ceremonial process. And so I think that was what sort of began my fascination with ceremony and obviously now I'm a combo practitioner. So how did I get there?

One of the reasons why I'm such a big fan of ritual and ceremony is I see that sometimes the medicine, like the physical biochemical medicine is not enough on its own and you'll get a lot more affects if you actually want to heal. And I've worked with a lot of people with chronic illnesses and sometimes I see people that really don't want to get better, they want to stay sick because they're attached to being sick because it's become part of their identity or they're afraid of who they might be if they aren't sick and the ones that choose to get better and they go through the ritual of creating intentional actions that are in alignment with their desires.

They get better results and from my experience as a practitioner, I've seen time and time again, that a ritualistic container can be most of what actually drives the healing process for people.

And these chemical agents can be some rocket fuel, you know, to support that. But ultimately it's the container where you invite the medicine of consciousness and desired intention to fuel a person's healing process.

– So how do you become a combo practitioner? – Well, there's different strategies for that. Some people like to buy a stick on the internet and call themselves a practitioner. That's a whole other thing though.

But to really become a good practitioner, it's really important that you go to some sort of accredited training program that is going to take this process seriously. And, you know, there's some Training programs that are three days long, which blows my mind that anyone thinks that they could be a competent practitioner in three days. Others are, you know, between 10 to 14 days, which I think tend to offer a lot more curriculum that's helpful to being a competent and safe practitioner.

But there's many different routes.

What Kambo Is and How It Works

Some people like to train directly with the indigenous tribal communities themselves and there's advantages and disadvantages to that. It's certainly not required.

So there's many routes one could go, but ultimately I think it's really important that anyone who is serving combo and is um, basically responsible for the safety of other people who are receiving that medicine, they need, they need real training and they need to really understand what they're dealing with.

– So essentially you're taking a person or a group of people through a ritualistic combo experience where they are journeying on the plant medicine and then coming coming out on the other side, having this experience.

– Yeah, somewhat. I mean, you know, to be technical, it doesn't come from a plant comes from a frog. And it's also not a psychedelic substance. So combo is not hallucinogenic, it's very different than any sort of psychedelic medicine. This is not toad or buffo.

Sometimes people get those two confused um because of this combo is not scheduled in most cunt, meaning it's not illegal. I have a yelp page of google my business listing. And because of that it's very accessible. There is still a

risk that it could become scheduled down the road, which is what has happened in Australia, which is unfortunate because as we see prohibition actually increases the risk of harm to people. But for now people are able to legally um serve and receive combo in most countries in the world.

– Okay, so I am going to be super honest here. I know nothing. I don't even know it came from, you say it comes from a frog. And so what we're gonna, we're gonna go to like combo one oh one, what are so what are, how are you getting it into your body?

– Yeah it's fascinating. So, okay, so I'll just backtrack combo is the skin secretion that comes from a very specific tree frog that lives in the amazon basin.

The species is called Philo medusa by color, it has some common names like the giant monkey frog, waxy tree frog. Giant green leaf frog is all sorts of different names for it. But it's the defensive secretion from this animal skin and different tribes such as the matt's the unique uni. The, yeah, Okinawa have been using Hambo as a hunting aid and the medicine for at least multiple centuries, perhaps thousands years is not clear and they use it for malaria for snake bites.

For something called Panama, which is like a dark cloud of like bad luck or like dark energy, like the Charlie Brown cloud. So when someone's feeling kind of like lethargic or depressed or like funky, that's Panama and they'll use it to clear that.

Which I would equate is like the equivalent to inflammation or something like that. And then they use it as a hunting aid to improve their visual acuity their resilience and their ability to not require food or water for long periods of time so they can go out into the jungle on these multi day hunts.

Right? So that's the traditional use of it. And they tie the frog up and they extract the secretion using like a wooden stick without harming the frog.

I mean the frogs don't love it. It's a little stressful for them, but it doesn't hurt them. And once they're done harvesting, they put the frog back and they try not to harvest the frogs.

Too often they give them at least three months in between. So if they see that the frog still has marks from like the little ropes or whatever, then they'll say oh this one's not ready to give secretion again.

So the way it's administered is through superficial burns made on the skin. So they'll take a tiny little vine called hash marks is called cash or it's also called Thomas Devine. And they'll make the burns and it's just that very top layer of skin. And then you rub off the top layer.

So it's almost like a blister. You get that white sort of glistening under underneath and that exposes the lymphatic system and so they'll apply the secretion directly to this burn. And the medicine goes in through the lymphatic system very quickly. It's like 30 seconds to a minute and you're feeling the potent effects of the peptides that are in this secretion, so that's kind of how it works. And then for 20-30 minutes there is a very strong physiological response which often includes um purging through vomiting or diarrhea. Sometimes there's face swelling and so sweating it's I'm not gonna lie, it's kind of an unpleasant experience.

It can be blissful if you really, you know use the medicine of mindset right? But it's hard work and it's a very uncomfortable experience. But the peptides themselves have really potent medicinal properties that we have some idea of in science. We have investigated them a little bit, there's still much to learn. But at the least we can say the peptides are doing some really valuable things. And then also the ritualistic container of having the intention of doing something, especially a purgative medicine where there is the opportunity for symbolism of what you're releasing in the purgative process.

Safety, Stigma, and Guided Use

It's very valuable and you know, the after the experience is really when the gifts come for the person, they are

chemically disrupted in a way where old patterning and holding like the psyche sometimes will hold things um to protect someone from their own emotional pain that's been buried.

The fact that you've been kind of scrambled chemically allows for novel pathways to kind of be forged and new insights to come and emotional release to happen. So this is like really the reason that people do combo is this period afterwards, where there's a lot of spiritual emotional and physiological benefits and gifts that come.

– So where is was this a big part of your healing? Like would you say that you have any lingering symptoms from your lime disease or the auto immune systems, the chronic fatigue that you were diagnosed with?

– Yeah, I would say my health is still a work in progress and you know, part of that is just relapse from stress ultimately. But I would say that this medicine was and still is one of the most powerful tools of support that I've had, I'm not gonna say that this medicine alone is a silver bullet, but if I had to choose a medicine out of all the different modalities that I've used that had the most power and most effectiveness in improving my quality of life.

It's this one and my relationship with it has changed as I've gotten healthier, I don't need to take it as often, I don't wish to take it as often. And usually I'm actually putting on non purgative, very small doses that I call micro doses these days. But it does consistently show up for me.

For example, I was in Sumatra a few months ago and traveling and I out of nowhere I got a urinary tract infection which was, I hadn't had one in years and it started to get bad and I was like this close to going to the Sumatran Hospital to get antibiotics, which I had been avidly avoiding for the last seven years and I decided to put a micro dose of the Kambo directly above my bladder for three days in a row, cleared it and I didn't need antibiotics. So it's still a very useful tool in my toolkit, especially as in acute intervention for infections and pathogens, which I encountered a lot living in Indonesia. – Okay, so you're administering this on your own.

But anyone that's like learning about this for the first time and and that's what this week is all about, is to bring concepts and ideas from all areas of you know, of mindset and health and wellness so that people can know you know, other other alternatives to the medicine that you might get from your pharmacy let's say as an example. Right, so would they would someone brand spanking new to this, Do this guided or – 100%, Unless you are trained to self administer, you should always be under the care of a supervised practitioner, especially when you're just forming a relationship with this medicine because it can be intense and there are risks to it. Granted there are precautions you can take that make the risks almost nothing. So it is it's very safe medicine when certain precautions are taken. But you might not realize what precautions need to be taken because they're not always obvious. But when you're trained practitioner, you know what these things are. And there's very simple protocols that you can put in place that keep someone safe and also, you know, the guidance and the space holding and the container that a practitioner is going to create again, coming back to the value of ritual if you just do do this on your own and you're trying to figure it out. There's not really going to be any ritual.

So part of the benefit of paying a practitioners one to make sure that you're safe and that it is administered properly to you and to guide you through moving through the experience, but also to bring alive your intention and the specifics of your healing goals so that you can use the experience as an opportunity to consciously address whatever may be blocking you from achieving your optimal health status.

– I'd like you to talk a little bit about societal boundaries that might, you know, show themselves in this modality. And how do those societal boundaries you talked about, or you mentioned, how do they affect, like, the physical boundaries?

Am I am I being clear with my question?

Research and Scientific Exploration

– Do you do you mean like, the boundaries that people have in their social interactions, Is that what you mean by societal boundaries? – Yeah. Like, I think that it's easy because again, if this is new or it sounds a little bit out there for people, they're very quick to be like, No, like that.

I would rather take something manufactured and I'd rather know, you know, the 27 side effects, I'm gonna choose this versus something that comes from, you know, a living breathing creature that is found on this earth.

That's what I'd like you to talk about. Like, how do you, how do we help people get over some of these stigmas around this type of medicine? – Yeah, that's a great question and this one is especially bizarre, right? Because even myself before I really knew what this medicine was, I heard about it. I'm like, that sounds dumb. That sounds dangerous.

That sounds stupid. I thought it was just some like crazy stuff that the natives did. I, you know, kind of like the gloves with all the bullet ants where they, you know, it never occurred to me that this is something that I would be interested in.

And so there is a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding about this medicine in particular and a big part of that is like, you know, frog poison. Why would anyone want frog poison in their system?

How can that be good for you? That's poison. Right. So it turns out the peptides themselves actually don't appear to have any non or sorry, any toxic effects.

They are so far really well tolerated, their degraded very quick quickly in the body by enzymes and actually the effects are mediated not by poisonous response but by the actual mechanism of actions by the peptides themselves.

So it's important for people to understand that this is not a toxic experience. And also a lot of people don't like the idea of purging, which I think is actually um telltale of where people are at in their I guess they're they're emotional processing in this society. So, you know, a lot of people don't like throwing up why. And it's because a lot of people don't like confronting things. They don't, they'd rather literally hold down nausea and bury it and have it can't continue to make them feel sick then to have it come up and and be witnessed right? And so there's a lot of metaphor around people's resistance to vomiting and their resistance to acknowledge their emotional pain. And so I think the fact that vomiting is involved and it is a very uncomfortable medicine turns off a lot of people but it gives them exactly what they need which is confrontation.

And it allows them the opportunity to become more embodied to reconnect with their body if they've become dis associated and to really feel their sensations again and to give meaning to the sensations in the combo experience such as the purging, There's something that you specifically do not want to carry around anymore, like resentments or anger towards your mother or whatever it may be, you have the chance to literally decide if that's what you're going to throw up in that bucket. And I see it time and time again that when people choose the ritual of purging and deciding that that's what your purge represents, it creates lasting permanent results.

So how do we change that? How do we change people's perception of what these medicines really are? I think the only way is through education is by talking about what these medicines do by people sharing their experiences openly even when they're afraid that they might be judged or misunderstood just you know really sharing the truth without fear without um need for approval from others. And just sharing from your heart that's how we change people's minds about these medicines. We educate them on what they really are so that they can't make up stories that um you know support their existing opinion that this is something that would never work for them.

– Can you talk a little about a little bit about your research? – Yeah absolutely. So right now I have a couple of projects going and I published a few papers earlier this year.

Choice, Mindset, and Daily Healing Practices

So the research I have going on right now it's as far as I'm aware the first prospective human research with combo um which is very exciting. So it's a simple study for now.

We're just looking at pre and post combo changes in things such as mood, life satisfaction, emotional wellness, pain, fatigue kind of things like that. So we're measuring those with psychometric scales which are basically just

validated surveys.

And so we're in progress right now with that we have we are actively enrolling people in the studies still And I also just recently partnered with U. C. S. D. So we're in the very beginnings of doing more sophisticated research with combo specifically on human brain organ voids which are tiny little like five million brain cell clusters of human brain tissue that you know they start forming more complex neural networks when they have that volume of cells together. And so it becomes a great way to kind of study how a substance might interact in a real human brain.

So that's very exciting. And we're in the beginning phases of seeing what type of research evolves out of that. – And so you're really like a pioneer in this whole area, aren't you? – Yeah. You know, part of why I started initiating these research projects and things that nobody else was.

And I was kind of confused. I'm like, why isn't anyone grabbing these low hanging fruit? Like why hasn't anyone done this? And I realized it's still so niche, it's still so underground.

And there just hasn't been somebody yet who has the scientific understanding and also the clinical experience as a practitioner to be able to bridge the gap.

And I felt that maybe that was my calling here, Maybe that's what I'm supposed to be doing in this field. – Caitlin, That is so amazing. And I, you know, my wish for this summit is that, you know, in 10 years from now, we're doing the 10th anniversary edition and reconnecting with all of the amazing people who were here in year one, just to see, you know, what advances have been made in their field.

And so I've already put that out to the universe, that's gonna happen. And then let's celebrate what you do and how you impact humanity with your research And your mission over the next over the next 10 years.

And so with that in mind, what do you think? And I hope this question still makes sense to you. So what do you think is not being talked about enough when it comes to your area of expertise?

And maybe if you don't want to answer it from a super niche perspective, maybe you choose to answer it for more of a you know, earth medicine, Mother Earth medicine or you know, how would you like to kind of ground this question?

And then let's, I'd love to hear your answer. What do you think is not being talked about enough? – Yeah, I think that people really underestimate and under appreciate the importance of choice in your healing process and the importance of your actions being a ritualistic act where you are demonstrating to the universe and to your own human consciousness that you desire to be healthy. You desire to be free from pain and free from sickness. And those who show up and make those choices every day, I see them get better because they have adopted self care and healing as a ceremony that they are participating in every day.

And so, I think that's really what I think is missing from the medical model, is giving people the power back that they have lost from from giving it away to doctors and medical ideologies that are not serving them at times and realizing that they have the power just in their own consciousness and their own ability to choose to show up differently in their health and in their lives.

And yes, that doesn't mean it will happen instantly and it means you still have to do hard work, but it is in these acts of choosing that right food item for yourself or you know, choosing to exercise that day, choosing to say no when you're feeling burnt out, these are all small ceremonial acts that reinforce the message to the universe and to your own body that you wish to thrive.

So that's what I hope people take away from this – And what do you do from your own personal perspective when it comes, You know, this whole week has been tying all this amazing information back to our mindset because I believe that sometimes we underestimate or we are in this operating system where we have like you said beliefs and values that no longer serve or they're just, you know, they're just like in this perpetual backpack that we're wearing every day that we are like subconsciously you don't even know is there, what do you do for your personal

mindset support and could you share one or two of those with us?

Where to Learn More and Connect

– Yeah, a big helpful thing for me has been using language to create my reality and to have my language aligned with gratitude. It's very common and it's something that I, you know battled my with myself for many years was being the victim, feeling like the victim feeling like the world is working against me, feeling like the world owes me. And so consciously choosing to not be a victim to reclaim my power and my agency in making my life what I wanted to be through meticulous choice of language. And you know, even if you don't believe it, the words that are coming out of your mouth in the beginning just say them and eventually you will start to believe them. Just using positive language to reframe something when you feel like saying something that's passive aggressive or kind of whiny or focusing on the negative, even if you want to choosing to actually use words that are expressing gratitude and content happiness with whatever is going on, even if you don't really feel that way, just let the words lead you eventually your mood and your internal state will start to adopt. What words that you articulate.

So that's something that's really helped me. – This has been really amazing, really Caitlin. Like I knew when I started doing my research for you know this conversation, I was like I know nothing about what this amazing young woman is doing and so what I don't know if you realize but what you've done and I am sure it's not only for me with our audience that is here as well, you've educated us on a piece of health and wellness or options for health and wellness that I didn't even know existed.

And so for that simple reason, I want to thank you for being here. And if someone on this, you know, in our audience is thinking well I need to learn more or they know of someone who this may resonate with your work and how you are, you know, educating society. Where are some, you know, on social media or where are some ways that they can connect with you?

– Yeah, absolutely. Probably the best way to reach me is through my website, which is medicinefrogkambo.com That's K A M B O. And I do have facebook and instagram as well, but you can reach me directly through my site and if you're interested in either participating in the combo session or participating in in the study, perhaps with one of the practitioners in the country that are enrolled in facilitating or if you just want to learn more about combo itself.

You can also use another site that I've built called kambofinder.com. If you are looking for a practitioner that is in your area and you can use different filters to look for experience levels or specialties.

You know, if you want someone that specializes in men's work or is trauma informed or Lyme disease expert. You can filter with those things. So yeah, use those two sites. There's a ton of content and information where you can just get a deeper sense of the facts around this medicine and see if it's something that you feel called to engage with. – I just, again, I wanted to say, thank you for sharing your knowledge and your resources where you know, our audience can go to learn more and maybe take an inspired action in this area of wellness from the bottom of my heart. Thank you so much.

– Thank you such a pleasure to talk about my favorite subject, so I appreciate the opportunity. – So, ladies and gentlemen, that wraps another episode of The Medicine of Mindset Summit, We are going to take a short little break and then we'll be back with our next amazing speaker.