Cancer diagnosis and perspective shift

And I felt really sorry for myself. And then I went to the children's ward and you see these two, three year old kids who are bald. They haven't even lived their life.

That's the day I quit feeling sorry of myself, I'm like, okay, i'm 24. Would I like to live longer? Sure. But I lived a pretty good life And these poor children, they haven't lived at all.

What am I complaining about? And at the time, I'll be honest with you. I look back, cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me because at that time I was very arrogant.

who have never been through anything serious in life, you can tell right away. They have ever been humbled by God or whatever you believe in. And I needed that humbling.

I asked God, I go, God if you get me through this, promise I'll be a different person. Nearly the arrogant person I am. Welcome to the To Curious in Me podcast.

I'm Dr. Ali Ahmed. And I am Dr Surya Rapan. In this podcast, we are asking the unasked questions. We're physicians applying the lens of narrative medicine, exploring integrative practices and psychedelic treatment and health.

Together with our guests, We weave new learnings from stories, expertise and the sciences. Let's dive in. So welcome to the Too Curious MD podcast where we dive into stories about medicine of healing, transformation, and the wisdom that comes from the lived experience.

Today's guest is Shaquille Biggs and I know him very well. He's also known to many as the Inspire Coach. He's an executive fitness and mindset coach to, I guess, high net individuals, but I wouldn't ask him about that.

He also has a podcast called Chasing 100. he is a cancer survivor. And he really believes in really directing and coaching with really, practical advice on nutrition, exercise, and also on the emotional, spiritual and psychological aspects that affect physical and mental health.

I would call him an alchemist. I don't know if he would call himself a trauma-informed coach, but I feel he does represent what trauma informed care really involves.

Today, he is going to talk to us about his own story and what brings him to the work that he to what we would call root cause healing. And I have many, many questions to ask you and I'm so happy to have you here.

You are really, again, we've known each other as children in our childhood in Houston, Texas, and that's where you live currently. Our families know each very, very well.

I've just been following you on Instagram and social media and there's so much pride I see people from my past and in my present now and even to the work that they're doing that really represents so much more to so many people.

So thank you for being here. That was a long intro. Welcome. Thank you, Dr. Ahmed. You're too kind. And yes, I'd say I'm more of an alchemist. I think that's a better term.

Yeah. Not good, that's right. We are not just organs, we are just a brain. There's a lot more that goes into people's health. Absolutely. And includes that spiritual aspect of health, I would ask you about that too.

I hope I get to ask all these questions. So, can you tell us a little bit about your own story as a cancer survivor? And we also talked earlier before the recording about, you know, your father's passing and how that affected you.

Did it bring you to the work that you do? In a way, yes. But let me start out with my cancer story. So I was 24 years old when it happened. I would have these weird rashes would randomly show up under my upper thighs.

We went to a dermatologist and they thought there was nothing wrong with me, just some rash. Then one day I actually had a bump on my shoulder. A random bump appeared from nowhere.

And I went one of my father's friends who was an internal medicine doctor. I was much bigger than I am now. I, was a big muscle guy and he basically did not even do a chest X-ray or any kind of scan.

He basically felt it and said that you pulled a muscle. And I'm like, well, when you pull a muscles, there's usually some pain. This is just like soft and like he's like no, you're fine.

Trust me. So of course, at that age, I want to think everything's fine, not going to second guess someone that says I healthy. Two more months go by and I met the gym and just stopped breathing during the set.

I can't take a breath. I dropped away to one of my friends. He starts pumping my chest. Somehow I start breathing again. And then I go home.

Father's passing and depression

Now, I don't know how it is. In the movies, they always say, you might want to sit down before this. I even remember what was on the TV in the room I was waiting on.

It was Dr. Quinn, the medicine woman. That's funny. When something like major happens in life, we tend to remember it down to the detail. If anything big happens to our life.

You remember exactly where you were the exact time I remember everything. He goes, well, we looked at your test and it looks like you have cancer. He said, just like that.

The first thing I think of is, okay, this means death. Okay, This is not good. he's like, Well, if we caught it early, you'd have about a 70% chance of living.

Of course, that means a 30% of chance or dying. Let me go to the restroom. And that was the longest restroom break I ever had in my life. I came out and told my dad, I go, We can't tell my mom about this.

She's not going to be able to handle it. He's like, okay, but I knew he was gonna tell her. That night I cried like a baby. And then like it's okay. You know, we'll get another test done and I'm sure you don't have cancer.

Now I know I had cancer, I hadn't a feeling. So I go to another hospital and they do the test and she comes back, Hodgkin's disease level 2A. so I asked the doctor, and go, so what are my chances of survival?

Do you have any patients that you know? He was like well I now one person that's still okay 10 years later. I was okay I need to get out of here. So at that time, my sister who's a doctor, she wasn't a Dr.

Then she was just volunteering at hospitals. She went to Herman hospital and she basically begged the professor there to see me. So this guy cleared his entire calendar and said, I'll see your brother tomorrow.

Now I saw him and his mindset was much different. He kind of lied to me, but it was what I needed to hear. He was like, you're going to be fine, don't worry.

You'll still be able to lift weights, You will still fine. Three months you'll be great. Okay, so this wasn't the truth, But it's exactly what i needed here.

Then he's like okay you can also go to these different, these, different you know groups like therapy groups. Now I didn't, I'm not saying this is the right thing to do.

But I personally didn' t want to go into any therapy group because I Didn't want see people I was close to die. I didn't want to see that. So I did do that and I felt really sorry for myself.

And then I went to the children's ward and you see these two, three-year-old kids who are bald. They haven't even lived their life. That's the day I quit feeling sorry.

I'm like, okay, I am 24. Would I like to live longer? Sure. But I lived a pretty good life And these poor children, they haven't lived at all. What am I complaining about?

And at the time, I'll be honest with you. I look back, cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me because at that time I was very arrogant. who have never been through anything serious in life, you can tell right away.

They have ever been humbled by God or whatever you believe in. And I knew that humbling. I asked God, I go, God if you get me through this, promise I'll be a different person.

Nearly the arrogant person I am. But I don't want people to ever be able to tell that I had cancer. I didn't want to be missing an arm or something. So a lot of people prayed for me and I went through three months of chemotherapy, which was really difficult.

I want through two and a half months at radiation, but God bless, it's never come back since then. Now the problem with that was, is I held a lotta anger towards the doctor who misdiagnosed me for lack of even trying to find out what it was and he never apologized, so I kinda held it against him.

And I kind of held against the people that didn' call me when I was sick. And it was funny, because there were some people who I barely knew they would call me regularly.

And I remember them the rest of my life. So it took me a long time to get rid of that anger towards these people. But I eventually got over it. Because that's why I coach people, like a lot of people don't know what to say when someone passes away or someone's sick.

You don' have to see anything. Just call and say, how are you doing? Like I always talk about, well, someone died. The best thing you can do is don's ask them how they died, say, like, what was your father like?

Because then you're going to bring a sense of happiness, a little bit of joy to that person who's mourning, because they'll remember the good things about this person.

Like, What was he like. What do you like about your dad? And then they will tell you what a great person he was. Well, I want to highlight a couple of things that you said that were really important.

And I think you talked about that moment, right? That flash bulb moment. In narrative medicine, there's a lot to be said about the flashbulb moment where time stands still and you can recall everything.

The scent, the smell, who you were, this whole scene and everything that stays there, of course, that is a trauma response too, right? Because your brain has to remember something so significant, it has mark it, and it's that memory, cellular memory that the body makes.

So I'd like to kind of highlight that, because that flashbulb moment, so many people speak to that. And thank you for describing it so beautifully, you not only described it but you really represented that emotional growth that came from That, you know, that cancer was the best thing for you.

And I've heard that many times too, from patients. One of the things that I had to write about too. Which is why I started writing and started to study in the Arctic medicine because there's that processing of experience that writing

can provide.

Then it takes you back into that story and then you get a version of it. You get one version. that you can recall, but then by that writing process, you really kind of engage with your perceptions.

And you put it, and you take it out of your body onto a paper, right? So you could really look at it in this sometimes objective way. So, You really describe that like a story.

It's good because it humbled me, But also now when anyone is young and they get cancer, they call me. Because like, okay, this guy's been through it. He can kind you know, help you like, it's not the end of the world.

Like you go meet this guy, like he looks totally fine. It's like it is not end the war. And one thing I like to mention is I hate when people say that they beat cancer.

I don't believe that because there are a lot of people out there much better than me that passed away. But it was nothing I did. I want to make that very clear.

No, there are a lot of great people who I've seen pass away from cancer. And with that second opportunity, I hoped to live a better life. I'd also like to ask you a little bit about what you started to speak about, which had to do with your father and that relationship you had with you father.

It's funny. A lot of people, especially as you know, in the South Asian community, they don't have very good relationship with their parents. Uh, it's more of like a sergeant and like private relationship.

My father was different. He was like my best friend. I really mean, he was my best friend. He was great because I could ask him any question. You'd always answer it.

Nothing was off topic with him. So, you know, a lot of people, like, especially in our religion and our community, and you can't talk about girls with your parents.

I had no problem with that. And, You know he had been in America since the early sixties. so he kind of understood how all this worked. and I kind took it for granted.

he, was going to be around forever. He passed away very suddenly. My father was one of those people, he even said that he wanted to go out like walking, like he didn't want to be a burden on anybody.

And sure enough, He wasn't. He had had double bypass surgery previously. It was funny because he was thin. He was a type 1 diabetic, so it wasn't anything he did.

He saw his cardiologist six months before he passed because he had a prostate cancer, which is very curable. And his doctor said, you need to put a stent because the radiation will affect your heart.

So he, of course, got a second opinion from someone who said you didn't need it. and he actually went through the prostate treatment and was actually declared cancer-free.

Passed away a week later. And at the funeral, one of his friends said, you know, eight months ago, we were on a car ride to Phoenix with your dad, and he passed out for 15 minutes.

And he woke up and said don't tell my family. Why would you tell someone this at a funeral of their father? So that really, that made me think, okay, well, he didn't have to go.

Of course, now I know everything happens for a reason. There's a time and place, but I had a lot of anger there. I remember the last day he was alive.

I was on my own. I wasn't one of the few people in our community who moved out at 25 because I'm like, look, I

want to do my thing. But I would visit my parents once a week.

This is my parent's that day. And I was watching a basketball game with my dad and he fell asleep and my mom said, okay, you're leaving kiss your dad.

Goodbye. I go, I'll see him tomorrow. That didn't do it. Sure enough, that night he, the ambulance came and took him to the hospital and I get a call and they're like, Hey, your Dad's at the Hospital.

And me and brother are just joking around because he's been in the hospitals for, it's not a big deal. My sister got really angry with us. What are you doing?

Don't you know? Dad's sick. You know my sister. I had never heard her that angry.

Healing through action, reading, and therapy

She never gets angry I always tell people she's the best person I know and when she did that I realized this is not good and went and visited him and he had a bunch of wires connected to him I didn't leave this hospital bedside for 36 hours well go eat go whatever I was like, I'm not ready to have to let him go and then he passed away and that was the start of my Depression it was so bad to her.

I couldn't even talk about him without falling over They did like a big thing for him in a hall where they talked about his life and I could speak and how was just crying the entire time It was, it was pretty tough.

It wasn't really tough to be honest with you. Even now I, I tear up just thinking about it, but you know, like I said, that was the start of my depression, unfortunately that went on for two years.

So yeah. I know this is real, right? These are the emotions that we carry in our body. The anger, the grudges, sadness. How did this kind of break down with the cancer?

I mean, soon after, I imagine. Yeah, five years or so. So, you know, very recent in what you were going through. I remember the phone call after the fact, like, my God, what?

Didn't make sense to me either, because I used to go and see your father at the restaurant. Right, exactly. I was like, that can't be right. And, you know, my father also passed away in the same time frame, probably six months later.

You know I heard about that very late also. Yeah, yeah. So, back to your place where, where growth occurs in, in The Qur'an, I think it says, with every hardship there is relief.

Absolutely. With every hardships there's relief, It's not before or after. It is actually with that moment in that movement and those moments that we carry in our body that there is the growth.

Tell us about that and to what has taken you in your journey now. So at the time I didn't see it. I started, I developed a gambling addiction. Now I used to be someone that used go out all the times and I basically stayed indoors at all times.

Only to go to work and the gym. And then I've started taking antidepressants. This was near the end of the second year. When I start taking anti-depressants, It was crazy because I automatically felt better.

I couldn't explain it. There wasn't a reason I just felt. So then I got over my father's passing. And I was like, okay, you know, he won't want me to live like this.

and I'm an addict. How am I addicted to this? I am going to go cold turkey. Now, before I did this, I had a plan. so I started reading a lot of self help books.

This kind of started my journey, right? How do I deal with issues without medication? I read a bunch of books, and one day I thought I was ready. I told my doctor, I'm stopping.

No, you can't do that. You're gonna… I'm out of control. I go, just trust me, I know what I am doing. And I quit that day. Now the funny thing about some of these prescription medications, it was a side effect like the flu.

Literally had the flue for a week. It's almost like they make these drugs on purpose to be like this. You have to go back. So I was like, i'm not going back and that was the beginning of my journey into self-help and dealing with issues without the help of medications.

and I never went back, and now when I look back at my father's passing, for me to grow up, because until your parent passes away, you're still a child.

Like some people say, well, until you have kids, yeah, I agree with that also, but as long as your parents are around, it's like you were still child, once they go, especially your father, right?

He's the strong force in your life, and especially in my life. He was so close to me. So it was really needed for you to go up. And because sooner after that, sooner up after my depression, my wife, And I got married and a life went on from there.

Wow. Well, You are an inspired coach. Yes. you inspire. That's my job, yes. But let me tell you something, Alia. I always tell people, when people go through struggles and they kind of get upset, I'm like, okay, if you were to build a perfect person, theoretically, would you want someone that had been through some things in life or would want somebody that's had a Of course, you would want someone who's been through a few things.

That's what builds strength. You know, that's a builds a person, an identity. If you've ever been to anything, and life is a joke, when anything comes you're not going to be able to handle it.

So all these things that I've been though, it just helped me, made me a stronger person. I don't look back at any of these thing as a bad thing at all.

They're all positive. It didn't seem at the time, because I'm not all-knowing, but looking back, it was exactly what I needed. Yeah. Wow. What would you say to yourself, to your younger self, the version who was arrogant and disconnected?

I would say, I think it's really good to have self-esteem. But what you have is arrogance. Self- esteem is like you're confident in yourself. You can do anything.

you can put the work in. Arrogance is on better than our people. I don't think that's the way to live. And you're not better than anybody. If you continue this lifestyle, you are going to get humbled.

Now, I've seen people like myself, and they all got humbled in different ways. Maybe not cancer, but some other way. Sometimes worse, sometimes better, they get humble.

Whatever you believe in, whether you belive in God or some outer force, They don´t like arrogance. They dont like pride. These are two things you can't have.

Yeah. Well, it's the ego, right? It's ego. Yes. You have to kill that ego It is the nafs or the egos of self-importance and we can talk hours about…

When you're young, its really hard to control it. Because of society and media, you know, is hard control your ego especially if people cater to you, right?

As you get older, it's a little bit easier in my opinion because that's why they call it wisdom, Right? You don't have wisdom at 18 years old. but you could have wisdom at 48 from everything you've been through.

I find it really ridiculous when you have someone who's 60 years old and they still have no wisdom. They still have no wisdom. I don't get that. Yeah, that's right.

People seek wisdom as well. And I think wisdom comes from, you know, vulnerability, being able to be open to sharing. There comes the wisdom that you share too. I think people have a private wisdom they keep in a box for themselves or in their home.

When they go publicly, it's not the same persona that So, my entire life is about growth and wisdom. I like to be the stupidest person in the room because I want to learn from others who know more than me.

If I'm the smartest person the in room, I need to find another room. So seriously, about getting better at stuff. Not someone that knows everything. It's funny when you talk to somebody and they're telling you how to buy and sell a house, but their brother-in-law is a real estate agent.

They won't take his advice. So, you know, a lot of my clients are doctors. And it's funny because I'm like, the doctors are always the people who never second-guess me.

So I'll ask them, I go, hey, no. I assume before working with you, would second guess everything I tell you regarding nutrition and health. They go no, but I know my lane.

What you're really good at. so I am just going to listen to you and be successful. Okay, that's smart. That's the way I live too. Yeah. You know I don't just randomly think I can handle something like that.

Yeah. Well, you are a healer, I would call you a Healer, because you're in the healing space. I have scrolled through your Instagrams and seen that you've been online for I don't know how long, right?

Five years. Five year. And you, are an avid, what is it called, Instagram person? Host, or I guess? Yeah, and I see your vulnerability, how practical you provide, the information that your provide to people is very practical, very direct, clear, your persona as you are on social media is deeply intentional.

But when we talk about vulnerability online, sharing to the wisdom, what have you learned from yourself in that journey as a person who speaks to this?

I'm not the first person that said this, but as long as you follow your beliefs, you can't care what anybody thinks. And that's kind of been my life the last six years or so.

I used to care like this. Like, for example, like, look, I've dated women, and I wasn't always married. So I will tell people, okay, if you have a situation with a woman or a man, how to kind What I've learned and I have gotten messages from people like, Hey, you're Muslim.

So Muslim people don't date. Are you serious? Like what, what world are you living in? Do you think your daughter just magically met, hang out with somebody for two years?

And then I'll have other people come up to me and say, You know what? Thank you for these videos because I'm having my son watch these. I am not proud of this, but a lot of times, especially in the Muslim community, we don't get our children ready for how to pick the right person.

It's always, what does he do for a living? It is never about anything else. And if you, like I did, I'm not saying this is what you're supposed to do, but when you date, you kind of understand what want and what don't want in someone.

People's surface, or even the first couple of weeks, is totally different than who they are. And some people who've never met their other half till the day they get married, they find out really quick, that I made a mistake.

So I am not ashamed of this. And like I said, I don't care what anyone thinks. One thing I've learned is, you know,

we all have six basic needs, but if your two most important ones are growth and contribution, You will always be happy.

I think about that. Even the most richest people I know who aren't happy, it's because they're either not about growth, or they don't contribute anything to the world in general, right?

And then I see people who are really happy but don' have much, and they are all about grow and contribution.

Marriage, fatherhood, and purpose

So that's why every day I'm reading. Every day, I am trying to learn something new. And as far as contributing, i give away so much information on Instagram.

If someone messages me, like which I've had in the past, I had an eating disorder and so I started watching your videos. That means the world to me. If I only affected one person and I made 500 videos, that's okay.

So I kind of center my life around growth and contribution, and I'm not trying to brag, but I am always in a great headspace, no matter what. And thank you for sharing that.

That's the growth in contribution that we need to have and sense of purpose, a sense dry motivation. So that is also physiologically healing coming from a place where you carried pain and anger and what I imagine is really you were opened up, right?

You had to grow. If you look at everything in the terms of giving love, now the funny thing about love is there are people who give love but when they don't get it back they get upset.

That's not love. Love is giving love and you don't ask for anything in return. If you do that, you will always be in a good head space. For example, if I say hello to somebody and they say F you back, that's not a me problem.

That's a them problem, so why would you get upset about that? I'm not going to be, I am giving out love. However you want to acknowledge it, That is your business.

I just giving it out, love, however you wanna deal with it. It's fine. Yeah. So contribution can be just what you want to contribute. And there's no ownership on love as well, is what I say.

No ownership. On love. Love is, and this is very important in healing. You have to be able to really empathize with somebody from a different perspective of life.

Empathy is huge. From a system, from different history and a, different, you know, have, to, be, able, see them as human and humans are naturally designed to love, I think.

Yes, we are. you know, until they're traumatized to not. So growth, your growth your journey, Your wisdom, I would say came from that place. Has it come from any other places in your life?

What would you say about where you are now? I will say the birth of my children. I don't know if you remember me when I was younger, but I wasn't good with kids.

Like I always felt I had to break them. I didn't hold them. I wasn't the weird guy around kids. But I knew I wanted them, right? And the day my daughter came out, well, it's actually a funny story.

So me and my wife had this foolish thing that we didn' even think a daughter was a possibility. We just thought we were going to have a son. That was the battle because we had to go through years of not being able to get pregnant, then we have to through IVF, which was tough.

And my was pregnant. The day of, we're going to find out the daughter's, uh, if it's a boy or a girl, I find I as a

daughter. And I was Chicago at the time.

Have you ever seen the movie Ferris Bueller's Day Off? Yeah, of course. You remember when Cameron wrecks his dad's Ferrari and he goes comatose? That was me.

I literally went comotose. for 24 hours, goodbye, what's wrong? And I was thinking, okay, God's punishing me for everything I've done. He's giving me a daughter.

And that just snapped out of it. I'm like, Okay, I want to be the best father humanly possible. Now, my dad was a great person, right? But one thing he didn't do correctly is like he would hang out a lot with his friends.

I mean, he was always there to answer questions, but he wasn't a lot. I was like, you know, I'm gonna be very close. Plus, now this might be controversial, and I might get canceled by Mercedes anyways.

Whenever I dating women, women were in a very good relationship with their father. were incredible. Now mind you, I didn't date anybody from my race or my religion ever.

And whenever I met a girl who had a bad relationship with her father, they were, you know, their life was a mess. So I knew that if I had had daughter, had to be super close to her.

The day she came out, everything changed. I was like, okay. I'm going to worry more about my health. I am going protect her, I will be a better person, read her and be around her constantly.

And I think I've done that. Then my son came afterwards, and I got a son also. That was a big moment in my life, the birth of my daughter. At first I thought it was always a curse, but she's been great.

Yeah. They're young, my daughters only six, so my sons is three. Yeah, you're absolutely right. I had a very good relationship with my father as well.

Yeah. I respect that a lot. Yeah, so that relationship you have with people in your life, and when I see patients, I do what we call an ACE inventory.

I check to see what the And also look at resiliency. There's also a scoring on that. But I always look for in the resiliency, if they've at least had one adult in their life, they had had adult one in there life who was there for them in whatever moment they needed them.

That is a highlight of a resiliency that is very, very strong correlate to resiliency But, you know, I didn't realize it was also the father-daughter relationship or either father, son relationship.

His wife's saying, yeah, it's very important. Yeah, Yeah. I guess I look for men who have had a good relationship with their mothers. Makes sense, right?

They respect their moms. To me, that's a kind person who, because I have two boys and they're very different, each both of them. And they have a very deep relationship, with me because of their difference in their personality.

But I think it is important for people out there who are taking care of raising a child. That relationship is such a vital. And a pediatrician, I'm a paediatrician too, so I used to look quite calmly and walk into the room and say, okay, what's happening here?

Who's who here. Often you had to kind of do that, especially in the hospital setting where cases were very, very heavy and decisions had be made. And when you walk into the room, you have to be able to assess like, what's the resources here?

And I'm very sad to hear your experience, how you were told about your cancer. That's just, I mean, doctors do a lot of harm. Yeah, I think you know you're right.

They do. We do, they do a lot of harm. Words are very, very important. I was just telling one of my persons that I work with that the words we use are so important, like everything you share is so because patients will remember it.

You may not remember, but they will. Work for word, yes. Learn for a word. And it rings, and it will ring always in their head. So be very very mindful of what you communicate and how you What people don't understand is that we remember the negative a lot easier than the positive.

Right. So you gotta be very careful when you say something negative to somebody. Yeah, yeah. Gotta be careful. Got you. And again, it's a trauma response.

Your brain will remember negative before the positives. In fact, we forget more than we'd remember. It's weird, right? Percent, yes. I wish we could remember everything.

There are people who can remember anything. That might be a curse though. So what drives you? You know, I know you like good things. I remember you always dressed well as well.

You matched everything just right. you drove the right car. Tell us about your cars. So it's funny, when I was single, had a Porsche 911 Turbo. And it was funny when i got married.

This is a horrible thing, but I used to always test women. Because even though I'm not a rich guy, you could assume I am rich by the car and the way I dressed.

So I would always, first date, I will take the girl out in an old Nissan Maxima. Here's the reaction. And if the girls kind of like, wow, not so great about it, didn't feel so, great, You know, would never have a second date.

I wouldn't ever ghost a person. Now let me tell you about how I met my wife. It was never planned. Like, yeah, people, and I think that if you're one of those people that is like I need to get married, it's not going to work.

I met my wife, which we're not ever supposed to meet somebody in a club, but I'm in her at a Club. And she had a good sense of humor. I took her on a date in the East on Max and she didn't care.

Then when I showed her the Porsche, she wasn't impressed. But the one thing about her is, and this is true to this day, She has never ever flaked on me.

Ever. So if she says we were going to have dinner at seven o'clock tomorrow, it happens. That's a very rare quality in men and women. Because back at that point, I was so choosy, if a woman even flaked on me once after three, four days, like I'm done.

She can't be trusted. And here's the shining moment when I knew she was the right person. So my wife is Brazilian and she won some Miss Brazil, Texas contest.

We were at the celebration and one of my best friends in the world saw her. And he talked to her, and he calls me on the way home, he's like, Shaquille, you know, I love you to death, please don't hate me.

I go, well, if you can tell me anything. He goes, i don' think she was right for you. Why do you say that? She goes well she seemed kind of like uppity.

She just seemed like she wasn't your type, like down to earth. You know what? I'm going to take that into consideration. So I go to her place, right? And she's sitting there at the table and I said to.

You know, my friend Omar, she was like, yeah, he's like my brother and this is what he said. I sat word for word. And I'd go, you know what? I'm actually going to take what you said seriously.

Now, how would most women react? Shock. Shock or like I don't care. What do you say? Who the heck does he think he is? Right? Yeah. Just know me. Right.

You know what she said? And this is the exact word she says. I'm just going to have to prove him wrong. Okay. God has sent a bite to me. My playing days are over.

And I go, I bypass this, and I am never going live a good life. She had told me her friends felt a certain way about me because I didn't drink, right?

I said, who the heck are they? She said I will have prove them wrong, so I was like, okay. There's something special about this person. What would you say is special?

I would call that agency, really. Agency, yeah, right. High agency. And it was like, okay. You know, we had our ups and downs. That's the one good thing about me being an open book.

When I was dating with her, I brought her to a family event. I wasn't scared. Hide behind their girlfriend. It was funny. My parents had a conversation with me.

Maybe we were off topic. It's time for you to get married. We found this woman. I go, stop. Stop right there. Look, I've always looked at people of the same culture.

It was almost like my sisters. But trust me, if you guys don't like her, they never ask me again. So I brought her to my brother's son's birthday. He's like three years old.

But I was cool with her and I kept bringing her, and then one day I brought her to the mosque. And I had her sit with my cousins and, what are you doing bringing us to a mosque?

I didn't care what they thought. I don't give a damn. Then, you know, they talk about what do they call the beings in Islam who are? They're not ghosts, but they're jinn.

Listen to this. This is a true story. I gotta pray real quick. So she waits in the woman's section. This Hispanic girl comes in. She's covered and she's like, hey, what are you doing here?

She goes, I'm waiting for my boyfriend. He's praying. Well, my wife is Brazilian so she speaks Portuguese, but she understands Spanish too. The girl goes hey you know, we have an Islam class once a week here on Friday nights.

It's in Spanish. You should come check it out. My wife goes okay cool. So she went. She went every day for a year. And one day she calls me and she goes, I'm ready to take Shahada.

Are you sure about this? And she took Shahadah there. Now here's the crazy part. After that initial presentation where she met the girl in the mosque, she never saw a girl again.

When she asked people at the Mosque about her, no one had even heard of her. Wow. Isn't that crazy? That's crazy. I don't know which mosque this was, but definitely that's a crazy story.

What do you want to call that? It could have been, well, God is everywhere. You know, we've had our trials and tribulations and I've also been a big speaker about going to therapy.

Like we go to Marist therapy every week. And I think it's, I don't think so bad thing. I, think that's a great thing and you know. So I'm trying to get rid of that stigma too, that therapy is something wrong with you or it is a necessity.

and, you, know I have a, great life, but I still need that outlet. right, to where I can say anything and get feedback from a non-judgmental, you know, person in the middle.

Professional, right? Professional. I see both of you, because we often just see what we see. You just hear one side of the story. No, we hear both. Yeah.

Wow, well, you are unapologetic, I would say, and I'm curious, when I was speaking, because as people might

listen to this, they might say wow, did you just know this at the time?

Because each event that you described, the cancer, your father's, relationship, depression you had to your growth as a person in practice and in your story with your wife, Did you just know this at the time?

Did it just, or was it something that you stepped away from and flagged on? Or how does that happen? Tell us. I recognized that at that time I had cancer.

You have to understand, recognizing something and taking action are two separate things. Right? So, and I think that's a lot of problems a lotta people have, right?

We have these, all these great plans are ahead of what we're gonna do, but no one takes action. So I'm the kind of person now, I take action, then I'll figure it out later.

But you got to take action first. So the cancer thing, right? I knew I had to make a change, but I took no action towards it, when my dad died and I got my depression.

When I have had that pill problem, that's why I know I started taking action.

Growth, contribution, and empathy

I picked up books, I start reading. And I think that the problem with society is that nobody reads. Yeah. I tell you what, Dr. Amit, and this might sound stupid, I can't even be in the vis-a-view of people I don't read because they just, like, you know, these billionaires, they read 10 books, what are they doing?

I totally get it. I've read hundreds of books in last 10 years. And only over the last three years I started doing something different. Like, because I read so many books, but I didn't remember anything.

So now, whether it's a book or an audiobook, if I hear something important, I will actually stop the recording and take a note. If you look at my phone, I have notes.

And I will go, even today, starting at note one, it might take me three days, but I go over everything. So it becomes a part of me, not something I just read.

I've been doing that for the last three years, so I think it's made a huge difference. because I'm the living, breathing embodiment of these books. And we're never like that because this reading, you can move on and it's, no, it might take me three, four times longer to read the book, but I am actually absorbing, I AM the Book now, as opposed to just kind of reading and kind moving on.

So the cancer thing, yeah, so until my dad passed away, that made me start taking action. And then the birth of my daughter. That's where I went into ultra mode with my nutrition.

Because before I was doing all this work to kind of build myself up to be a certain kind person. To be the most impenetrable as far as like, you know, anger, like I haven't been angry in months.

Cause I always look at perspective, right? It was funny cause I, cause, I help out other people. So a friend of mine was saying, my brother tells me that he wishes I was back in California and he can't stand to see me.

I go, how old is your brother? He's 14 years old. How old are you? 26. Okay. That's perspective. Let's put yourself in your brothers head. You're 14 years old, you're a spoiled kid, your dad gives you everything, and your mom gives everything.

Isn't it normal for them to say something like that? Yeah. Your problem is you're judging him by your standards. Put yourself at his shoes. That's totally normal.

What are you upset about? He's a 14 year old kid. He is like, you are right. I go, next time you say something stupid like that, I just want you to repeat what he said slowly and be like okay, cool and walk off.

So happened again. And he goes, you wish I wasn't here. Okay, cool. He walked off and he says his brother couldn't stay. It worked? Oh yeah, it worked.

Because this is a 14 year old kid. Understand he's a 40 year-old kid, you know? And you, know, a lot of times I used to get upset with my wife and, uh, the therapist happens a little less, but I understand that.

A lot women say things out of emotion that they don't actually mean, that's not a good thing, But it occasionally happens. Okay. If I'm my life, I work, this job is constantly stressed out.

I have to use masculine energy because I mean the, in the male workforce. Well, she forgot to turn off that masculine energy when she came home. Maybe that was my problem.

Because I did not let her become a woman. I didn't let be feminine. Hey, I got the kids. You actually take a bath. Do whatever. So I look at everything from the perspective, so I'm not going to get angry at all because I totally understand.

The problem is people hold each other, hold other people to their standards, but they're not you. They're now you do a little perspective and you understand it.

Yeah. That people see themselves and they can only see them. Right. Exactly. The world isn't in their head and it's a representation of what they believe.

And it colors the frame in a very, very different way. If you don't read, you're not going to know these things. You're magically born with this ability.

you have to read people who are more intelligent than you, who were teachers and learn from them, wanting to learn. That's right. So which brings me to my point of why we need curiosity.

Yes, that's great. Curiosity, which is kind of what I'm hearing in your story is that this element of I've got to learn more. I got a figure this out.

And I hate that phrase, curiosity killed the cat. What are we teaching people not to be curious? It's ridiculous. Yeah. Yes. I'm so glad you do. Yeah.

We were called Too Curious MD. That was perfect. Or that's a good thing. Too curious. Oh, too curious, right? That's how you learn and it opens up a neuroplastic window.

Change happens in, in curious but you have to be able to tolerate that change and then tolerate uncertainty in your life. And I imagine when you're doing therapy on a weekly basis.

Whatever I do, I still take out that hour every week for therapy. It's funny, sometimes Debra just shuts up and lets me talk and she's like… You know, you could do this, but I need someone like you, who's not me.

Cause even I can't judge myself properly, I cant do therapy. I look in the mirror and say, oh, no, it doesn't work. That's what psychedelics I think do.

And when we do treatments in Ipketamine, that self-reflection, You're really accessing your inner healer. Your inner Healer is, which you're going to connect to that part of you.

You going see yourself in a great different way, with a lot of compassion. You know, putting that mirror and looking at it with compassion is a very different lens than the self-critic and the judger.

I know it's really good for PTSD also. Yes. Yeah. Before I even knew about you guys and read about that, they were doing research, the government was, on people in the military.

And they were having changes that couldn't happen within years were happening within one or two sessions. So when I heard you were doing this, I go, you're the perfect person.

God bless. Thank you. Yeah. MDMA, PTSD just clears it, but it does require work. I mean, these, just like any medication, because ketamine is a medicine, it is medicine.

It's just the thing that's going to open the door. You have to walk in through that. Yes. So it's not a magic pill and I think medicine is prescriptionized.

It's like you go to the doctor and it right away, pull out your prescription pad. There's almost an urge. No one tells you to eat better exercises, throw out a pill.

Yeah. So you're depressed? There are side effects with that. Depressed? Here's an antidepressant. You're anxious? Let's suppress that anxiety. Let us treat the symptom, not the cause.

Right. And if you have to look back now on your health, I imagine the question I would have for you would tell me more about what that grudge and that anger and pain, how did that manifest in your body?

It manifested like right here. It was like a deep, heavy feeling. You know, like I tell people, Like I don't believe in competition. I think competition, it's like they say money is the root of all evil.

Because if they make a lot of money, you can help a I think competition is the root of all evil. I always give this example. Like I was talking to a friend of mine, I go, you know this guy, he makes money by nefarious means, let's just say.

You know, He got this car. What do you think of that car? Oh, that's a car, who cares about that? He does this and this or that. How do feel when you say that, even though it's the truth?

How does your heart feel? It feels kind of bad to be honest with you. Even though, it is not the I want you to say, you know what? I love that car and he's a hardworking guy.

Just say it, just lie to yourself. He doesn't. I go, how do you feel now? He goes, I don't have that heavy feeling. You see, and even though you might think you're not competing with that person, if you didn't that fancy car, You wouldn't of cared.

So even thought it's not, A parent, your subconscious is competing with the guy. So I always tell people, I'm not competing anybody. Any other life coach, any other nutrition coach.

I am competing, with yesterday's version of Shachil Beg. Can I beat that guy? And I constantly trying to beat the guys from yesterday. As long as I do that, i'll be happy and fine.

Wonderful. Wow. What a message that you really represent and embody, I would say. You not only speak through your own trauma, through own pain, but you're really represented and embodied in such a powerful way.

I wanted to highlight the word you said, imprenetrable. How you chose that word, it's a very select word. You did not want to be impenetrable. Yeah. Why?

And this is when you talked about your cancer. Well, like I said, you know, people like, for example, For the last five weeks, I cut out sugar. Totally.

And I hope to do this the rest of my life. Like people are saying, why are you doing this? Why are, You're enough. I go look, look I know I'm enough, but I want it to an example for everybody.

Because to me, Like I've said I talked to about. So a lot of people, Their problem isn't eating, their problem is boredom, or maybe they deal with their stress by eating.

So we have to change their, I can get them to quit eating food for like six months per year, but they'll go back to it. If I could change there identity, how they feel about themselves, then everything takes care of itself.

I've been able to work really hard, you know, I'm 51 years old now. I worked really, really on building my identity. So everything is easy. Everything is because I think of a certain way, like I said, Imagine if you start thinking, nothing bad ever happens to Aliyah.

You might think that already, but a lot of people don't. Everything happens, no matter what happens. The worst thing could happen, your child could get deathly sick and you're not upset.

I mean you care, you can do whatever you want but you are not cursing the world. There is a reason for everything even though you might not know it at the time.

So I want to be that example. And I enjoy being that. I enjoyed what I do. Enjoy reading. Try trying to beat yesterday's version of Shaquille because you know what?

The first 40 years of my life were, where I say wasted. You know, I think, you, do you the philosopher Naval? He says, he says the worst thing is the worse thing out there is a lazy man.

One who's not contributing to society. And I'm glad you brought this up. So about my father, right? When my daughter was born, I was like, okay, how do I live up to my Father?

He was a big guy, like socially, everybody knew who he was. He's a nice guy. he used to show up in people's hospital beds who we didn't know and pray for them.

You would go to funerals of people he didn' know. I am like he had a purpose. What is your purpose? Making people laugh? Like you're kind of the cool guy?

I go, I got to find a purpose. And, you know, when my daughter was born, a lot of times the child is the perfect purpose for people. But that kind of got me into my nutrition, my health.

Now it's like, okay, know my purpose is just to help people, like when people message me from wherever and like oh, he helped me. Okay, found my purposes.

I didn't have a purposes until then, aimlessly going through life like most people do. I feel so sorry for them, you know, and luckily I found my purpose.

And once I find my. I'm like, I'll just go with it. You know? I have all these grand plans of doing this and doing that. People are like. Or if you pass away before, before you hit those plans, he reached those plants.

It doesn't matter. So as long as I am going towards it, i'm successful. Like when you have a goal, whatever your goal is, become a doctor, or become whatever, You don't enjoy the process.

You're never going to get there. And when I say it doesn't mean you love the processes, it might be difficult, but you don' have a passion for that process, you're not going get their.

So I've enjoyed the processing of growth, of helping people, trying to better myself so I can help other people. If God takes me home tomorrow, I'm not happy if I have two small children.

But it's okay. I died doing what I was doing. What I wanted to do. That is why you are called the Inspire Coat. You inspire. I could listen for hours to your stories, to again, the things that you really speak to are really powerful and very, very nuanced.

Somebody, you could have taken a path this way or that way. It shows this way. There's a lot of action to what you described. When you talk about intention, there's action, and then there is either passion or purpose.

The fun is better. They say purpose is best because passion you can have, but it doesn't drive it further. It takes it to purposes where you really, like you said, take it on a journey.

You don't care about the outcome. And so then when you asked me, you know, what is, What are the subjects we can talk about? I tell you I'm open book because what Is the point of having knowledge if you can't give it to people?

If you're can give It to the next generation, if You can, give that away, where's the Point even having it. I want to give away everything I have so I can help people, You know?

Like people say what what do you want people to say? When you die, he helped me with this one thing. If anyone, people just say he help people or I'm happy.

That's all I need. You can never be, that's why I always say people try to compete on money. you can ever be the richest person. Y-you can be never, you know, be th-the best looking person, but you could always contribute whatever you have to society and to humanity.

And that will always be remembered. The lessons people learn. Thank you for sharing that. I'd like to just ask you our last question until we close this beautiful conversation.

What is something that you think is needed in our society more than anything? Maybe the South Asian culture or even to our Muslim heritage, mission and beliefs and our practice, or to the larger audience as we're living now in this kind of turmoil of the world.

I think we need more to give more love. We need to get more empathy. And if you can't directly affect something, I don't think you let it control your life.

You know, there are people like, look, those are a lot of terrible things going on in the world, especially in Palestine. and do what you can. Pray for these people.

If you have any way of actually making a difference, make a different. But if you just sit here and get depressed about it, you're not doing anybody any good.

You really aren't. A lot of times I tell people to watch less news because the news is so negative. There's no love. And that goes for everything. No love, there's not empathy.

It's like you see what these politicians do. You see how they allow, you know, children to constantly get murdered. For a million dollar donation, is it really that much money?

For you to kind of like, I'm a nobody, but I am a nothing. You could offer me a hundred million dollars and I wouldn't let, and to take hand murder this child, no.

There's no love. There is no empathy. It's all about me, me me. And that goes for humanity. Oh, this migrant crisis. You weren't born in America. Did you do something before you were born to have that right?

No. If you had empathy, you'd understand that not everyone is lucky enough to be born a country like America or Great Britain or someplace like that. Some people are born in war-torn countries.

If they want to come here and you have room, and, you know, it's funny when they come in, they're always contributing members of society more than people actually are actually born here.

Like, why wouldn't you allow them to? You know why? Because you've no empathy. You're not giving love out. So

that would be my thing. But you need more empathy and more love and understanding.

I don't think enough people have this. People live in their cocoons and yeah, I think that's much needed. Correct. That's because that's really quite accurate, right?

Love, connection, empathy, and witnessing, I would say, you know, is being able to witness somebody else's pain or somebody elses process and that something that is very missing.

Even though we've witnessed so many things, we're just kind of immune to witnessing. We're kind just, witnessing so much, but we really are immune the actual witnessing of something.

And I wish more people just wanted to wish the best for everybody. and people you don't know. Just wish the best for them, you know? Like I said, being negative, it hurts your soul.

And like I said, even if you're Pollyanna and you always happy and always wishing people the best, it's better to, your heart feels much better being like that.

I'd rather be that way than the other. Sorry. Thank you. Well, we'll close here and thank you for being our guest. And thank for having me. If somebody had to contact you or to reach out to you, what would be their way of communicating?

Sure. Easiest way is my Instagram, which is at The Inspire Coach. podcast with my co-host. We have an Instagram also. It's atchasing100 now. And these are both Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok.

Thanks for joining us on the Two Curious Andy podcast. 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. It helps us keep the curiosity alive.

Post a comment with a question or curious inquiry that have and seek to explore or learn with us. Stay curious, and we'll see you next time.