Introduction to Trauma and Chronic Illness

Welcome to another episode of Mycotoxins Mold and Chronic Illness Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Ann Shippy, and today I get to interview Keesha Ewers and she's one of the most interesting, diverse backgrounds of anybody I know, even in this functional medicine world.

So functional medicine. She's a doctor of sexology, a nurse practitioner, the ayurvedic. She's done maps, training. She's a doula of conscious, dying. And all of this and more has prepared her for the world of trauma, which we're starting to understand from research is playing such an important part for all of us that are affected by chronic illness or environmental toxicity.

So do you want to elaborate a little bit more on that? Sure. You know, when we started talking about how this is connected, I was talking about how oftentimes we head toward the signpost that I think is sort of like the low hanging fruit on the tree, right, where we'll say, okay, let's look at your microbiome.

And that's absolutely perfectly, you know, accurate thing to do. So good. But then there's a point, and this is where a lot of my patients find me is when they've spent a lot of money on protocols and supplements and dietary changes worked with a lot of people and they're still not bitter and they're very angry and frustrated.

And it's the angry, frustrated reactivity to life that actually I was programed really early in life in response to early childhood events. You know what our genetics are, how our program genetically and then also the nurture part of it in terms of what our expectations of life are, our perception and actually our the driving force behind a lot of chronic illness.

So if we're reactive in the mind, we become reactive in our bodies. Our bodies according to ayurvedic medicine, this 5000 year old sister science of yoga from India.

Right, too. I loved that. Yes. It really helped me way back, even before I went to med school to heal her. Same here, you know. And they said, okay, so we are not all the same.

There are different ways we're supposed to feed water, sleep, take ourselves for a walk. Because, you know, according to seasonal changes, age related changes, all of these things are not as set in stone.

Here's a protocol to follow for every single person. And I think we get very angry and frustrated if we read something at a book or read a blog or work with a functional medicine provider and then have an expectation that that one thing is going to take care of it when in fact we're very complex beings and we each have our own unique genetics.

There are no to the same right. We have our own unique genetics. We have our own way that we hold on to our perceptions from childhood and of life and the way that we lived it, and that then programs are nervous system and how we respond to life.

And, you know, going from childhood to elder head, there's a place where we're supposed to move from reactivity to skillful response. And I think that a lot of the work that I do with my patients is moving them from reactivity right?

How Early Trauma Shapes the Nervous System

The body reacting against pollen, against mold, against, you know, viruses, bacteria, pathogens of all sorts, including parasites to having a body that because the mind is now perceiving everything differently, there's a there's a gap between reactivity and response.

And that actually takes a lot of skillful training for our own selves. Right? We have to train our minds about how we respond to the world. And if the child part of us is still reacting, we have these certain expectations about the way things should be.

Yes, not feeling safe like safety is always first. If you don't feel safe in any kind of an environment or in your own mind, then it doesn't matter how many supplements you take, it's not going to work Well, because and that's the thing.

Revival mode, right? Room healing mode, writing exac. Exactly. Rather than actually letting your body actually say, I'm so with you on this. It's really a foundational principle.

And a lot of times, you know, we kind of buried whatever it was or we're not even aware or right. Or family programing was until, you know, somebody helps us to see it or mirror to it.

So I love it that we're going to get to explore this topic more. It's so awesome. Well, love it, though. First, because I remember from years ago, and I think it'll help our listeners to know that you can really understand what they're going through.

I know you've gone through some mold, so would you be up to telling. A absolutely. That story so people can know that you can go from, you know, pretty tough things to feeling as amazing as you do and you look like you.

I haven't seen you in a couple of years and you look better than ever. Thank you. So this is such a wonderful opportunity and thank you for providing it and asking that question because again, we're all so different and my journey will be different from everyone else's.

But I always say everyone that lends themselves talking about these subjects like us has a story right? And I'm definitely no exception. Yeah. So I grew up as a Navy brat living 21 places by the time I was 14 in a lot of very moldy environments in the South, you know, Key West, Florida, all the southern states in Japan, off base where we had to Tommy Wright to Tommy Mats and rice paper walls and things like that, which turns out those are really great.

Yeah, but a lot of stuff can get into that. And so a lot of mold, a lot of chemicals from the naval air station. My dad, when it was out to sea a lot, but we, we lived on the bases and, you know, there was a lot of jet fuel.

I was a third generation photographer, still am. And I would have my hands and all the chemicals because we didn't know Yeah. Assessed by now and so lots of this you know it was that this was my upbringing.

My dad was a smoker so a lot of secondhand smoke. So by the time I was six years old, I was already showing signs of a body that wasn't filtering very well.

And I would get constant strep throat. I was put on antibiotics over and over and over and over again. And so then and this teenager, I was on Accutane for acne.

I finally had my tonsils ripped out. And then even like the whole thing, I'm of that generation where antibiotics were the answer to it. All right. So by the time I graduated from high school and went to nursing school, I went straight into the high intensity medicine.

I really loved Balloon Pump and LifeFlight and ICU and all of that and the adrenaline. Yeah, I was adrenaline junkie as a skydiver. I loved that. And and when I was 30, I'd had four children and I was really driving myself in terms of like perfect wife, perfect mother, and I started getting inflamed.

And, you know, when I had already been getting inflamed, but I didn't recognize it. Right. I was a marathon runner and I was taking ibuprofen for all my aches and pains.

And so, you know, one day I woke up with just like ten extra pounds of stuff all over my body. My joints were red

and inflamed, and it was like someone had taken the batteries out of the Energizer Bunny.

I was just flattened. And I got myself in to see a doctor. And she asked me if I had any family history of autoimmunity. And I said, Well, I actually think my grandfather had rheumatoid arthritis and was in a wheelchair when he died, which actually I'm 58 and he was 58 when he died.

And you know this. She said, Well, that's what you've got. And she hands me two prescriptions, one for nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and one for methotrexate.

And I remember saying, well, hang on, a very disciplined is there anything else I can do? And you know, back then it was it's the same is what's happening today.

Nope food has nothing to do with it. This is your genetics, right. And people are still getting these prescriptions for the same diagnosis. It's so sad.

When they could in the house and get better. Right. Exactly. And so. Every day. I remember driving home that day thinking there there must be a different answer.

Like my model of medicine doesn't have an answer for this, but maybe there's another one. And I knew nothing about anything that I do today. Nothing. And so, you know, I went on the Internet and and started looking for research articles on RNA.

And it turns out yoga, there was something about yoga. And so I went to my first yoga class. And in the meantime, you know, like all the mold that was in my home, you know, we had a black mold in the south.

We used to get evacuated from our housing while they sprayed for cockroaches. You know, I mean, this was just like general living environment. Right. And and when I look back, it was go, okay, well, no wonder.

And so slowly, slowly, you know, I started learning how to meditate as I started practicing yoga. And one day I remember sitting and meditating and this word autoimmune kept coming up.

And it really struck me that this was me attacking me. Oddo I mean, I am doing this to myself, so I wonder if there's a place in my life when I wanted to die because this is really me killing myself.

My immune system is attacking me. It was really interesting day in this meditation, and so I thought, Well, I'm going to go backwards and kind of see if there's a place in my life where that was true.

And as I traced this bag, I found myself in Key West, Florida, again with this ten year old little version of myself who was being sexually abused by the vice principal of my elementary school.

And I remember going, Oh, my dad was out to sea. I could not understand what was going on. I was raised with no television. I know it sounds so odd, but at ten, I don't even think I knew the word abuse or molestation or sex.

I hope most ten year olds don't write. Yeah, like. Part of their world. Well, I mean, it shouldn't. And, you know, there was no Internet like I was. Yeah. Yeah. And I lived overseas for a lot.

So I just remember trying to tell my mom, like, I didn't feel good. I didn't want to go to school. I was afraid. And, you know, I was having rashes and things like that.

And sure enough, there was mold everywhere. And my school's key was Florida.

Keesha's Mold and Autoimmunity Journey

And it was interesting that back then there was some question about whether or not mold was bothering me. Isn't that fascinating? All the way back then, because I was coughing, I had a lot of respiratory things.

And that the interesting thing about it was that once I left that school and that sexual abuse environment, I was better. All my respiratory stuff cleared up.

And so I remember looking at this from this meditation and going, I think that that that event has something to do with my rheumatoid arthritis. And I started looking at like the acne, the strep throat, the respiratory stuff.

Every time I got sick, it went straight to my lungs and I would get so reactive with like wheezy coffee stuff when I was and I could I could see it was when I was stressed and it didn't matter my environment.

It was when I got really, really stressed, everything would tighten up. And so I thought, Oh, I wonder if this is related? And it turns out that actually once I saw that this must be connected and started going into deep trauma work, within six months my R. A.

was gone. I never took the meds. And you know, over the years it took like five years where I would do this. Okay, I feel better. Let me try my old foods again or I feel better.

Let me go back to my normal way of pushing myself, you know, like a perfectionism, people pleasing thing. And as I started to unwind that drive and really relax into learning how to love and care for my little girl child self, right.

And not drive myself to this perfectionism that I started really getting better with my respiratorie stuff. And we had black mold on this house and on three levels.

Exactly the story that I was thinking and. And I did not react. There was no reaction. And I had been so reactive in my earlier life. And so I you know, it's this really interesting, like how you express your genetics is not set in stone.

It really does have so much to do about your perceptions. And if you feel safe, right. As we started out the conversation and learning how to really get attachment trauma, ethics, sexual trauma, and, you know, you had said a lot of people you said don't know what it is or it's when we talk about trauma, I just want to could define it.

It was any event you didn't feel capable of managing in the developmental state that you were at. And so it's so much everyone's had trauma. So we can say like some.

More examples of. That. Yeah. So like capital T trauma, that would be the kinds of trauma we're talking about right now where it's domestic violence, sexual abuse, physical, emotional, spiritual abuse, having a parent die, divorced in class, rated, addicted to a substance and mentally ill, abandonment, neglect, right.

Those kinds of things or those capital T traumas lower case, those are obvious. Those are the ones where a lot of people. Not have them at top of mind.

Yeah, I think that you have to move past them, but they still might be influencing how your brainwaves are operating and exam addicts are operating. Right?

And so then lower case T trauma. We've all had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of those. Those are any kind of experience that you had where you didn't feel good enough, wanted, you know, betrayed, rejected are not part of the tribe because we are actually wired to know that if we're put on the outside of the firelight circle in tribal times, the sabertooth tiger can eat us.

And so any time we feel like one day you have three girlfriends on the playground in elementary school, and then the next day they turn and said they don't want to play with you.

That's going to be experienced as a trauma. Right. And that's what people don't really realize. Too, is I feel like those kinds of things, like getting kicked out of the tribe.

Yeah. Is happening more and more like, yes, up and over vaccine choice. What's happened? You're absolutely right. The polarization between religion, politics, political issues, cultural, societal things, cyberbullying, you know, I

mean, maybe so hard to be a kid these days, you know, And so hard.

Yeah. Like, yeah. And so that you've never you feel like you never meet from all that social media. Right? Thinking it was kind of hard just even, you know, some of the teen magazines.

I'd look at the pictures and I be like, Oh yeah. Yes, yes. And but. Now it's it's even more extreme. Right? It's so much more extreme. And a couple of researchers out of two different universities wrote a book called The Narcissism Epidemic.

And they they said, like from the 1960s to today, it's been straight line like this of narcissism in our society. Well, you know, when we hear the word narcissism, we tend to think just like trauma.

We collapse of our one way of thinking about it, but it's also very self-absorbed, right where self is center and effete, you know, entitlement things that we don't think we're getting, wanting other people to think like we are.

They labeled for different root causes of that. And one of them is what you're identifying social media and FOMO. Another one was easy money from the banks where you could live any lifestyle you wanted.

Another one was everybody gets a trophy, all the self esteem programs that you and I. Right. They started that when when we were younger and our kids, everybody gets a trophy, right?

And then the other one was this fixation on celebrity. You know. So fascinating to. Yes. And that creates reactivity inside of us. Oh, interesting. Yeah.

Very fascinating book. Mm hmm. It's really interesting. One of them comes from, I think, the University of Texas in Austin, one of the researchers. Oh, nice. Yeah.

So, I mean, based on your definition, then, everybody has some traumas that are only hardwired in that are not being recognized. That may be really influencing how their health is going.

Yeah. Yeah. It's really interesting because I was just through some things, so I just got done teaching this. I got this little diagram that's kind of interesting where I just want to set the stage for this.

Like we have this innocence in childhood. Everybody goes through some kind of heartbreak, trauma, betrayal, and that creates what we call our false self, our ego, right?

The thing that we want everyone to see us as and then we stay with kind of resentment and bitterness about these heartbreaks. If we don't do the healing necessary right to come to wisdom.

And then that helps us grow compassion When we're able to heal that and we get in touch with our true nature, which doesn't require us to be seen in a certain way.

We don't have to have everyone like us, you know, And perfectionism doesn't need to be the defining factor of our lives or people pleasing, you know, and holding on to our I call it these are the four root causes of autoimmunity, the way that I talk about it and what makes us react to mold, you know, is when we're resentful, we're better.

We are people pleasing, we're perfectionists, and we're holding on to that poison of past pain. And this is what my study in 2013 illustrated. That's called the Healing Unresolved Trauma study.

And it was like, this is how this happens, right? And we're supposed to have trauma. That's really an important part, I think, for us to realize is we we have to have a loss of innocence.

And sometimes people will mourn that until they die. You know, this shouldn't have happened to me. And the truth of the matter is, is no one deserves that.

No one deserves trauma. Right? You're absolutely right. You shouldn't have happened to you. And there are things that happen in life that are meant to propel us towards that wisdom state where we can have equanimity and compassion.

And once we've got that in our our minds trained in that way, our bodies relax. We're not expressing genetics that are programed to respond to mold right.

So you're. As you're explaining your model for this, it also makes me think about how getting sick is also a trauma to. Such a big trauma. At the functional medicine meeting last weekend, three people that I just ah, I love so much and are just they were they got on stage and were so vulnerable.

The three of them had all gone through cancer. And I'm sure you know, all three of them and the way that they spoke about their cancers, as bad as it was, and one for sure almost didn't make it right the way that they were able to, to have not kept it as a trauma space was really to found the gifts and the wisdom in it.

Right. You know, it was a whole process to get there. And I know that that's part of what you teach. And there's no bypassing that process. You have to digest it.

That's another thing that taught me way back when I was 30, is that autoimmunity, chronic illness that we're talking about now, just just any chronic illness reactivity to mycotoxins is undigested anger.

I just remember sitting back in my seat when I was reading that going, Oh, you have to digest your emotions, your experiences, your feelings in the same way you digest an apple that's revolutionary or right?

Because I think so often, especially as children, we're taught to not get angry. Right. Like crying loud, too, certainly. Right. Right. Lou. So talk a little bit more about.

Yeah, every human has anger for a reason, right? Yeah. We need to be angry sometimes that it propels us. Galvanizes us where our. Boundaries are. It helps us to know what's important to us.

So right about how we digest it. Yeah. Sticking like my sexual abuse experience up on a closet shelf in my mind. Right. And checking it away in the dark and not thinking about it anymore.

And that bit me right? It's in there and digested. And so then the way that I perceive is going to be that anyone in authority is dangerous.

Understanding Capital T and Little t Trauma

And so any time that I am in any kind of environment like you should see or once before I did all this work of if I get pulled over by the space, it was the case, you know, I mean, it wasn't just, oh, no, I'm going to get in trouble.

It was survival. It was I was shaking. You know, we don't we talk about fight or flight freeze or faint, but children freeze. They don't go into fighting fights.

You know, they they free because they're not autonomous, powerful beings. So if your child part comes up and is taking over, you can't navigate the complexity of an adult life.

So the digestion of that anger doesn't mean that you have to go relive traumas. That's a really important point. You really have to remember your traumas.

You don't. Either. You can. Look. At a point because it's. So important. Going over it over and over. It really entrenches it in the brain. Exactly. The story is important to tell.

I don't ever say the story's not important, and it's very important. But when you tell it on a rumination loop and the the beliefs that you created, so I'm going to help you track mine. So so there's this is from my healing unresolved

trauma study in the hurt model, the way it happens is you have an initial hurt and that can happen when you're 58.

It doesn't have to be in childhood. Okay. So people will ask me, what about traumas you have when you're an adult? But these early ones have programed your nervous system.

So there's an initial hurt. So for me, like we'll just say that fifth grade classroom deal, the intercom would go off in a corner as a class. The secretary could be making announcements asking us to stand up and say the Pledge of Allegiance.

And everyone's like calling me to the office. And it didn't matter if that thing crackled to life. I was like Pavlov's dog instant. I call it panic. Grab it right.

So there's a freeze state that happens with an emotion. So first you're going to have an emotion. For me, it was terror. So not just undigested anger, it's undigested emotion, so terror.

And then I go into a free state. So your your autonomic nervous system will kick in with the parent, with the sympathetic. And so usually freeze when you're a kid.

And from there, this is the part that gets left off a lot is you're going to make up a meaning that matches, that develop mental state of your brain at the time of the life this happened.

So for a ten year old, you know, it was going to be a ten year old meaning making process. Right. So the belief that I came away from that with was because the Vice-Principal was telling me this was because I was a bad kid, was I'm going to have to really be perfect and not stand out in the crowd.

I was the only white girl in an all black school, too. And so, you know, it was like, how do I get some kind of protective camouflage? So from the time I was ten until my mid thirties, I couldn't speak in front of more than two people without social anxiety disorder.

I would stutter. I would turn red and sweat. I was a mess because I was so used to blending in. In the nervous system. And so that's undigested experience and feelings, right, with that nervous system in it.

And then you're going to this is in everything gets left off a lot. You're going to have an adaptive behavior strategy that matches your developmental state and brain of the time.

So for me, it was perfectionism. So then that's your initial hurt loop, I call it. Then you have this opportunity where it bifurcates in adulthood, where you can choose two different ways of being one.

You do. You never self confront whatever it is that you thought when you were five, 6 to 1, you know, whatever those ages were that you started this looping, you continue it all the way through adulthood.

When that happens, then you go off with the same emotions. They're never digested the same beliefs, the same adaptive, which now become maladaptive memory processing behaviors.

This is why you don't have to remember anything from childhood. You can just look at what is it that you do when you're stressed out? Do you sit down on the couch with Ben and Jerry's and numb out?

Do you go shopping? Do you is it a sexual thing? Is it a gambling thing? Is it alcohol thing? Do you have to have a glass of wine before you go to sleep in order to cool down?

When you're in social settings, you have to have alcohol in your hand, you know, a sugary thing for you. Like these are the things for you to look at because that's now become a maladaptive behavior in response to a stressor.

So that rather than trying to remember what your traumas are. We can reverse engineer it. The first step is to look at how you're responding to stress.

Exactly. And then I do a lot of trauma retreats, and some of them with plant medicine, some of them without and what we do is we go to reverse engineering.

Like where do you what feeling do you have in your body? How old do you feel when you're feeling it? You don't have to actually get into your trauma. You want to get into unlocking that pattern of perception right?

That somehow your parents, you know, should have been different than they were. Somehow your teachers should have been different than they were. God should have done it differently for you.

Life didn't pan out the way that you wanted it to. There are a lot of biggies, you know, and if you still had those going on a loop and you're not willing to self confront your own patterns, you'll just keep doing the same thing and you become more and more reactive to life.

The environment you live in, and it causes disease. Your genetics will express themselves in ways that you're tagged, right? Your gut will break down.

And test for your. Exemplifying. Exactly the other side of the hurt model has in the middle of it willingness to self confront with curious compassion like, okay, every time I'm unhappy, I'm the one present.

Maybe there's something here that I need to examine. I'll never forget when that first time that occurred to me. Hmm. Maybe I am not the only right one and everyone else is wrong here.

Maybe the way that I am perceiving things is being generated by something else. And that's the first part where you get to start the digestion process because you start to realize like, Oh, my upset ten year old is running this.

When that happens, I'm no longer my chronological age, right? I've gone into a different state of development and I'm trying to navigate this complex life.

I'm not doing well. Right. That's that's a really great opportunity for you to start self confronting with here is compassion. And then you go through there a bunch of things that I have people do to start working into that digestion process and everyone's going to be a little bit different about what they're willing.

And a lot of people will say, Well, I've already worked phones, I've done EMDR, and yet they're still in front of me with X, Y or Z illness. And so, you know, I always say, well, there's still some layers, right?

It's never a linear process. It's not one and done, and it doesn't take too long listening to the verbiage or the language someone tells their story with.

It's kind of go, okay, right there, right? We can actually help that move into a more skillful response, a different way of perceiving, and then that heals that part, right?

And you just keep doing that. Yeah. I think what you're talking about is so beautiful and makes me even more aware of. No, so much of the programing that we have that makes us be able to function in the world that, you know, we're so automated on so many things now as adults, right?

Like embrace our teeth without thinking about it. We drive our cars, we answer the phone like there's so much that we don't have to think about how we're doing it.

Right? But what's happened is that there's there's some like some programing that isn't serving us like it was probably like we it's probably part of survival at the time, right?

The Hurt Model and Emotional Digestion

It's how we get through those feeling like we didn't belong or people aren't treating us right or the the traumas. It's our are compensation for what's happening.

And probably 99.9% of the things that we've come up with. But it's so fascinating to me how that, you know, like 1% or point 1% can have such a dramatic impact on our bodies.

It's so true. And the thing that it helps as you work through this, there's an evolution. Suzanne Greider is one researcher out of Harvard that did developmental states of adulthood.

We're really familiar with Erikson, you know, and developmental stages, developmental milestones are supposed to be hit for children. And oftentimes there's this idea that, okay, you're 18 and you're done.

You're now you're now an adult, right? And it's like there's this whole developmental state that's just adult. And like me, there are several different levels of adult head that have developmental milestones that are not widely publicized that she worked with that.

When I ran across them, I went, Oh, this makes so much sense because it just shows why sometimes people are still in. They go into what's called a concrete black and white space, even though they're in their thirties, forties or fifties.

You know, it should be done this way. This was, you know, these people shouldn't be thinking like this, you know, instead of having more tolerance to the fact that every single one of us is different, why in the world would we expect everyone to think the same way? We are not homogenous.

Our microbiome is not meant to be a homogenous set of beings. It is an in which diversity is paramount and it affects 60 to 80% of our immune system and our mood, our weight, everything.

If you I Aveda says we're a microcosm of the macrocosm of the universe. So the same is true for humanity. We're supposed to be very diverse and get together in an ecosystem in which we are supportive of the environment we live in and each other.

And so when we're not doing that well, we become the chronic illness of this earth. We are the autoimmune disease, you know, And so you can kind of go, Oh, and these developmental levels that she identified are exactly that.

Each time we move into a new evolutionary way of perceiving where our view gets larger and larger and more expansive, we have more peace inside of ourselves.

We then are more peaceful with our environment or more mindful or more loving. We're more compassionate, and the more of that we can attain, the less we're going to be reactive to the environment and each other, and so the less our body then will become reactive.

So it's this really beautiful way of saying, gosh, you know, illness or disease. I have a TED talk about this is actually a call to evolution for each of us as an individual.

And a collective. So, you know, the idea that where I was at Paleo effects, speaking on a stage and I got this download and I said, Oh my gosh, to the audience, it just struck me that we as humans are so entitled that we think our bodies are supposed to behave in very specific ways.

And when they don't, we're angry. Instead of turning towards the body and saying, Oh my gosh, you have supported me for however many decades I've been alive, largely without gratitude.

And here I am complaining because you don't have energy. And yet I'm not helping, Right? I'm chugging down coffee. I'm drinking alcohol to wind down. I'm eating sugar to have, you know, a little up in my mood and all of these things.

And I said, we have so many entitlements that I didn't even realize things like, oh, I don't know, like some of them are going to get kind of strong, but like, children are supposed to outlive their parents, right?

Nobody ever promises that. Or like, I live kind of close to a volcano and I know everyone around me feels like entitled to the fact that the volcano is not supposed to.

You're up. And yet that never got agreed to. Right? So I'm sitting here in a chair on a floor, two stories up, and I fully expect the floor to remain stable, for the roof to remain there and for 60 there.

Yeah, exactly. And, and we just heard how much entitlement and expectations about life like that. It's just supposed to deliver us the stuff automatically.

And I thought I was I was standing on that stage in the middle of my talk and I went, Oh, this is really interesting. I would love to hear from you. After my talk about what you think about this.

And so many people came up and said, I just realized you're right. Like, I expect when I wake up in the morning, my eyes are going to see and and I'll be angry if they don't.

So this is a lot of where our undigested emotions can come from, too. It's not even little T traumas and capital T traumas. It's just our entitlement, our expectations that the financial markets will sustain a certain like we're supposed to have certain things.

And if we don't, then we're really angry. And so then we have to work on that. That's right. We've got all that running through our minds and that affects our bodies.

And so it's really becoming conscious of, Oh, I just don't live a life of gratitude towards this amazing body. So it's tired, so it reacts, Right. What can I do with that?

But and yet even when we notice ourselves doing those things right, how do we respond to that? Exactly. And I the the curious compassion. Oh, how did they get to these?

And oh, what is it doing something? Is there something I need to approach? Is staying in that place that I love the curious compassion. It's like a mental mastery that happens.

But I thought it's it's a thought by thought process. And that's what I came to finally was, oh, can't get lazy, mind you. Like, you have to let your mind always be a weight to your own thought patterns.

Like what does this last all behind the screen? That's awesome. I love that. You know, it's over wiggling. Oh yeah. So one of the things that I know that you emphasize, too, is how trauma actually changes the brain architecture.

And Yes. And that it can't be reversed like, I think that's the message in this. So that is the message of. These things can be reversed and finding. And also the skills that we created in childhood in response to our trauma, our skills.

So like perfectionism, you don't want anyone medically taking care of you. That's anything less than imperfection. That's right. No, It's like you're going to have whatever your adaptive strategies were as a child, there are skills you gain from that.

So what you want is you want to have a wake to use them when it's appropriate, but not have them govern you. Right? And so you start to get freedom from being controlled by your child's mind and then still be able to fold in the parts that are that are actually really wonderfully developed skills in response to trauma.

Right. That's really important. As you remember. And the architecture of the brain is really fascinating. When I was doing my doctoral research, I look at over 900 brain scans and what I saw was this really interesting, like shrinkage of the prefrontal cortex when someone had been diagnosed with PTSD.

Now it's pretty well established that prefrontal cortex is the adult brain. We don't have it on board until we're 26 years of age. So that adult brain is executive function.

So that's that's been well established in the research.

Brain Changes, Reversibility, and Healing Practices

The thing that I found was that people that filled out a perceived stress index of perceived stress scale that said, I've been divorced, I've moved, I've had someone close to me die.

You know, those things where they have a lot of points depending on the stress level, right? Normal life stress when that was perceived, that's the word is the perceived stress scale.

When that was perceived as overwhelming to the study participants, the same shrinkage of the prefrontal cortex was seen on an MRI scan that was new. And in my work what I saw was that also affected female sexual desire.

So the same parts of the brain that are required for a woman to have libido, which doesn't just mean sexual, that means passion for life, interest in the things that she wants to do are those areas of the brain are hijacked when there is a perceived sense of overwhelm and it actually changes the architecture of the brain.

So we knew that capital T trauma did that, but now it turns out all these little ones do it to. And as you just said, I never write or teach or talk about anything that you can't change.

So you can actually grow it back. Because what happens is, is that shrink. So we have these little micro glia that go along. This happens with massive activation to carves away parts of the brain that that you don't think are necessary because you're focused on survival.

So then the part of the brain that recognizes the beautiful flowers that are blooming right now or feels the warmth of the breeze on your skin or really is mindful of the taste of the strawberry.

You know, that carves that right away because the zebra that's being chased by the lion only has survival, right. The horizon is right there. And that is all the.

Things that we need to get away. Yes. So all the joyful stuff gets carved away because your focus right on a self absorbed way of being. And that may not be really necessary anymore because if something terrible happened to you earlier in life and you're still generating that same way of perceiving, you're actually shrinking the adult part of your brain and the right side of your amygdala is growing in volume because you're like this, Am I okay?

Am I okay? Am I going to be loved and my lovable, you know? And so it's it's absolutely reversible. That can be changed. And that's the beauty of all of this. Right.

And it's just it's such an important part of healing. I love it that you're focusing on this area right now. So if somebody is listening and they really want to this is resonating with them, that this is something that they want to understand more and address.

What are the that you would recommend them? So the first thing you know, because everyone's going to be different, but the first thing that every single person can do is to really take the time that I was talking about earlier to develop like an observation of your own thoughts.

So you start keeping your awareness of yourself awake, and if it starts to go to sleep, you shake her awake again. All right? And you're really developing a discipline around watching not everybody else.

You don't even use. Don't worry about all those other people out there, Right? Just your own thoughts. And do this for one day, one day of waking hours.

And just notice that tone that you speak to yourself and others in the content. Turns out that research tells us that 94 to 96% of the thoughts you have every single day are recycled.

They're part of ruminating loops. So and they're unconsciously repeating themselves. They're just on repeat. So notice what are the themes of your repetitious, ruminating loops?

Notice the feeling in your body that you have to each one of those thoughts that you have? Does it generating generate a feeling of peace, of compassion, of love or frustration and resentment, anger, fear, anxiety, depression?

Right. These are all the thing that I think people don't really realize. And I see it as a cultural flaw the way that we are brought up. And every preschooler needs to be taught this is it's like sitting on the couch watching the movie on a big screen TV, you know, where you don't have a remote.

Whatever comes up on that screen, you just have to watch it. And I think that's the way a lot of people think about their own bodies, that it's just on video and you don't have any control over it.

And if you if the thought happens, it's actually somehow a true thought, which isn't accurate, either, you know, or it's a valuable body because you've got it right.

And so, you know, you actually do have the remote. This is the only things that you have control over in life. And so you get an opportunity to kind of play with this.

I asked people to gather like a little bag of white pebbles and a little bag of dark pebbles. And after you've spent a day of doing the thought experiment the next day, at the end of the day, for every life supportive thought that you had put a white pebble down on the floor in front of you or on the table.

And for every, you know, one that has created some negativity within, you put a dark pebble and then the next day, what you'll notice is if there's a thought that, you know, goes with a dark pebble, you'll be less likely to continue it, be like, Oh, I don't want to put a dark pebble down tonight.

I'm going to change that thought. But let me go through my little Rolodex of thoughts. I could have a hummingbird at the feeder. This morning was so fun to watch.

Right? And so you get to play with that and then you'll start noticing like, how that feels inside your body. And so just do that for a week and see what happens.

It's a really beautiful place to begin. That's a great exercise. Yeah. To have the thoughts being shown to you in a visual collective. Right. Is awesome.

And of course there's going to be some hard days in there, you know, where right? There are some things that you. Can in a hard day or always is defined as your expectations were not met and so start noticing that it is a hard day and start noticing if there's something around the way, like your expectations that can show and it won't be such a hard day.

It'll just be a day that has unpredictable challenges that arise. Just like that's, that's how light fits. Yes. Yeah. And the overall trajectory isn't linear, right?

Write it down a little bit, but I hope it's. Always going to be like this. And what we're what we're working on is making it so it's not like this where it just goes down, down, down, down.

And you find yourself in this dark hole, right? Wave form is normal, light comes in, waves down, comes in waves. Everything's in waves, cycles, rhythm.

The ocean is in waves. You know everything is so the expectation that we're always supposed to be like this or happy is also erroneous. But what we want to do is have our dips not be so catastrophic.

Curious Compassion and Closing Reflections

Right. And get stuck there to get stuck. Yeah. Yeah. Well, this is beautiful. Is there anything else that you want to share before you tell people how to find you?

And what more about what you're up to? Well, I would just say there's always a new learning that we can do. And the more excited we are about that and not having it be, well, I'm done now that that's also an unrealistic expectation, right?

Everything is cyclical. And if we recognize that just like just the candles hero's journey, that once we're through one challenge and we've learned the things and we've integrated them and we've come out as an expert at that learning, then you're going to have another one.

That's just how it goes, you know, and having an expectation that life is meant to be challenging for us. I think that's very helpful and it helps us rest a little bit back and go, okay, this doesn't mean that I can't ever catch a break or I need to sit around waiting for the other shoe to fall or, you know, like all of those things that people will feel.

How come life never goes my way? It helps to bring again some equanimity and the natural rhythms of life. Because if you look in Dr. Shippy and my background you'll recognize like the only straight lines or manmade.

But if you look outside your windows, I have this big bank of windows right here. Nature has zero straight lines, all very chaotic. And yet it's very, very beautiful.

And so our wish for things to be nice and tiny is an unrealistic expectation. I think that's what we really ultimately want anyway. No, it is. We want the growth.

We want that we do and the grace that comes with all of it. Exactly the wisdom attained. The only way we can get there. We really do want the wisdom. So let's go for it. Yes.

Oh, beautiful. So how do people find you? drkeesha.com, D R K E E S H A.com and my book, Solving the Autoimmune Puzzle is a great way to start. And my TED talk.

When you get so many awesome things out there too, to really help people, I'm so happy that you're doing what you're doing and bringing your unique combination skills and perspective to to this life of.

The same with you. Thanks for the work you're up to. This is very hard work everyone. What Dr. Shippy is doing. So I would encourage you to really purchase the talks because all of these experts have so much to offer.

And, you know, take your time and digest them layer after layer. So thank you for all the work you're putting into this. Thank you. It's I felt so lucky to get to do it because I think it really will help a lot of people to get through to the other side and really know, oh, here's.

A light at the end of the tunnel. Is there? Yeah. We've been there. We know. Yes, we do. It's hard at times, but this I is the thing that really resonates with me and the thing you're sharing is this curious compassion.

Yeah. We can come from that space for ourselves that makes such a difference. And in our in our process. We won't get better. Or if we don't hard on yourselves.

If we bring perfectionism to our healing journey, we won't get better, though. Yeah. I hope this helps all of you listening and look forward to more. Everybody.