Healing the Alarm: Dr. Russ Kennedy on Anxiety, Safety & the Inner Child Part 2 Transcript

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Opening on mind, body, and spirit

Why did we lose contact with that? You know, we're mind, body, spirit. Those physicians were pretty good at the body. Okay. At the mind because the brain is so complex.

I don't think we ever really gonna understand it, but the spirit part, you know? Why do we use that and can we get it back? without losing our credibility, you know, without sort of saying, Hey, there's there stuff I don't know.

There's stuff maybe we could look into, can we meditate together? Can we find this sort place of peace? Welcome to the To Curious MD podcast. I'm Dr. Ali Ahmed.

And I am Dr Surya Rapan. With the wisdom from holistic, alternative and these conventional medicines, we are here to challenge the status quo. We're curious about the connectivity and complexity between diverse fields of knowledge as it relates to consciousness, chronic illness, mental health, resilience and beyond.

learning more about the art and science of healing or listening to stories of extraordinary healing. You're in the right place. Let's dive in." And they are so defaulted to that system that that becomes their medical condition and the gut the same way.

I mean, it's how all the things that you feel about yourself or your world and your trauma, how does that show up in your body? That is a question I asked.

So when it showed up for you, and you've also described this, the term woo woo. I just recently heard this term. Really? Okay. What's woo, woo? She says, you're very woo-woo.

And I said, I'm woo!

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I don't get it. Well, how am I woo wooks? Because you are focused on the emotion, up that anxiety and how that shows up in people's body. How do these practices, the one that you described, MBRX, is what M stands for?

The whole thing is called your mind-body prescription. So that's mind body prescription for permanent anxiety healing. I was thinking memory, breathing, then R, I couldn't get.

I come from med school with acronyms, you know, so I have a kind of like jabs is one of my favorites, which is basically the default mode network. Judgment, abandonment, blame and shame.

That's what you do. Jabs at yourself in the network, So I've all these little things. Yeah, a lot of alarms as, abuse, loss, abandoned, rejection, maturing too soon in shame, like I am all of these acronyns.

that's how I got through med School and I love acronym. I love them. That's how I remember. I know that. And my question, which escapes me right now as I try to catch it in my head, is this, you know, what you described was almost like hypnotherapy.

Get into your mind, get into the body, think about that past memory, go there, see it, be with it. Can you trust yourself? So my question is, how do you know that somebody can do that?

Do they have the resources to do? Yeah, you take them very slowly. That's why I check in with them. You know,

that's what I say, don't pick the worst trauma of your life.

Pick something that still has a bit of a charge to it. And then that sort of flares them up a little bit. And they're safe within that. I keep reassuring them, you're in your chair, relax your shoulders, take a breath.

So I kept grounding you in you body. Then we slowly titrate the old wounds. And then I keep an eye on them too. Like if it's too much or they've chosen something that's, you know, too intense for them, they'd say, let's back off a little bit.

Let's pick something, that, seems maybe ridiculously simple when you were younger. It's like, well, once I forgot, I was supposed to go to the store and get bread and cheese and I came back with just cheese.

I didn't have bread. And my mom kind of yelled at me. You know it just one of those little things. Okay, lets do that. rather than my dad used to hit me when I would get a B on a test or whatever.

And everybody's different. People are sensitive. I don't see anxiety, chronic anxiety in people that weren't born highly sensitive So what you consider a trauma for one person may not be a drama for other people.

Titrating trauma and working with the body

And what consider not a trama for someone may be huge trauma or someone else. So it's really sort of titrating them through like, is it okay to go here?

Like, and if they look like they're, you know, getting too upset, then I know that I'm losing the edge and I have to sort keep them sort balanced in that discomfort.

but also coupling it with safety the whole way through. Because typically that memory has just basically isolated itself or merged itself with discomfort.

And then when I add something that's comfortable, it sort of gives it a bit of a lobotomy. It sort shakes it up a little bit so that that neural pathway isn't quite so potentiated, not so hardwired.

When you do that, when you start opening up people's traumas, they start realizing, hey, Actually, that isn't all of me. There were other things going on at the time that were actually quite good.

It's like, yeah, let's go into those a little bit. Sometimes I get people to put a picture of themselves when they were younger up on their bathroom mirror and just connect with the younger version of them.

Just going in for a pee, saying hi. You don't have anything deep. It's just being there with that younger version of you and starting to merge that adult self with a child self.

And I think, you know, medicine doesn't know anything about this. They don't have any real clue of like the child's self, the inner child. You know funnily enough, The people that I find with the most inner-child wounding are the ones that hate the term innerchild the more.

Which is what I, I used to hate, because I had a lot of innerchild woundings. So I thing the people who are sort of, like, eh, inner childhood or whatever, we're getting into the woo part of it.

But the woo part of it is where we heal permanently. The other stuff, you know, we can teach you CBT, cognitive therapy, but the problem is when you get all that norepinephrine in your brain, adrenaline in you body, it shuts off your pre-final cortex.

So the part that holds these CB-T type rescue therapies gets paralyzed when you get into an anxiety. So it leaves you and you need it the most. I try and ground people in their body first and then once you're in your body, then we can start bringing in the cognitive stuff because your cognitive brain goes offline when your got all this adrenaline,

cortisol and norepinephrine in you brain going on.

That's one of my frustrations with cognitive therapies is that they leave you when they need them the Back to my original point then, you are a neurologist and you're treating patients with medicine.

Well, I'm not a Neurologist. No, but I am saying you. Yeah. You are in the brain. The brain is connected to all the other body parts. And you were treating them as a neurologists would or could.

Yes. If you put it that way, it's an interesting way of putting it. Yeah. I think that's true. You are taking them out of a place of protection where your brain has gone into this kind of locked in this sympathetic phase.

where you don't learn anything. You basically just sort of repeat old programs in a rote fashion into a place where, okay, I can live in my brain, my body's relaxed, and now all these other channels in brain open up, including the spiritual ones, because when you're in alarm, you have no access to spirit.

You know, it's very curious. And I think that's true with a lot of medical doctors. Like we get into sort of when we're working kind of like an alarm state about the patient after patient, after, patient.

After patient and we don't really learn how to see people or feel people anymore because we are in this alarm. State ourselves. And when you're in this alarm state, other people can pick up your vibe.

They feel how you are feeling. And it's contagious. If you have a doctor who's tense and you've been told that there's some significant problem with you, and if you feel their tension, it will act as a bit of a double whammy there.

But if your doctor is kind of relaxed, they maybe do some processes with your to relax you and your body just by You know, speaking slowly. When you take deep breaths, like when someone's really focused on you, they will match your breathing.

So if your reading is nice and slow, their breathing will go nice, and so too. You start building some connection with them physically, as opposed to just through language.

And then they're much more open. Drop the resonance of your voice a little bit. Be a littler slower, make more eye contact if that doesn't trigger them.

You know, just have the intention that you're going to be connected to this person. But again, if you already burned out yourself as a doctor, it's very hard if can't look after yourself to look at other people and that magnifies the burnout because the resentment there, you know getting into that doctor stuff is that we're trained patients come first, patients comes first.

That's how we are all trained. And that basically is setting you up for burnout. Because you are basically saying to people, You don't matter. right, which is basically what my childhood was.

You don't matter. So for me, it kind of fit in this sort of Freudian repetition compulsion kind way. Like this was familiar to me so I kind repeated it.

But if you're told that patients come first all the time, after a while, you gonna start resenting those damn patients because what about me? What about my?

And I think a lot of the doctors are resentting the newer doctors coming up because the new doctors, I'm gonna live my life. Like I am not gonna devote everything I have to medicine.

So yeah, there's a lotta stuff in there for sure. their death day is, and I just love how your life experiences your story to yourself and to your identity.

Is it from a child to who you are now? The work that you've done, yoga, breath work, even humor, I would say even

the woo-woo and the neuroscience. How did these practices for you and even for what you speak to help rewire our nervous system?

Well, I think we have to have safety first before we can rewire. Otherwise, we will just default back into the old protective patterns that we learned that got ingrained into our systems when we're younger.

Inner child work and grounding anxiety

So when can teach ourselves that are safe, and that's why in my sort of inductions with people that I do, it's like I can relax your shoulders, relax you jaw, take a breath, feel grounded.

Okay, well take another step. We'll go a little further. I'm constantly reassuring them that their body is safe. before we go into the next step. And then when we going to the step, they can see their old trauma in a different way.

It opens up a little bit. That's where the spirit comes in. Because if you open yourself up and you stay open in your relaxed body, you will start to see things that you've never seen before because you have been living in protection your whole life.

So once you start making the intention to seek connection everywhere, with spirit, with everything, you will see more of that. So it's just the way your brain works.

Whatever you focus on, whatever you make the intention to, And I wasn't really aware of a lot of Teslas before. They were out there, but once you buy one, you see them everywhere.

It's the same kind of thing. So if you start seeing spirit in whatever way you say spirit, it could be, I just kept people to say, okay, feel the breeze on your hands.

You know, look for the auras around trees. This sounds very, very woo. I agree. And part of me wants to have a seizure when I say it, because it sounds so antithetical to how I was trained as a doctor.

But when you start opening yourself up to different fields, to the different ways of looking at the world, the Other ways start coming in to meet you.

But if you're rigid in protection, you don't have the option of having other other things won't come approach you because you are too unapproachable. You don' have to neural openness to be able to absorb anything new.

Once you make the connection to see spirit, to feel spirit. you will start seeing it more. And the more you see it, the most you start seein' it again.

Then it becomes this kind of third, sixth sense, you know, that I've never been here before. There's places here that are very comforting, very soothing.

I think that's why people say, go out in nature, because I thing nature is one of those ways that exposes you to a level of absorbing things that is beyond your five senses.

Of course your senses are being used, but there's something more there. And I think we lose that. I Think we're getting into this very reductionist way of looking at the world as human beings.

And the more fearful we become, and believe me, there's a lot of fear going on right now, the More reductionists we want, The more we look for answers and people that have answers.

But unfortunately, for looking for Answers and People that don't have them and have never really deserved the credibility that they're Getting now. So it's really about being open to spirit because the more you are open spirit.

And again, like I said, I'm saying this as a neuroscientist and a physician. The more your open-to-spirit, the things

will come to you that you have been blocking.

But it does open you up to the fact that the world is a benevolent place. You probably didn't get that when you were growing up, but you can create that for yourself now.

And one of the ways of doing that is starting to see spirit, starting beyond us. Call it the quantum field, call it God, the consciousness, whatever you want to call.

But it's there and if you tell yourself that it is there, you will see it. If you say it isn't there. It's all a bunch of hokum or whatever it, is you won't see and you don't have access to it so you're in a much better position to look for spirit.

Assume it there Pray to it if you want, because all intentions, all affirmations are really prayers. They're just intentions that you're directing your subconscious mind towards.

So if your direct your sub-conscious more words to seeing miracles, synchronicities, blessings every day. If you wake up with that, I'm open to see miracles syncronicity and blessings everyday.

You will see small things. they may just be, you know, somebody pays your parking meter or whatever. And then when you look at that and you go, okay, You know, the world isn't this dangerous place that I've sort of unconsciously kind of given it this sort patina of fear.

It's this place to kind go, okay, The more I see safety, I will see more safety. The More I See Fear, More Fear. And fear is so powerful that it kind overwhelms that sense of safety and I think that's why our society is where it is now.

We're so fear-based that we can't actually see the spirit that is in all of us. So as you said, once we are able to feel safety in our body, and I'm curious about what that feeling would feel like as I think about that, feeling that safety, what does that feel?

Like war or a patient that you observe? Yeah, I. Think, you know, your muscles are relaxed. Your breath is deep. You know you're kind of that six, six breaths a minute thing, Yeah, your jaw is relaxed.

We hold so much tension in our jaw. Our neck is kind of relaxed, just feel that kind warmness. You can put your hand over your heart and just make the intention that you're going to connect with yourself and connect You know, I often connect with Rusty in the morning.

You just put my hand over there. We're open to miracles, blessings, and synchronicities. So we're going to see them. And again, this sounds woo to medical doctors.

This is like, oh, it's witchcraft or weird stuff. But the more I've done this, the More I see it and the I move my needle from this need, This constant need to protect myself.

to just this openness, like I can stay in this place that I feel safe. And that's where healing occurs, is safety, when we feel, emotional anyway, I'm not sure about lymphoma or whatever, but I think it would play a role if you did feel save emotionally as well.

But I especially with emotional disorders, it's just creating these islands of safety. And then over the course of time, these islands congeal into bigger land masses where you sort of feel safe most of the time.

Whereas if you just stay in your own protective field all the, you know, get moments of feeling calm or peaceful or safe or whatever. But in general, your sort living a life of fear with moments peace as opposed to living life with peace with the moments fear.

Thank you for bringing that in. I think it's very important that even our audience, our listeners, patients, a lot of patients listening, at least for our podcast, lot patients listen to this.

getting in touch with him, staying connected with Him is very important even as you continue to do this work for yourself.

Safety, spirit, and rewiring the nervous system

This idea of safety in the body and safety and what that can feel like and really bringing that grounded energy into even this conversation as you spoke to it.

And I think that's very important to highlight that what you say really emulates or really, I can feel it even on the screen here, that sense of calm, and that since of safety as your whisper or as a voice modulates.

That protective mode and recognizing that protector, who is that Well, it's the ego. You know, I have this concept called the Ego Dragon, which is basically this big, dumb, powerful monster that you incarnated when you were, you know a child, four, five, six years old, because you didn't have any control over the situation.

Right? So this, the ego dragon is this powerful figure. It can completely overwhelm your physiology. when it feels like you're in danger, but the problem is it doesn't really know what's going on.

It has a hair trigger, so you are constantly in this sort of state of sympathetic activation waiting for the other shooter drop. And then it just begets more of that.

So as you feel that you have to protect yourself from the world, you will see things that need to be protected from. Like Brene Brown saying, don't go through the word looking for reasons why you don' belong because you obviously find them.

But the problem with that is that when you have this sort of milieu of protection, you miss, if someone does plug your parking meter or whatever, You miss that benevolent.

You sort look at it as a luck. It's like I'm having a good day and everything seems to be going well. And then you're having bad day, and then something good happens.

But it's, like, well, I have a bad a day. So I just going to push that off to the side. I want to tell my people that I am having the bad days, so I can't bring that in.

And your brain does that. Your brain sort of slides things by that aren't consistent with your particular philosophy. You know, if you live in protection, things that appear to be protective, you will focus on.

And if your in connection, which is what you can try and move towards with the more spiritual side of you, You will see more connection which you'll build on So whatever you focus on, if you'll focus protection, you will build more fear.

If you're focused on connection, You'll build sort of spirit, more connection with that spirit. But if your living in a body that's fearful, that doesn't feel safe, the natural default is to look for protection.

And we have to change the body to the change of the mind. It's much more effective to use the Body to Change the Mind than it is the to Use the MIND to CHANGE THE BODY.

You know, when your brain says, hey, relax, does that work? It's like, no, it doesn't work. But if you take a few breaths, you know relax your shoulders, relaxed your jaw, take if few breath, that works.

But in this society, we give so much credibility to thinking that we lose feeling. And I think that's what we've done a lot. We've lost feeling because we're so focused on thinking now.

Because thinking has given us amazing things, but we are losing our sense of ourselves because were always thinking. Thinking is the coping strategy of the child.

Impulsive thinking is a coping of a child What is your thought on anxiety as a, really, I see sometimes, not in every patient, but in some patients, anxiety, as the cap of a volcano.

And what's beneath that is really some other emotion, call it depression. What's creating the anxiety is the bubbling of that. lava that's about to come up and that anxiety is trying to really hold it down.

What would you say to this idea of anxiety's not really the symptom, it's really not the problem, something else is? Well, I draw the analogy of an iceberg.

So the tip of the iceberg above the surface is the worries. You can see worries, you can your scary thoughts, like by definition they almost define themselves.

I'm going to die, this is gonna happen to me, I am gonna lose all my money. Like you see those things very, very clearly. What you cant see or describe very clear is feeling beneath it.

When you ask someone how they feel, that takes second or third order thinking to be able to go into how you feel about that. So the analogy is that the tip of the iceberg is the stuff we can see.

And that's basically what a lot of CBT and that kind of stuff treats as the anxious thoughts. But it's the alarm that, you know, two thirds of iceberg, the old pains, abuse, loss, abandonment that you experience when you were a child, that is what's causing the problem.

You can chop the top off all you want, but it is going to make a bit of a difference, because you are not going at the root cause of So it's finding the alarm in your body, which is what I do in that meditation in the MBRX course is like, find the alarming in body and then treat that as if it is your younger self.

And when you're having a good day, bring your child along to that too. Don't just wait until, you know, your racked with worry to start talking to the younger version of you.

Like when your having fun time. Bring the child along. I used to do that with stand-up. It's like, we're going to have a lot of fun tonight. They're a great crowd.

We're gonna really enjoy ourselves tonight or when I bought my Tesla, it's I brought him along to buy the Tesla. So it is really about merging this adult self and this feared protective child in us and bringing them together.

so that you can show them that your in charge, you didn't have a lot of agency back then, but now I listen to you, I will take what you have to say, i will bring you along to these good events that we're experiencing as well, to try and repair that split of adult self, child self and mind and body, because when we get the adult and child back together, the mind body just automatically come back again.

Well, I'm going back to my pediatric experiences and seeing babies when they're born and through the life cycle of them becoming adults. What I used to notice about that is that when I would go to deliveries and see the baby and hand the mom and maybe would interact and then there would be, you know, this handover and you would observe that and observe the connection being made to that child.

And I would step back and just stay with that, and really observe and say, wow, what's happening here? And then within seconds, within that minutes of time, You can see the temperament of that child.

I could see it, I would be like, oh, this child is going to be this kind of baby. They would become, you know, and then they would come to my two-month, four- month, preventative well-child visits.

And I can still see that temperment of the child, still. Well, they think temperamento is genetic. You know, that seems to be kind of a newer thing in psychology, is temperament seems be genetic.

So you talk to a mother and you say, which is the more sensitive of your kids? And she'll immediately tell you which

one is most sensitive or of her kids.

Temperament may have much more to do with genetics than it does with environment. Now, of course, it's molded and shifted and that kind thing too. But there's a lot of oxytocin in that first meeting.

there's a lot of dopamine as well. So it's like, you almost get a snapshot of how connected is this child to their mom? Because I used to deliver babies too.

And now that you mention it, yeah. When the baby had to go into the incubator or whatever, was the mother kind of like oh, I don't want to let go? Or was a mother like okay, there you could see little patterns.

And we're not that complicated.

Burnout, empathy, and the limits of medical training

You know, when someone looks for these things, like is this child born into connection? And so many weren't. You know, so many weren't. The psychiatric experiences and seeing babies when they're born and through the life cycle of them becoming adults.

60s or 70s. I think the kids feel the energy, whether or not their parents are more stressed in general and they feel it that way, but there's definitely an energetic component to this autism thing, as well as genetics, all this other stuff too.

So, you know I just think it's a more complex world. It's more protective world and it is a us and them mentality world, So we're not really seeing people as people anymore.

We're seeing People as transactions or seeing. People is like ways to make money from we are seeing the relationships that we have are becoming very protective as opposed to connective.

Yeah, which also brings me to this idea of that. the temperament, whether it be a genetic or a spiritual or something or is consciousness based process that develops or enhances over time.

There's so many questions around that and I would love to explore that. I also wanted to ask, you know, this connection, This idea of connection that's made in utero before the child is born, before that child was born because it's the epigenetic effect of trauma that transcends time as well.

And how that could be a temperament. So, you know, temperamento is a big question. For sure. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, Rachel Yehuda does a lot of work at Mount Sinai with children of Holocaust survivors, and their risks of anxiety and depression are quite significantly higher than the general population, whatever that is too.

We're seeing that that trauma can be definitely handed down. from parent to child through DNA methylation, through there's a whole bunch of mechanisms that are scientific that really do show us that if you come from stressed parents, you know, will probably inherit some element of a stress nervous system yourself.

And I would see that as a family doctor too. I will see families that aren't nervous and families are like, whatever man, like you see both. Yeah, the cortisol levels in each.

Yeah. Oh, for sure. And the reactions to different things too, you know, that the calmer ones just, they don't react as quickly, You know? They tend not to be as intelligent because I think on some level, people who are anxious are more intelligent than the population because they've been going to the fricking overthinking gym for 25, 30 years.

They get pretty good at thinking, right? But we don' get as good the nuances of feeling. And sometimes what I'll say is like feeling from anxiety isn't so much about feeling better.

It's getting better at thinking as knowing that envy is an anxiety. You know, disappointment is anxiety because I

think, you know anxious people tend to have this sort of funnel that any negative experience gets just funneled right down into their anxiety and because it's so overwhelming and it because its so habitual with them that they lose the nuisances of negative emotion and all gets railroaded into anxiety Exactly, or ADHD.

Or ADHD, yeah, OCD, all that stuff. Autism, let's go into that. Sure. Tell me what your thoughts are on this rampant increase in autism. Is it related to time alone or not?

Or some immune condition or some sense of disconnection that happens, whether in youth or prior or later. What would be your belief in Yeah, I mean, it's a complex subject for sure, but around between two and three years old, there's this pruning that goes on in the brain.

So there is this place where, you know, say this kid was going to be a master musician and at two-and-a-half, those things get pruned in there. But it tends to, be I think, things that get proved are the things, that just aren't in your Dharma.

But that's the way it's supposed to go, is that you're supposed prune back a lot of these connections so that your child becomes more of what they were supposed be.

Now what happens in autism, in some aspects of autism is, that pruning never happens. So they have all of this connections that never sort of withdrew away to make room for the more you know, personal connections of this particular person.

And now they are overwhelmed with every stimulus because they never really got that refining when they were two or three years old. So now, they feel everything.

There's no way of kind of just going into, okay, this is me. It's all me, everything, it's overwhelming. The stimulus is overwhelming, so they can't form social dynamics.

They can form things because don't know themselves because everything is in there. They have all the parts of the F-150 and the Tesla Model S, they have the all parts in there, but they're not coordinated.

And the poor kid is overwhelmed. They can't handle too much stimuli. That creates an issue in and of itself in the parents and in child and energetically that kind of folds onto itself.

That's a whole topic, but as far as the acetaminophen thing goes, looking at the stats, the sibling stats. You would think that if your mother took Tylenol that your siblings would have it too, it doesn't seem to be that's the case.

So there's lot of stuff that kind of goes against this Tylinol theory. And, you know, it just, It's such a complicated thing. Same with anxiety. It such complicated that it's really hard to kind of just say, here's the one cause.

This is the cause of this. You know? It is vaccines. For a kid who has a genetic predisposition to autism, maybe they have an adverse reaction to the vaccine and that's enough to push them into that realm.

And then they say this is what's causing it. You know, if they didn't get that stimulus that pushed them over the edge, they probably would have been fine.

And then there's other people that say, oh, it's genetic. If they have these certain gene types, then for sure they're going to develop it. It's like, I don't really believe in that either.

I think, like everything, its nature and nurture. There's always the combination and human beings want one answer. Well, there isn't one. The anxiety or anything, There isn' t one But people, when they get more fearful, they want that one answer.

And right now, it's that acetaminophen causes Tylenol, or acetamidin causes autism, and that's what they're running with. Back to the question about medicine and healthcare system.

What would medicine look like for you or what would you imagine the practice of medicine say look, like if emotional safety or in connection were valued higher than say clinical precision or clinical treatment?

Well, it's hard to do because it is time consuming. For the first 10 or 15 minutes of meeting with someone or being with somebody, we still have that sort of, oh, I'm not really sure about this.

And then 20, 25 minutes in, there is this sort resonance that people form with each other. So you're gonna need half an hour with the patient. And with depth of sickness in our society now, doctors are kind of few and far between in a lot of ways, and they're kind forced to triage.

A lot of this stuff so people don't get the emotional connection that they need and maybe someone who's not a sensitive only needs 10 minutes to connect and someone Who's more sensitive needs 45 and that's the thing is that there is no one-size-fits-all Just like we were just talking about and you know an emotionally more connected medical society I don' know if that is possible.

Autism, trauma, and complex causes

You know I would like to think that it was But just from a time standpoint alone, and just the way that medical doctors are trained, is that we don't really look at the emotional state of the patient.

There's so many people to see that it's very difficult to assess the emotion state at a patient, you're too busy getting out the diagnosis and the treatment plan to really at look the emotions state.

I mean, someone's crying, for sure. But in general, especially men, men are very stoic. They can be collapsing underneath it, but they will look like they're fine.

So that's a very, very complex question in that I don't know if the alopathic medical system can become a whole lot more emotionally connected. I would like to think so.

But time demands the way it is. And I think we can train the doctors to look at it. empathy declines every single year of medical school. Yes, I actually measured it and was involved with the research and looking at empathy from first year to fourth year medical students.

And then of course compared to residents that empathy does decline and compassion even the kinds and there is burnout is real and is felt. I had burnout, I needed to find a resource for myself to really work with that burnout.

So what got you through it? What got through burnout? Writing. psychedelics. Your experience in LSD was my experience. In COVID with psychedelic, it popped open my own trauma, which I completely, I was fine.

I thought I functional, but if I had to look at my trauma it's so real. It's penetrated in my body in every part of me and was able to see it as such.

And so I do believe, though, I still hold onto this belief that we can do better in medicine. I think so, too. We can speak to this woo-woo, and we go back and really emulate what this can look like.

Within five minutes, it just takes five. Five minutes. Read the room. Read the room. Before you say anything, just read the rooms and stay quiet and listen.

And really pay attention not only to what you observe, to you feel, what to notice, don't even think. Don't think! Just read the room and just be present.

And just five minutes, if you can do that for five, minutes you will have the answer to the problem because the patient will tell you their problem. They'll show it to you.

If you give them a chance. if you give them a chance, don't interrupt. So this idea that medical safety is a big one.

It's a bigger one that we're dealing with in healthcare.

it's affecting healthcare, it is affecting what we are seeing right now. Oh yeah, and the backlash towards doctors. You know, there's a lot, you know I'm on Instagram quite a bit and there are so many, it's like, oh the doctor's telling me I had this and I didn't and the doctors got it wrong and so much doctor, like expert shaming.

Now, they'll take someone who's got minimal experience in healthcare, which is, classically, if you look at the RFK situation, over someone who's actually been trained in it and studies it.

And I think one of the reasons why it's so easy to discount medical doctors is because we haven't been that emotionally connected to our patients. That's why chiropractors and naturopaths have a better relationship because they had to.

They have to be congenial, they have be connected and that kind of thing because their in an environment where they need the patients to come to them.

Whereas in medicine, well, at least in Canada, for sure. In Canada it's because we have free medical. So when you see the doctor, it is free. If you go to the naturopath, you have to pay for it.

Natural path chiropractors, they have develop this sort of emotional connection with people. Otherwise they go bankrupt. But we don't need to, and I think that's hurt us in a lot of ways.

We can see a lots of patients in very short period of time. you know, the quality of care that we're giving is rather limited. And I think most doctors would agree that they could do better jobs with most of the patients they have, but you're spread so thin that you do, you the most care that you can for that particular patient and then have them come back in two weeks and re-follow up and this sort of stuff too.

And that creates its own issues in medicine too, is having people come every week or two week. The other thing we have in Canada is only one problem per visit.

I don't know if you guys have that in the store. You know? The problems are related. Their digestive problem and their headaches, it's all related And you miss that.

You wind up specifically looking for one thing and then you missed the other sort of vagal kind of pathways that you would see if you were able to have the time to take a more thorough thing.

educated in how these things go. Like if you see a patient who says, you know, it burns behind my eyes when I pee, my left shoulder has been, kind of bugging me and hurting for two weeks, and I have this fecal urgency.

When you somebody who has a myriad of different symptoms, think childhood trauma. You know, but what happens is a lot of people get into this thing. Well, Lyme disease, lyme, disease presents in all these different crazy ways.

So it's not, I don't have childhood trauma. I have Lyne disease and it doesn't, and I've insisted that they have lymed disease when actually they clearly have.

Childhood trauma presenting in multiple different organ systems. in almost a semi-spiritual way, but it's so much easier for them to absorb the fact that they may have a physical illness rather than going back and actually treating the emotional illness under all of these crazy symptoms that are showing up in their body.

And that's a big issue, you know? And then the doctors, the regular allopathic doctors say, well, it' all in the head. Like, clearly this is all on their head, so anytime you have this issue to go, It's all over their heads, think childhood trauma, because that is probably what it is.

Yeah. I say in one of my videos is that we meet at the bus stop of trauma, whether it be a bus, stop or a train

station or airport lounge, we're all there.

We, meaning I'm the healer, doctor or provider and the patient, and we get to have this conversation. we get to have this conversation. And what a privilege it is to a conversation with somebody who wants to share their, you know, their problem with you.

If you see their spirit, absolutely. Yeah, if you them as a number, it's gonna be painful. It's going to be. Painful. So for the physicians out there, for healers out their who are struggling with burnout or anxiety or their own trauma or you know, dismay or numbing that they're experiencing as there are many doctors out there speaking to this as well.

What is the one truth that you would want them to hold on to? What would be something you'd tell them? Yeah, just being true to themselves, being to the child in them.

Connection, time, and the future of medicine

You know a lot of us became doctors because you be amazed at the number of surgeons who had cancer in a parent. And my little joke is you have to have a bit of a screw loose to give away 10 to 15 years of your youth to become a doctor.

And then find that it's not what you kind of hoped it was going to be. That's a pretty painful experience. But burnout isn't an external problem. It's not about seeing less patients.

it's about having more organization. Its not having, you know, getting rid of electronic medical records. its not any of that stuff. That is your confirmation bias.

So your conformation bias is, I burned out, it must be these symptoms. But it's not. It's the connection with yourself. And like I said, medicine says patients come first.

We get trained in that. There's a lot of issues with medical school and residency where people are essentially abused. So you learn that abuse is normal.

Self-abuse is normally. So it's really hard if that's the template that you studied under to all of a sudden go, oh, I'm going to be kind to myself. I am going be more, and that gets into your default mode as well.

And then it is like, well, you look at these guys or women winning these physician of the year awards that never see their family. Right? So this is what we're striving for is this sort of ideal that we'll never attain.

And burnout is an inside job. It's something that you need to fix internally. it's not about the workload, it is not seeing different patients, not refining things, being more efficient at work.

Not about any of that stuff. Its all about your relationship to yourself and specifically the younger version of yourself. I know a lot of physicians are going to be like inner child, bunch of crap, a bunch a hoodoo, But I was burned out and the only thing that got me back into seeing patients again was connecting with myself and just sort of starting to enjoy the spiritual connection.

Now I don't have to see you know 30 people a day anymore or 40 people today. So I can really enjoy my interactions with people. But it's really about finding what did you like to do when you were younger?

Did you to ride your bike? Do you liked to play tennis? Like, start doing that stuff again. Because then you're gonna find yourself. You're going to find the joy that you had in life when were 10 is probably gonna be the joy that if you painted, if dance, like find that and do that.

But the thing is, the first thing that goes away with thinking about doctors is that medicine is the last thing they'll let go. You know, they'll let go of their exercise, their diet, or their family.

But medicine, because it's part of identity, like when I graduated, I was Dr. Russell Kennedy. And that doctor, man, it is a blessing and a curse, and it becomes part your identity.

A lot of physicians kill themselves before they release that identity. Before they say, this job is not going to work for me. And there are so many positions for doctors, especially these days, in not practicing medicine the way it classically has been done.

And as far as I'm concerned, I am infinitely happier doing what I was doing back then. And you have a lot more power than what you believe. Yes, you may take a dip in income for a couple of years.

Absolutely. There's no way around that. It's going to be emotionally difficult for the first couple years too. But it's the best choice I ever made. And I think you can still stay in it provided that you start making these connections within yourself.

Because if you don't have that connection with yourself, and part of that is spirit. Part of it is Spirit. I had to find out the hard way because I was hardcore neuroscience.

Spirit was a tough nut for me to crack. But I think it's just learning. What does your spirit say? And if you are going against your Spirit, you're going to burn out and you'll wind up getting sick.

And you know, the body says no. If you do stuff for too long, eventually the Body will just go, nope, we're not doing this anymore. Most of burnout is internal.

Fixing stuff on the outside might help you for a month or two months or stave it off for another year, but it's going to come back. The cat comes back, maybe not the very next day, I thought he was a goner, he just came back the next very day.

Couldn't stay long. What you allude to, what you spoke to several times is that spirit, being connected to your spirit. Staying connected or finding or feeling your Spirit and noticing your Spirits is what I've been hearing from you and what your way of reconnecting to that Spirit, that journey was like for you since it was a tough nut to crack as you said.

Tell us more about that. Getting back into it. Yeah. Cause you know, like I said, it was, I had a lot of my identity wrapped up in being Dr. Russell Kennedy.

You know? I still do to some extent, but it's almost like, can see it as a distant part of me now. I like it, But it it used to be all of. So I think it was just finding that, giving myself the permission to be connected to the spiritual part of me that I had lost, and frankly, medicine beat out of my for a long time.

I thinks if you're a burned out physician, I thing by definition, you've lost your spirit. I think burnout is a spiritual issue. It's a spirit injury.

You spend all this time becoming this doctor, and then this is not, I'm not happy in this. And then again, if that becomes the umbrella, that become part of your default mode, good stuff happens, but it just slides off like Teflon, you know?

And the bad stuff, it's like, oh, more hours? Oh, am I on call this week? It just stacks up. And unless you can really find that, and I think it's so hard initially, it was so initially for me to find the spiritual part because I kept looking for, like I said, seeing less patients, working in a different clinic, trying a new field of medicine.

You know it wasn't that it work for a short period of time but it always came back the burn out always come back because i was. I was just pushing my own spirit away and again i think a lot of positions that listen to this are gonna go out you know.

Which craft you notice a bunch of crap and i take the ones that do that are the one that have the most. the most

spirit talking to them that they're kind of ignoring.

And I think you lose your spirit, you loose your sense of yourself in medicine. You do. Unless you have a way of finding it and getting back to it. I thing it becomes something that you don't even see that your missing in burnout.

It's just like you feel hollow, empty. The reason why you're hollow and empty is because that spiritual part of you that used to like to ride your bike or play floor hockey or whatever, it's gone now.

What were the ways that you found your spirit tell us more about? Was it psychedelics? Writing, writing. So I've done LSD, I have done psilocybin, Ayahuasca.

I haven't done any psychedelic in 10 years now. The last one was 2015. So I think there was an element of that that helped me see the spirit part of me, or feel it, probably more important to feel the Spirit part me because if you, seeing again is this academic left brain kind of approach to it.

It's feeling it's going, okay, what can I do to expand on this realizing that a lot of my resists it? You know, I love yoga, but I will go six months without doing any yoga.

So I think it's just really taking this interest in yourself and then once you decide and make that intention every day that you're going to focus on spirit.

I do like a meditation, I have a studio upstairs that I record my meditations in, otherwise known as my wife's walk-in closet. But I have all the recording equipment in there and I make these, I've done it since I was a, you know, 17 year old for sports.

You know I made hypnosis for it. And I think it's getting into those deeper, deeper parts of ourselves.

Burnout as a spiritual injury

Like the cognitive part is very smart and with doctors we're so used to living in these. We're very adept at the cognative part. That's how we got into medicine, that's why we're good doctors.

But we lose the feeling part, we loose that sort of limbic, feeling good, sense that things are okay, it's a sunny day, taking a breath, looking around.

I think as we burn out we kind of lose that part. And then the deeper part below that, the spiritual part like, who am I? Who am without medicine? That was something that, I mean, still don't know it, but I know because I've been out of medicine, organized medicine now for 10 years, just being able to see myself as a different person without medicine and not needing it.

When I started writing books and getting pretty good advances for that I made probably five times the income from writing than I ever did from medicine.

And then that's a very self-affirming thing. Like when you get out of this thing and you're making more money than you ever did as a doctor. That's very like, okay, you did the right thing.

You did right the thing and I could have easily, well, not easily but I, I couldn't have stayed in medicine and just, work two or three days a week and kind of eat my way out.

But I don't know if I would have survived. I really don' because my anxiety was so bad and anxiety, depression, eating disorders, OCD, all that stuff are signs that you've lost touch with your spirit.

And you're using these coping strategies to kind just sort of band-aid your way through every day. And eventually you hit the wall. Eventually like find your spirit, find what lights you up emotionally before you get cancer, before something knocks it out of you.

Because if you don't look after yourself, nobody else is going to do it. No one's coming to save you as a doctor. In psychedelics or LSD, the act of writing, I would imagine, is a spiritual process.

It's a way of reconnecting to oneself, right? Through memory, through the words, just the acts of doing writing about oneself is very, very spiritual.

Whether you get it published or not, it does bring you to that space of connection. And writing about stuff that you feel confident in and you're creating new paradigms, like the alarm anxiety cycle, I've never heard that before.

So I created that. I create the alarms acronym, abuse, loss, abandonment, rejection, maturing to early shame, all these things that get locked in your body.

these are things that I love to write about because they bring a new perspective to like an old field and then people take my work and they expand on that and put their own spin on it and it sort of exponentially goes out into the world and that's how things change because this idea that anxiety and even depression, OCD, eating disorders and to some extent even personality disorders are rooted in the sense of alarm in body is pretty controversial.

But the more I work in it, the obvious I see it. More obvious it becomes. And I would also say that shamans, our indigenous practices of medicine, that Shamans are also doing their own work and their treatments and care so that they can be better shamens.

In the indigenous practice, it was the Shamens who did the psychedelic treatments. Whatever vision they were doing for themselves was allowing them to be a better healer.

And that practice was been practiced for centuries and why is it that Western medicine has disconnected from this idea that the healers don't need healing?

Right. Yeah. Well, we create this superhuman persona as doctors, and it's starting to crack, you know, it is starting crack quite significantly. So yeah, I think there is this sort of self-affirming Superman complex, superwoman complex that we have as Doctors.

And in a way we almost use that as support. You know, like, oh, I can be strong, doctors don't do it this way, you know. Doctors don' cry, as a group.

And doctors as group don"t like seeing other doctors collapse because it kind of weakens the field, right? Like, it's like oh they're too weak, they couldn't make it, that kind thing.

It really is part of the sort of old boys network of medicine in a lot of ways. and that you don't assume weakness, you do not show weakness. You have to be strong all the way through.

And we're just not built that way, especially in this society. Especially when the load of sickness in the society is so much greater than it was 40 years ago.

Then we are expected to the same as we were back then. We have evolve, evolve or die really. Well, this is the Too Curious, M. D.' 's podcast and we speak about curiosity because curiosity fuels kind of discovery and builds on ideas of creativity and really expands and decouples us from our before world, right?

It makes us question. What would be a question you would curious that you feel has been unasked, whether it be for your own journey, for you own story, or what would a be question that would you want to even ask me or the audience here?

I think it's why did we lose contact with that, you know, we're mind-body-spirit. Us physicians are pretty good at the body. Mmm, okay at the mind because the brain is so complex.

I don't think we're ever really gonna understand it. But the spirit part, you know, why did we lose that and can we

get it back? without losing our credibility, you know, without sort of saying, hey, there's stuff I don't know.

There's maybe we could look into, can we meditate together? Can we find this sort place of peace? You lie on the table, I'll do a little induction for you for your chronic pain and see if that kind of works.

And just, you know, speak more softly to each other, to the patients, like be more connected. Like I said about the whisper, we don't have to whisper because that would be a bit weird.

But in general, just how are we losing this connection to other people? because that's what we went into medicine for, was to help other people, which I assume is because we want to be connected to them.

You don't want just help people for random reasons. So I think, you know, it's like, we've went in to this to connected people. To be a positive force in their life.

to Be connected with them, so why are we choosing to only connect with the modality that is least connective? Which is, essentially, knowing about their body.

Yeah. In my own work, I worked overseas. And when I would go in the practice there, as I was in a Muslim country, people would be in. I, was a hospitalist, medicine, doctor, pediatrics.

These children would come in very grave, complex conditions. With this, the culture there was different. There was lot of family, there were a lot people coming in and out of the room.

Writing, psychedelics, and reclaiming spirit

Sometimes when things got heavy or hard, there would be a prayer that would made, there'd be music or even recitations in the background while we were talking, and you'd walk into the room and immediately feel this energy, this peace, the support, hey, just pay attention, you know, your voice would change.

you would sit down and you'd say you give respect to the family because it's very important that you connect with that same spiritual energy that's in the room and it is a felt energy.

And this is one thing that is in Eastern practice very, very accepted. It's been accepted to talk about God and say, you know, I hope God, we can make prayer with God.

This is difficult situation, but God will have the answer. Sure, man, whatever you think. You know, you've been out of residency for two years, and I've done this for 30, I lived in a temple in India, done psychedelics, studied the brain for thirty years.

I got a degree in neuroscience in 1987 when it was still called behavioral psychology. I've been studying this stuff for 30 years and yeah, your psychiatric residency at some prestigious hospital, basically you know way more than I do.

And it's like we have to watch our egos. You know, and that even for me, even in saying that as ego as well, you have really watch that sort of ego thing because it puts us in a cage.

Like we can't go outside. We can accept that there might be another therapy that works better than what we Let's start using that. Let start bringing that in.

And, you know, there are some doctors now that are really starting looking at the sort of the mind body connection and looking that medical doctors. I think they're getting so much more satisfaction out of their practices because they are actually doing things that holistically are healing the patient.

So, as we sort believe that we have all the answers, that's a curse. It really is. It really is. And in narrative medicine, we learned different methodologies to really apply in medicine as a medicine.

That art can be a music as medicine and how we can bring that into the healing space. So in Columbia, in programs at UCLA, there's programs in a lot of prestigious universities that are now paying attention to this, I believe.

And the research in narrative medicine has just skyrocketed as well as there's not more publications of this being a modality for treatment. But to me, it's going back to the old way of medicine.

It's just the art of the medicine and we're going to back the way medicine was practiced centuries ago or even. It's all energy. You know, before we had, you know penicillin, energy, we have this understanding that everything was energy like maybe not conscious but sort of this unconscious knowing and we're seeing it more in quantum physics, looking at the quantum field, examining consciousness.

You know that nothing is really there until it's observed like we're starting to see the real weight of energy as healing or as just what everything is.

So if you are are not aware that everything has energy and you're going at this sort of you know cognitive thing that okay well this is the treatment.

We don't know what it does energetically, which most people don' know. It's really understanding that if everything is energy, we have to be open to assessing and believing and seeing that everything's energy.

If we believe that we somehow are pulling the levers and we are above God or above consciousness and have all this power and control, and we enjoy that power of control, it's going to make it very hard for us to relinquish that and start saying, okay, you know, look at the quantum field.

Look at God consciousness. The fact that the number one issue in healing from mental dysregulation is the spirit. It's not a medication, especially not medication.

When people go to these retreats, it's not the particular Gestalt therapy or somatic therapy. It's the fact that you're in with 10 or 20 other people and we're meshed together and were feeling connected to each other.

That's what heals us, right? So medicine really has no idea of that. And I think it is just in its infancy understanding that medicine is energy too. Sometimes that energy that we give can be counterproductive.

And if that's all you believe in and the patients, you know, I have so many things coming back from psychiatrists that used to say, well, your patient failed antidepressant therapy.

It's like the patient Even our wording, even our language. I know the way you just kind of toasted that the patient failed. Yeah. Exactly that question, Mara, that we put all that pressure on the patients.

Well, we know everything. So if they're not getting better, then it's their fault. Well, thank you Dr. Russell Kennedy for really showing us how healing, your own healing journey and your story, all work that you're doing is really demonstrating how we can reconnect to our bodies and come home to it and feel safe with ourselves and even to your spiritual self and that medicine is about more than science, it's connection, its art, and its integration.

It's the integration and the attunement of all those things that we spoke to about. So I'm very curious to learn more about your MBRX method. They would love to attend one of your talks and really connect more and stay connected.

Absolutely. In our podcast, we talk about curiosity, and I really do feel this is the era of curiosity. We have to engage in this curiosity so I'm really speaking to our audience now.

Curiosity, energy, and closing reflections

Staying curious because curiosity does open us up to ourselves and to the world and gives us a sense of intrigue

and keeps our mind like a child's brain.

You know, a children's brains, We need to nourish our child brain and curiosity is one way of really Speaking to that, so this is the era of curiosity and stay curious.

Absolutely. And curiosity is one of those things that when you're feeling upset or low or whatever, curiosity brings you into that sort of rational part of your brain and it takes you out of that limbic cycle of feeling worse and worse.

It's like, why am I feeling so sad? You know, I get curious because when do that you take a lot of the emotional weight out it. it becomes more of a sort an overview.

of what you're feeling rather than just being stuck in that sadness or stuck and that anxiety. Like why, like be curious about what got me so upset about my mother said.

Be curious because when you go into that curiosity realm, you pull yourself out of that sort of ego based, oh my feelings are hurt realm and you start actually really seeing things from a different perspective.

So curiosity is one of those things that takes the emotion out and allows you to really see them a lot more clearly. close here and just for our audience to really stay connected.

If you have a question or an unasked, curious question about your own story, your healing journey, or your exploration of science, of anxiety, whether it be ketamine or psychedelics, post in your comments.

Your questions might just inspire our next episodes of Two Curious Air and Day. So thank you for being here, and thank Thanks for joining us on the Two Curious MD podcast.

We hope today's episode inspired you to ask new questions and explore fresh perspectives. we challenge you 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 your comment with a question or curious inquiry that you have and seek to explore or learn with us. Stay curious and we'll see you next time.