Podcast Introduction

why are our eyes doing that? And she said, oh, it's just chaos leaving the system. And that's one of the things, one the poetic pieces of The Medicine that has been so ingrained in me in viewing chaos and what we call wind in the systems as something that can leave, as a something isn't a part of us and a And again, this is an example of me not needing to explain anything about what I was going through.

It was me identifying and for whatever reason, feeling a certain resistance to the moment. But then once I named it, and once was able to feel like I in a safe environment to let go, I then was then able relax.

My nervous system was now able calm down. Welcome to The Two Curious MD Podcast. I'm Dr. Ali Ahmed. 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 a relief to consciousness, chronic illness, mental health, resilience and beyond.

Learning more about art and science of healing, or listening to stories of extraordinary healing. You're in the right place. Let's dive in. Welcome back to the Two Curious MDs podcast where we explore the spaces where medicine, human story, and deeper communication meet.

Today we're diving deep into the concepts of creative authenticity and liberatory embodiment. examining what it means to truly inhabit our bodies in a world that so often encourages us to disconnect from them.

Joining us is Dr. Gina Dang. She is a liberatory embodiment guide, licensed acupuncturist, and practitioner whose work weaves together somatic trauma work, Taoist alchemy, cultural anthropology.

Her mission centers on cultivating sustainable ways of being that honor individual sovereignty and earth-aligned living. framing personal alignment not just as self-care but as a vital transition away from systemic extraction and towards deep collective resilience.

Dr. Dang, welcome to the show. Hi. So glad to be here. Absolutely. We've had lots of different opportunities.

Defining Liberatory Embodiment

If I were to trace back where we first met, I think it would be in the space of healing within Pasadena in California, where We first connected and we came upon this, you know, idea to work together and bring together the art and the science of Healing that we're both discovering in our own ways, myself in psychedelic healing, yourself in acupuncture and and liberatory embodiment.

Let's start with just defining that. What is libertarian embodimento for somebody encountering this concept for the first time? Libertarian embodiment is a practice that recognizes the energy body as the primary site for transformation.

And starting with the body, we can align with authentic self and the natural rhythms that help bring us back to a more sovereign and sustainable way of life.

I love that concept. And you know, I think the first time I heard it, There's always this moment of going, well, of course it's in the body, right? But it is one of those things where unless we put words to it, pay attention, and actually explore it it just becomes a concept that can seem kind of ephemeral to people.

But this idea that the Body can serve as the primary site of personal and collective evolution is something that you've talked about. You link authentic expression to sustainability.

So let's kind of bring that in so we can get the full lay of the land of all the topics that we're talking about today and then maybe dive deeper into some personal experiences and stories of how you came to this field and this practice right now.

Yeah. When we generally think about sustainability, I think it's easy to think of it from an environmental lens, an economic lens. Maybe a socio-political lens but I also see it and I thing a lot of facilitators and practitioners can see at an individual level because we're not separate from nature.

We're a part of nature and because of that, Our experiences are governed by natural laws, so we might begin to think about it from biology or chemistry or physics, but even without going into the academic rigor, there's an innate connection that we have to these natural seasons and natural cycles.

We can see it in the seasons of the year, we can it see in seasons over a lifetime, you know, like the spring of youth and the summer of young adulthood, the autumn of midlife, winter of your elder years.

And then on a smaller scale, we interact with cycles on daily basis, right, between night and day. If we're tuned into our bodies, there are cues, these ways that Our intelligence systems try to communicate with us, to tell us when to eat, when rest, and when we're able to stay embodied in that way, there's less of this risk for us to overexert and extract from ourselves, so that we end up in various states of disease.

And so in this way authentic expression is tied in with sustainability. And this is knowledge that Indigenous tribes, groups have held for millennia. And it's something that I think us in the modern world are starting to tap back into, and I that's why it is a really powerful place to return to.

Childhood Trauma and Acupuncture School

Yeah, I love that. I feel like there's a story here of how you found yourself in, like you said, the cycles and not just recognizing them, but then starting to flow with them and starting bring that in.

So how far back can you go to your young life where you became aware of these aspects? That's good question. I don't think I became fully aware until a little bit later.

We know with neuroscience, I felt like through studying acupuncture and understanding Taoist alchemy that I was able to integrate these parts of me in ways that I wasn't able to before.

So I was born and raised here in LA, and both of my parents are Vietnamese refugees. They're part of this legendary group of boat people who fled Vietnam after the war.

And they're one of the lucky ones who made it over here. My childhood, I'm grateful for what they were able give to me with what the had and what their capacities were as refugees who were acclimating to a completely new home and new world.

But that also meant that they were carrying with them a lot of this colonial, imperialist violence, you know, this generational trauma that came with it.

And so my childhood also contained a lots of violence and emotional neglect that I did my best to process and cope with primarily intellectually. Like the home wasn't quite a safe place and so school was my safe and I had a proclivity for reading and learning and that's why I poured all of my attention.

And I think this is interesting when I look back because I can see how, because we are here in this context where things are Western or Eurocentric, that there's this separation and this dissociation that I personally went through, but this Cartesian dualism between the mind and the body.

And so I was able to understand, maybe through a psychological lens, certain models to help me understand what Iwas experiencing with, you know, narcissistic abuse and CPTSD, the kinds of symptoms I Was experiencing, with anxiety and panic attacks and all that.

And I, by social metrics, I was doing okay because I graduated high school, went to UC Berkeley, graduated from there, got my first job, and it wasn't until then that my coping mechanism started to fall apart.

I couldn't quite manage with the emotional distancing that I doing in order to survive still. And, in this constant state of sympathetic activation, ended up in rehab.

at one point because I was self-medicating with alcohol and other substances. I had to quit my first job as a result. And I think when we're in that state of hitting rock bottom and feeling like our entire lives are just complete chaos.

That's also a very ripe moment to take right action, to pick a direction and commit to it. And so what I ended up doing was kind of reflecting on everything that I've done.

You know, I studied anthropology, everything I did in college was social justice oriented. I was always wanting to serve other people. So that was kind of the principles I guided with to explore acupuncture.

And at the time, I only committed to it one semester, because I'm thinking, okay, who knows if this is for me or not. We'll give it a shot. That semester completely changed everything.

for me, because I had a therapist. I wasn't taking in medications because i hated the symptoms that I got with medications, but something about that therapy model wasn t quite clicking, and I didn t know why.

But once I get into acupuncture school, as a student, I was able to get weekly sessions at the same time that i was learning the foundations of this medicine.

What I loved the most about it was that I didn't have to tell a story, I did not have relive and identify with anything that was in my past. I was able to just show up and the practitioner would ask me a lot of questions about my life, you know, what I'm eating, how was I sleeping, my relationships, and then they would look at my tongue and feel my pulses and you know, palpate my abdomen and put some points in and then I would just be left there, you now, for 20 minutes, half an hour.

And I've had some very interesting experiences on the table that were all maybe surprising but extremely relaxing moments of stillness. I feel like I was able to process my trauma in such a deep way.

So my one semester, my trial semester became a whole program, master's program doctorate program and, you know, what I'm dedicating myself to. What a journey.

And you've encapsulated so much and I could hear the emotion in your voice that, how much the body was carrying in you're younger year. We know that this is a protector mechanism that all children who go through this kind of, I reassure people like, our human body knows how to protect itself.

even amongst them was vulnerable. And so to remember that, you know, but then also beautifully mentioned that yes, and then there comes a time when that protector mechanism, that initial one, the one of intellectualizing in your case, in some cases it might be, moving into dance or any other kind of coping mechanism.

Even that comes to a place where it's run its course in some way, or it has gotten to you as far as it will go. And that feeling of the bottom dropping out, the feeling that, oh no, this can't carry me any further and I feel rudderless, right?

And how that can sometimes in a young person's life come right at that time. When yeah, we're leaving college, you know, going into a new job. We're supposed to be this new person all of a sudden.

And you're like, wait a second, I thought I knew what I was or who I. But then things start happening, right?

Learning to Receive Care

And I think that's also the other piece here is that sometimes people can only look back when they feel grounded again, so there's this place where you are in survival mode.

You're just in forward motion. Your feet barely touch the ground. may pay attention to your body. It's a mechanism. And then there's the time where, yeah, you get your first apartment, your get first job, and all of a sudden you do feel grounded.

That's when sometimes that shift can happen into this. Now the system says, well, now we can manage all this, we now can feel. more than we've been allowed to feel.

And sometimes that can come up as anxiety. Sometimes that could come as sleeplessness. That's when, yeah, the use of substances and other things to kind of help to manage that without really having words for it.

I love how you described that as you went into acupuncture and discovered it's a place where you don't have those stories anymore or you have to attach to a story.

and I feel like that's the freedom there. The intellectual part can make up a bajillion stories. We can have all sorts of ways to explain our behavior.

And we do. You've studied anthropology, you've study social justice, and you know what the stories are that we're living in our bodies. Yet, it's not the knowing that's enough.

It's the being with, and then this beautiful way in which it's a return to the body and the experiences of the party. What were those initial skills that you felt you had to develop or started to development as you were starting to explore?

Because we're now at the end of that journey where this has become your life's work, but there was a beginner there. And I feel like a lot of us, when we first encounter this, are kind of like, I have no idea how this works.

Is there an instruction manual for it? you know, breath and mindfulness and embodiment. How did that first stage involve? Yeah, knowing is not healing, right?

So my acupuncture school was a special place. And I feel like so many of those people there taught me in ways they probably don't realize or understand.

But there was A lot of moments of resistance, I think having the anthropology background helped because I already went in there with a holistic lens in understanding that there's so many ways culturally that we create meaning.

and that the meaning and the perspective that I have is never going to be what the person across me is going have. We might have a lot of overlap, but there's so many places where we are shaped and conditioned.

So it did make that a little bit easier to sit in the first theory class and go into our first practices or going into clinic where For the first year, we're meant to just memorize a bunch of stuff.

Like half of our classes were biomedicine, pathophysiology, and understanding how to communicate with biomedical practitioners. And then the other half was all of this completely different philosophy that we had never been exposed to before, but we were meant just to take it and run with it.

But inherently, acupuncture works on the body. So when we're working on each other and we are locating points and putting stickers on one another to know where the points are, there's something about the touch, right?

Like, touch can be healing. And when you have a trusted friend, a colleague of yours working in certain channels, and you're learning about how the channels go inward into deeper channels and connect to our organs and how physiologically the points can impact you.

There is this interconnectedness in acupuncture where the mind and the body are not separate. So we're also talking about emotions and then we are talking what we refer to as the spirit within the medicine and that's all interconnected the entire way through.

And that part was really poetic and really beautiful for me as someone who is more creative that allowed me to lean into it in an academic sense. But the resistance came when we would be in clinic, and I actually have one really good experience here where my first year in clinical, we were in a group of interns.

There were maybe three to four of us and one practitioner. And I don't know what it was about that day. I could feel a panic attack coming on. So I started to have this sweaty hand.

They started feeling the racing heart. and i just panicked, you know, I'm like, oh gosh, i'm in the clinic right now. Like I can't have that happen. And I could really feel it coming on and I didn't want to shut down in clinic.

So I just kind of quietly pulled my supervisor to the side and it was like, I think I need to go. I don't feel really good right now. This amazing thing about acupuncturists is that we're all so tuned in, right?

So my Supervisor immediately goes, well, why don' you just stay? Like, it's okay, whatever you're feeling, you don't have to participate if you want, but why don' you just stay?

And so you can still absorb things. And you know what? Why don''t we treat you? I really couldn't argue with those suggestions. So I was like, okay, I guess I'll stay.

And so now I'm a patient and my colleagues are doing an intake and I am on the table and they're treating me. As I m there on a table, some of the points are in, they re still putting the other points in.

But my eyes were partially closed, and for a good couple of minutes I started to feel them flutter a little bit. One of my asked her, oh, why are our eyes doing that?

And she said, Oh, it's just chaos leaving the system. And that's one of the things, one, of, the poetic pieces of medicine that has been so ingrained in me in viewing chaos and what we call wind in the, system as something that can leave as, something, that isn't part of us and a part our identity.

And again, this is an example of me not needing to explain anything about what I was going through. It was me identifying and, for whatever reason, feeling a certain resistance to the moment.

Daoist Alchemy and Acupuncture Lineages

But then once I named it, and once was able to feel like I in a safe environment to let go, I able to relax. My nervous system was able calm down after that session.

And there were other moments like that throughout the program. I even I got to a point halfway through where I had to take a break because it felt like in me I needed time to process everything that I was taking in because you're right there was meditation, there is massage, we're going at a certain pace because there's a recommendation for, you know, when classes need to be taken.

But then the break was also very necessary. I think that was probably the first time that I was able to recognize, I Think I need To Pull Back. Everything leading up to that, was me feeling like I Need To Keep Going, and I needed to keep pushing and putting pressure on myself to achieve a certain way.

Pulling back allowed me to reconnect with what for me is like my soul's medicine, is the writing and the creative

processing. And so that's what I did for a semester when I pulled back.

Then when came back, I was ready again to meet myself and meet the medicine where I needed it to be. That's beautiful. Can you share a little bit about what that semester of writing in creativity was about?

What came out of it is one place. I also want to just recognize that what you're describing as a training system where the student is also putting themselves in the place of the recipient of care is so rare.

And for your teacher to actually have gently moved you and nudged you to accept that, and for you feel that professionally we can sometimes build up a resistance to accepting care because that means we are not somehow intact or we're somehow fallible.

And that really can be at odds with the professionalism that we have to project. And I'm kind of going back to some of what we're learning in medical school and nursing school, and all the different schools of professional healing, where I think that's one of the ways in which the psychedelic training is actually a little bit different where we are actually, if you're going to train to be a psychedelics healer or a person who's accompanying somebody around psychedelic journeys, it's useful to know what it feels like to be in that vulnerable state and that completely open state for the purposes of not just your own healing, but also to hold somebody else in the gentlest way possible.

I think having that capability to say that, oh, push is just one mode, sit back and take a moment to reflect is another mode and it's just as useful if not more useful because as you've discovered, all the parts of ourselves need to come to the plane of educating the self, right?

And I feel like there's a great understanding of like educating and education being a change agent. within the self. How are the learnings kind of shaping into this creative outlet for you?

I wanted to have a quick note here because you were speaking about the psychedelic piece. Because I was so actively going through my own healing process when I in school and the mind, body, spiritual access was something that I'm so intrigued by.

I did actually, the first time I started learning about psychedelics was in acupuncture school because I wanted to understand what within biomedicine in the Western world was even beginning to think about that integration because unfortunately in a lot of conventional care there is still this division between the identification with the mind and you know viewing the world from a purely materialistic sense.

I didn't have a goal aside from recognizing I needed a break and I had a really good mentor at the time who was like, yeah, take the break. That was a lot of my resistance was, like no, but I should keep going even though I feel like I need to do this.

Yeah, so I took the brake and something about that time made me feel I wanted to travel, like I needed to essentially go from having this very rigid, structured schooling program to more creative freedom.

And freedom was kind of this idea that I very loosely was chasing at the time. So I was traveling through various cities in the United States, couch surfing.

My only goal was to stay in each place for two, maybe three weeks and just every day commit to writing and allow whatever needed come up, to come So I felt like in that process, I really reestablished my connection to my voice.

And for each person, there's a different way to access the authentic self. For me, it's through my writing. So that when I was able to come back, I've, it was one step closer, one-step closer to feeling whole.

I love that you were just kind of leaving it open and that sometimes it's, that's the scariest piece, right? And then that such a, sometimes a skill we have to cultivate and an awareness that we can bring in.

And it is about, yeah, permission. It's a permission given from somebody with authority to say, no, this is okay. You

can do it. Everything in our life has said keep pushing, keep achieving, you know.

Survival and achievement are so intertwined that I feel like that's a moment of kind of saying, well, survival is actually not intertwine with constant achievement.

And what a shackle that is, to kind break that even just mentally and even for a small period of time, especially since in out modern world, those two things are just so closely aligned that we can't see the space between them.

And now here I see this kind of like Daoist alchemy piece that's also there. So tell me a little bit about that, because I feel like we've dropped deep into the body.

We've kind talked about the reset. we kind said, okay, space, what's happening under the hood here? When I chose the school I went to at the time, there were, I believe, three or four programs.

in Northern California, I could have chosen, but I went for this Japanese school. And I believe it was the only Japanese School. I'm not familiar with any other one.

Reading the Body and Regional Patterns

That was intentional because when I was doing my research, it felt like most of the programs were traditional Chinese medicine, Chinese somewhere in the name.

And so just the fact that there was one school that was a little bit different caught my attention. But there's something really interesting about acupuncture's history is that the classical texts are from China, and they develop from Taoists, mostly Taoist and some Confucius philosophers.

From there, it moved throughout the Asian continent and then moved to the United States, over through Europe. And every time that we have a traditional medicine, a folk medicine or an indigenous medicine it develops in a very bioregional way.

So Japanese acupuncture, because they went through a period of isolationism, is completely unique from what we call TCM today, which evolved after the 1950s during the Cultural Revolution in China.

But Japanese acupuncture for a certain time was predominantly performed by blind people. So if you were blind in Japan, they would often assume that you're an acupunturist.

And that was mind-blowing for me to learn. And I had a certain connection to that because my grandfather was actually blinded during the Vietnam War. I thought about this when I grew up.

You know, I'm very attached to my vision. A visual learner. But I am also a very kinesthetic learner, and so I wanted to explore that aspect when i was in school.

And so the Daoist alchemy part, because I'm in a school where I am learning a Japanese technique, at the same time that the way that our education system is run, we kind of have to learn to the test.

So standards-wise in America, what we have codified into traditional Chinese medicine. But it doesn't mean that it's the only lineage. And so because I was able to see these two very different lineages and my school was an integrative school where we talked about the biomedical aspects of it and we've talked multiple other traditions.

within acupuncture, I felt like the unifying concepts that I was able to pick out were the Taoist elements. The ability to connect with the world by seeing it in a fundamental way as a balance between these mutually reinforcing and sometimes oppositional forces, but we know them as yin and yang, and they're continuously moving into each other and transforming into one another.

You can't have one without the other. There's the warm, expansive energy of yang and then there's cold, darker,

constricting energy, of ying. one of the laws of universe, right, that the ancient Taoists were able to come up with just from observing what we see in nature.

So body is this homeostatic place where those energies are also in constant motion as they are in everything else. And so there is a way of connecting with that, a wave influencing that and working with it that can really not just diagnose but also treat.

So maybe we can talk a little bit about what are some conditions that we see in this. And I love how you said that practices are bio-regional, right? Like this idea of bio regional, your body interacting with the region that you're embedded in is so important because what you see, the illnesses that are seeing are very regional to where we are located right now in the midst of Los Angeles, where there's a lot of this constant busyness.

So that's physiology that we're adapted to. And so what are you finding is kind of typical for some of the patients that you're seeing? It's so interesting.

So interesting because the first place that I practiced was in Oregon, which is a very different zone, very climate. It is two-thirds of year, it's gray there.

And it's raining a good chunk of the time. And so when I was practicing up there initially, a lot of The symptoms I Was seeing were dampness and cold and how that affects the body.

The tongue will be more swollen. It might be a little bit more on the paler side or on purple-ish side because that's what cold does, it constricts. And you'll see it in the body too, a more certain propensity to hold on to water weight.

Moving back down to LA, because I grew up here, coming back home physically, but also coming home culturally and energetically to almost see like a mirror to what I saw in myself.

So I went to school in Berkeley, right? And I felt like when I was, we all tried to diagnose ourselves when we're in school. And in my tongue, in pulses, you know, I had like, a rapid pulse and my pulses were, because I doing so much, the pulses end up being really worn down.

They're weaker, they're thinner. And my tongue, I have maybe not so much right now anymore, but at that time I had a very bright red tip, and the tip of the tongue corresponds to this part of body, on the heart.

I didn't see that in too many people when I was in school. Some of them would have that kind of red-tip. But when i came back here to LA, almost everyone has And it makes so much sense to me to understand because everyone here is like in constant go mode, where even if we feel like we're relaxing, like people's idea of relaxing here, is planning vacation, going somewhere to do something.

It's very rare that somebody would self-elect to just hang out and do nothing. Right. Just chill. So those are some of the ways that we see that physically on the body, but we'll also see we're in LA, you know, the red tip, The insomnia, certain sense of frustration that comes around.

I spent a few years working in an integrative women's health clinic. And so there's more heightened PMS symptoms and menopausal symptoms. Because when we think about these times in a cycle, in the menstrual cycle for example, we're going from, you know, the hormones are doing their thing, but when were about to menstruate, were going form what was a very young, masculine, ovulatory phase to a yin.

phase where then the body is shutting and it wants to rest, but our schedules don't want us to. So we're going to keep pushing and we are going keep doing and then over time that throws things out of balance and everyone has a different constitutional type and so that will influence women differently but things are gonna get thrown off.

Absolutely. There's such a like dryness here compared to the dampness that you're talking about in just our climate. And I remember seeing that in the skins of people, because I had come here first from Kansas City.

So I think it's true. It's like when you come from another place where you kind of see a certain way, and then you just come to sun damage too, I was just like, Is everybody always outside?

Somatic Shifts in Client Care

Like, what's happening here? You know, it's just that lifestyle. Our lifestyles are different. We're in a city. And what you described earlier about the body and the channels, and I love how this idea of they're the superficial channels that go to deeper channels.

we are basically in the constant state of being with our environment and kind of like this circuitous way that there's another homeostatic kind mechanism happening in some neuroscience you know, kind of circles, it's called the Markov layer, I think, which there's a layer between us and our environment and that layer can be detected.

There's like this sensitivity and discernment that we can grow about what's happening there. And so can you speak a little bit to that? Because I, think for some people, especially those of us who are trained in very materialistic ways of the body, is like the, body ends at the skin.

It's, like, like, actually, no, there's more to it. How do you describe that? How you conceptualize that for people? Yeah. Have you had that experience where you walk into a room and you can tell that there was the two people in it were like in an argument?

Like you could tell something's off? In that room, we think about emotions as having a certain directional quality. So, for instance, if you're angry, there's this kind of rising energy, right?

When you are feeling joy, that's an expansiveness that comes from your heart. When your feeling grief, it dissipates. There's a kind a vacuousness in this area.

You're not really taking in as much. Fear feels a You're going to feel it from the lower back going up into your spine. So energy moves in these different directions, you know, up, down, outward, inward.

And what we think of as the energetic body, we can call that kind of outer layer like an aura. almost. As someone who palpates in my practice a lot, as I'm going towards somebody's body, it's not like I am going for what I can physically see here as like this barrier, but as we're going in, there's almost like a little bit that we can sense from here.

Maybe from there there is a bit coming out. I've definitely had the experience in psychedelics of when you put your fingers together, you can see the energy matrix.

There is something between our fingertips if we just slowly come into awareness of. Some of this lives under ordinary awareness, but we're speaking to the idea that we can expand our awareness.

And what you've learned is through practice and attunement that you are becoming, you're aware of it. And I love how you mentioned like grief is here and anger is rising.

Just the ways that people experience, for example, depression, right? When you ask somebody, what does your depression feel like in your body? They'll point to their chest.

and they'll say it feels really heavy and it's that yin energy, right? Like just that dark heaviness. And so just this idea that we do have language for it.

We have story attributions, but they may spin off into other stories. versus being grounded in the body. And I love how what you're describing gives us an ability to be with the Body as it is now.

Again, devoid of the stories that we've told about it, because it's not that that's important. It's what's happening in The Body that can then shift. Let's say, give me an example of how you see that somatic shift play out for

somebody as you are working with them.

What do you notice? Yeah. Let me think about a particular client here. This woman, when I started working with her, she was mid-30s, going on later 30s.

And like most of the people I treat, She is a creative type, executive type. High, high functioning type and when she came in, her primary concern was a certain pain.

that she felt like under her rib here and massive reflux and because of the nature of, the intake process, you know, she's talking about stress and grief.

She lost her father recently. There, there's some anxiety sitting there and she spoke rapidly. there was something about the pace through which she, spoke where it was like, She wanted to give me as much information as possible in a minute.

Which is good. More information is always more helpful, I guess, than no information. But there was a lot that she kind of threw out there. And you could sense it in her presence too, that there's this kind-of outward pushing energy.

It's not like when somebody is very depressed and you can feel almost like they're pulling you in a little bit. Her energy was very forceful in going out this way.

She initially had some trouble keeping up with regular treatments and so some weeks we'd focus on the abdominal pain. Some weeks were focusing on some back pain and for a little while it was kind of complicated to feel out what exactly she wanted to focus because there were so many different things.

But there was this underlying hum about her. that she was always moving very fast and there was that outward pushing energy and her tongue tip was very red, a lot of her was red.

I'm afraid to look. Sometimes when you see a redness though, you assume that the pulses will also be more forceful because there's so much agitation and inflammation in the body, especially because she has this acid reflex.

And so I expected that at the beginning, you kind of have an idea theoretically of what you feel, but when I felt her pulses, they were actually on the deeper side.

It was like they're hiding and they are taking an app and it didn't want to be felt. They had to really feel for a while to find them and see what they were trying to communicate.

When you have that kind of pulse, but you had this presentation that feels very loud, there's a disconnect there, right? then the common, the primary approach I had to treating her was to reconnect this fire with the water element in her body.

And so I chose points that would do that, you know, based on my training. Over time, what I really appreciate about her as a client is I noticed that she transitioned from having this state of activation to ever so slightly having moments where she would calm down and she'd come in and the speech wasn't as rapid.

and I would tell her, you know what I noticed? Most of the time you come in here and you're speaking so quickly and this is the first time I'm realizing, I am noticing that you are speaking at a slower pace, like how are you feeling?

And there's very specific questions that I will ask her about what she was feeling, where it's located in her body, if there was anything she is doing that felt like it was changing that and it may have taken a couple sessions for her to really fine tune what it felt to be in her body and that there were these other aches going on like maybe in the mid back she's carrying something underneath the shoulder which tells me some information and I've seen her for probably a year and a half.

maybe more at this point, but it's amazing seeing the transformation because eventually she did commit to coming and getting treated once a week. And with these check-ins, the questions became different.

The questions were more targeted towards asking her how she was stepping into her own agency because she would notice these rhythms with her diet and alcohol consumption and the schedule she is running.

maybe the boundaries she wasn't quite maintaining for work. And then the other amazing thing is this was not fun for her to go through, but she ended up spraining her ankle after months of telling me that she was so burnt out and she didn't know how she's gonna do this and the panic attacks are happening.

I'm like, well, it looks like your body's helping you to slow down. Right? And she took humor too. But gosh, the slowing down was so helpful for her because it, I think the two, three weeks where she literally couldn't do, like go anywhere, do anything because she actually could.

Yeah. She was able to ask herself those deeper questions and journal and focus on what she was eating and focused on going out and meeting the sun in the morning and hanging out with her dogs and recalibrating with your nervous system in a way that she wasn't going to be able if she kept running the schedule that was running.

Last I spoke with here, she actually had inspiration to start her own business and so she's running with that and she doesn't think that production is really where she wants to go anymore so I'm very proud of her.

Oh my gosh. For putting in the work though, because she probably, she didn't see it this way, right? From her perspective, there was a lot, and there WAS, She was processing a LOT.

But the fact that she was able to show up consistently for herself was just as much part of the medicine as me being there to hold the space for her. Well said, well said.

Collective Healing and Community Practice

When somebody can be at least a little bit on their side, because you're right, like part of the ailment, if we want to say it, what rate we are functioning at, which is incongruous with the rate at which the body needs to function at.

And that's such an externally determined kind of, the schedule, this, meetings, phones. It's so easy to just let that take over. we don't hear the subtler signs of the body's distress.

I love how this is poetic, you know? This is so much poetry because it's like each body becomes a poem and you're seeing like, where is the reality and what you are telling me about your body and where the real body really is?

Where is that disconnect happening? Because it is only in the realm of poetry sometimes, right, that we can get to the subtle-ties of like oh, there was a hum.

Like, what is that hum? You just feel it's perceptible. But, you know, and we only have poetry to sometimes, recognize that these are subtleties, these changes.

And what you noticed about the fast speaking is almost like a body that forced to perform fast. So the fact that we can look at that incongruousness, I sometimes say it is like watching something where the audio and the video are off.

And you know something's off, but you can't quite put your finger to it. But there's just a little dissonance. And it is just on the level of poetry and rhythm and meter and words and speed, right?

It's so much about this human aspect of being. You can see where somebody is in their being by how they're talking and what story they seem to be. running, right?

And so it really brings us this idea of, yeah, this body is the one beautiful, you know, kind of like perfect machine in

a way that we've been given, each of us gets to have a body to be here.

And we don't ever get a instruction manual, but we can learn and it's very responsive and has its own inner intelligence. It's always trying to tell us something if we listen.

You know, the back pain and the neck tension and story that gets wrapped up around it. Like, oh, I have degenerative dystasis. Why? Why is your neck tense all the time?

Is it because you're constantly trying to keep safety or, you know. Curling up in a body. And where does that come from? And how much of that is yours?

How much is that ancestral in story? Now we're kind of getting towards the end of our hour, but I really think there's this other place that you are taking it, which is the collective resilience.

you know, the individual and the collective and this longer term vision. I mean, you've studied in this space, You're working now with people who are really, benefiting from recalibrating their bodies.

And so what does it mean to in, this moment in time, learn how to do that? You know, whether you're five years old, 15 years, old 20 years or, you know or when most of this happens is when life is in a transition and you, know we fall ill or we sprain an ankle or some larger illness happens.

I feel like we're speaking to the meaning of illness in our lives in some ways and what we do with it. You, yeah, if you can speak a little bit to that.

Yeah, I like to think about acupuncture and Taoist alchemy as a starting point because it certainly was for me in being able to reconnect with the energy body the way that I have been and the ways that i've seen people reconnect.

What I found is there's also a limitation to acupuncture because there could be a certain dependence that people can formulate or adapt to when you are seeing a practitioner who holds that space for you.

And so in the last couple of years, I started offering more individual and group facilitation processes. So on an individual basis, it looks more like coaching where we're able to hold that space, but there's more of a guided, okay, like, how are you going to step up to the plate to do this?

And individualizing that so that each person gets met where they need to be met, whether it's diet or somatic practices, breathing practices. And more recently, I've been doing more group facilitation.

And I think that part is very key because that's how we get to connect to the community and the collaborative piece to healing. Because even though I believe there's an individual responsibility that we have to step into our own power and our authority over our lives to maintain the sovereignty that we have.

There's also a collaborative collective experience in being able to support each other through that process. And so I'm pretty excited to do some of that facilitation with Spirit Circle at Polymedicine, where I'll be doing the liberatory embodiment circles there.

I will be weaving in storytelling in honor of the kind of oral traditions that indigenous people would have. And I relate to this because I see it in my Vietnamese family too, is sometimes we'll gather and we will talk about what the current, whatever is coming up for people, you know, in the news, and their lives, but also tying it with, moon cycles or the season or what's happening locally here.

We'll do some of that, we do somatic practices and We'll have a good time together. Joy is such an important part of healing too. We get to move from this system of extraction, where we're pushing all the time, into this systems of transformation where, we are not tied to the productivity, and we aren't tied making money.

we're instead putting our phones down and voting with our attention and investing in the time and energy that we have with each other. Re-learning some of those ways, right?

I mean, so many of us may have lost that attunement to that because of, yeah, migration or family trauma or just the fact that, you know, we don't live with the communities and families that grew up with or the traditions.

how to reclaim those in ways that we know are healing and common to most all communities. Thank you for bringing in the oral tradition. I want to bring up that you have a substack called auric minority.

And I want to ask you what, you know, how you came to that and what are you exploring through that Zupstack? Because I really want bring to attention that this is available.

This is, this you're sharing this learning and information from a place of, yeah, right sizing some of those power dynamics of the health care system, empowering people to take on their own journey.

And, I love that we can collaborate and create those spaces. And we don't have to be in our extractive mode all the time. What balances that out? Auric Minority is not my first space Friday.

I've had multiple blogs and websites before, and they're all iterations that I needed to go through. Aurac Minorities came from a state of meditation I was in where I thinking about my experience and always feeling like I'm the odd one out.

There's a sense of not belonging. But I don't feel like I'm the only person who feels that. And it's this synthesis of so much of that I've focused on throughout my anthropological studies, the acupuncture studies and my more spiritual side.

I think about it as this soft anthropology of consciousness, but it it like a safe space for curious minds and soft hearts. They share stories about whatever it is that my muse wants me to write about as it relates to The now and you'll find stories about my like psychedelic experiences things about acupuncture things, about parenting and relationships stories from the heart and also highlighting that the quirks and the shadows that we feel are opportunities to find our inner strength and step closer to our authentic selves So if you pop on there, there's some short essays and short videos that I originally I thought I'm going to do this once a month or once every two weeks.

And then I though, okay, if I really going embody this liberatory process, I am going write when it feels right. to write and share. That's right. So the writing process is consistent and the creativity is flowing.

And if you subscribe on there, you'll get the stories and videos when they do come out. But it's also the way that I communicate about any offerings and any changes that i'll be making.

Great. You can subscribe there at the Substack and on your website. I love that decoupling from the hegemony of having to do something on a weekly or a bi-weekly.

We resist that so much and I turn that resistance around into a strength and say, actually, I'm just going to flow with it. I love that. So thank you so much, Gina, for sharing your perspective, your grounded wisdom, and your lived experiences for what is, a very exciting time.

that's coming up for people who are looking for this kind of healing, for the somatic sovereignty, and also looking to heal the larger collective. So thank you so much for so elegantly and deftly stitching those together, the inner and the outer, staying true to your craft and your vision.

Thank you. Yeah, it's been an honor for me. It's fun too. Thanks for having me! Thank you! 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.