Opening Reflection on Curiosity

What are you curious about? What's the next thing that you're curious about that draws you towards it? So for me, what I'm curious about is just my own life's process unfolding and I'm not trying to direct it or say this is right or wrong or this is stupid or I shouldn't be doing this or something.

I really have that childlike curiosity of just allowing what's arising to arise and just say, man, this is fantastic. You know, like I feel so grateful to have a healthy body and the ability to, you know, mobilize this energy and express it in this way.

And I'm not saying I'll do it forever, but it's what I'm doing now. Welcome to the To 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 they relate 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. Welcome to the Two Curious MDs podcast.

I'm your host, Saraya Rahman, and today we have a really special guest who's coming to us from Texas.

Podcast Introduction and Guest Background

His name is Jared Rudrananda Turner, MDiv, Contemplative Chaplain and Trauma-Informed Spiritual Care Provider. I'm so excited to bring Jared to our podcast today.

Thank you so much for being here, Jared. Jared, I've known you now for a couple of years. I could say we're part of a growing group that calls ourselves the Medicine Family.

We have traveled in some of these medicine ways. We've worked in these different trauma-informed spaces of both frontline workers and our past lives. And really bringing all of that, bringing all of our history, our biography, our experiences, our heart and soul, our intellect, our knowledge, knowledge of all different kinds, Western and Eastern, to this practice of psychedelic medicine.

and finding that there are a few pieces here that we can offer to our community, to our patients, to our clients that we find are helpful, that we find are helpful to talk about and to describe, and also from a place of having experienced these places ourselves, you know, having been through our own trauma, done our own work, and discovering the validity of these techniques and tools that we're talking about and how we got there.

So with no further ado, I'm going to read a little introduction and then we'll lead into the question of how did you get here from there? Yes, I love how you say that.

So Jared, you bring a unique synthesis of crisis leadership experience and contemplative wisdom to transformational healing work. Over 27 years in the fire service, you progressed from firefighter, paramedic to administrative EMS captain, developing skills in crisis response, team leadership and compassionate care during life's most challenging moments.

That's one piece that I want to also bring in, that relationship to fire or agony that we've talked about before. This extensive first responder background provides you with a deep understanding of trauma's impact on both individuals and families.

Your spiritual journey began during your firefighting career and led you through multiple wisdom traditions. We'll touch upon that. Your exploration has included pilgrimages to India where you studied Sanskrit and engaged in traditional spiritual practices at sacred sites along the Ganges.

So you have walked the walk as we get to ready to talk the talk. As a published Kirtan artist who has led hundreds of devotional chanting experiences, Jared discovered the healing power of contemplative practices and their ability to transform suffering into wisdom.

And that's really how we first met was outside the convention center in Denver with the harmonium. And Kirtan, and that was actually my first episode of Kirtan of Feeling the Devotion.

Your advanced training includes a graduate certificate in psychedelic assisted therapies and peer support counseling. So you're bringing together a whole host of threads here that we're going to get to weave together.

You're also a member of the Association for Spiritual Integrity, the Vedanta Society of North Texas, and the North American Hindu Chaplains Association.

Early Life, Trauma, and Spiritual Seeking

and where you maintain an active engagement with these interfaith spiritual communities. And community is going to be a real big piece of what we talk about today.

Your approach honors each person's unique spiritual path, drawing from your multicultural training to create safe spaces for healing. And with that, I'm just going to dive into this topic today, this podcast topic of remembering who we are.

So let's start with your story. Well, first off, thank you so much for Soraya for inviting me. Anytime I can be on something or engage with you, my heart feels full and I'm just happy to do that.

And thank you. I feel very humbled and honored to get to chat with you today. So my story, your listeners will learn quickly. I'm a storyteller, so be careful about asking me to tell a story.

It's just… I'm from Texas and it's just our conversational style. I'll try to be as succinct as possible, but our line that we joke about, you can't really get here from where I started.

I started in a working class family. My father was a fundamentalist pastor. My grandfather was a fundamentalist pastor. At about six years old, I was asking questions that they didn't have the answers for.

I'm looking around scratching my head going, This doesn't make sense to me, right? So that kind of started me on the path of just self-seeking. Like if I can't find the answers, then I'm going to find these answers on my own.

And I had, you know, a lot of people do. I had some really traumatic experiences really early in life. that I feel triggered those kind of existential questions so early.

And now looking back, it was a gift. I mean, it's just a gift or karma, however you want to say it, some sorrows or past life, paying it forward. And I was always curious to be on theme with your show here.

Just that curiosity has driven me most of my life. And so, you know, I was just living a normal life, but I was trying to find answers to these questions that I couldn't find.

And that kind of left me on an island where I had just kind of cut myself off from anything spiritual. I was an atheist, you know, slash agnostic. And that's just where I wound up as part of that, because I couldn't find answers to these deep heart longings.

So I just tried to shut them down and get through life and do what I thought, get a job, get married, have some kids,

have a career. I thought that was the answer.

But there was this nagging little inner voice that just never was satisfied at the mundane, just everyday living. There was just always a piece of me that was like, I know there's more to it than this.

And interestingly enough to kind of catapult forward, I've never experienced psychedelics at all in my youth. I have never used psychedelics. I wasn't in that orbit, you know, and it was probably a good thing for me because I had a lot of anger and a lot of things and at that time it might've not been.

skillful for me to use those things. But anyway, rocking along, somebody in about 2003, I went to a breathing class, a firefighter friend of mine asked me to come with him and I'm like, this is crazy.

I'm going to go lay down, you know, with a bunch of hippies and listen to whale music and smell insect. Like this is not me at all. I'm a firefighter, blow a block.

But just to stop him from asking, I finally relented and went and I connected in really with my body. I feel like I was probably dissociated for most of my young life.

And in that moment of this release, you know, that can happen just through the breath of really feeling presence back into my body was such a pivotal moment in my life.

that I thought, okay, it put me back on the path because I had strayed so far away. I feel like the universe woke me back up to remember that curiosity that I'd had.

And so really this kind of ardent spiritual work started for me in about 2003. On about 2006, somebody handed me a CD. We had CDs back then. And they said, hey, this is some really cool music.

I think you'll like it. It's from a Westerner. And it was from a chant artist named Bhagavan Das, who's still around. And it was Kirtan. He was singing and chanting these Sanskrit mantras in a way, but in this big American voice with such a gospel bend in it, that it just, I remember growing up in those ecstatic, you know, Pentecostal churches, I was the drummer back then when I was a little kid.

And that I remembered that calling, you know, for the divine and it just reawoken less in a judgmental way, but to say this is the exact same thing, you know, like the different religions that call is the response as Rumi says.

And so I was so taken and so it just had opened my heart listening to these chants that like a little child, I wanted more of it. Like I didn't know what any of this meant, but I was like a baby.

I just wanted to repeat it because it felt so good and it just opened something in my heart. And that's really how it started here in North Texas. There was a local yoga studio and I just started.

offering call and response, let's get together and chant. And there'd be maybe two people, you know? And then it grew and grew and grew to a whole community.

And then coming back to psychedelics, Naropa University, this was during COVID time. And I was about to transition out of the fire service and thinking, you know, what's next for Michelle and I, and how are we going to survive in retirement?

Neuropa put up a thing for psychedelic assisted therapy. I had been experimenting with microdosing at that time and seen some really positive results.

I had reached that point of my career. I was facing burnout and then the repeated moral injury of the nature of the work. As you know well, I needed something.

I had reached that point and so I started microdosing mushrooms. didn't have a profound effect, but there was a

general sense of wellbeing. You know, we know what microdosing can do.

So Michelle, my wife, she applied for a program she wasn't qualified for and got accepted. And she's like, you should apply to the Naropa program. It was through MAPS.

It was primarily MDMA assisted therapy. So I applied and the cookie cutter reviewer denied me, you know, it's like, we're looking for medical doctors and practitioners.

You're a licensed paramedic and first responder. That's great. And I was like, it's okay. I mean, it was just, you know, it was a thought, you know, doesn't matter to me.

Breathwork, Kirtan, and the Path Back to the Body

And then I got a call about two days later from the director of the program. And they said, we're sorry for that. You're actually exactly what we're looking for.

So they offered me a spot too, you know, which was wonderful. So I really feel like the medicine has called me into it because I wasn't searching for it.

And actually my own spiritual ego over the last 25 years, I kind of looked down at psychedelic use in the spiritual arena because I felt like you got to do it the hard way.

You know what I mean? You got to sacrifice and get up at dawn and meditate and you should, there's nothing wrong with that. What I'm finding in our work here that we do for people who are really serious and on the spiritual path, when they come and do a journey with us, what I'm finding is their container is so well prepared.

that they are able to really actualize the healing and the learning in their lives and then go live it, you know, instead of like sand pouring through their palm, you know, a great experience and not able to have a container to hold it.

So to kind of wrap up these comments, each one of us has just a tapestry of experience and wisdom and knowledge And once we learn to actualize that using psychedelics, you know, as practitioners, we just see over and over the profound healing and the profound wisdom that comes out of people who, when they come into a session, they would self-acknowledge, I'm broken.

I'm all my trauma, as you noted earlier, like they're so attached to the story of being a victim, being broken. And then when this innate healing intelligence and wisdom within them awakens and begins to express itself, it's just, I mean, I get tears in my eyes watching the transformation of the people.

Thank you for bringing that in, that the human capacity to transform from trauma exists in each person. And that's something that we end up disbelieving or not realizing or shutting down.

And when you describe some of the words you use, waking up, remembering, that's what these experiences, whether they're spiritual or psychedelic or psychospiritual, can awaken in us, but I love that metaphor of the sand slipping through the fingers.

It's like, yeah, you'll get something, but how do you hold it and how to build that container? And so it's such a beautiful conversation because it weaves in that when you put work into the container, you can hold that wisdom that's pouring forth and it's there for you.

It's such an accepting perspective and preparation. So as you're talking about this, we can talk about some of the skills that go into developing this and so maybe the journey of learning these skills because you're very skillful, but it's been a process.

It's been a 20-year process of arriving at yourselves. And so what are some of these skills, these maybe rituals, both inner and outer that you've discovered or brought into your world and what do you see has been there for you

and arrived for you?

Yeah. Well, what a beautiful question and what a great opportunity to reflect. I think the first thing that's coming up for me and when clients approach us about doing this work, particularly first responders, I think sometimes they feel shocked and what I want your viewers to really in this moment think, you deserve happiness.

that you actually deserve to heal, that you are not defined by your story, trauma happens, we've experienced it, we viewed it, and all of that is relatively real.

But ultimately, you know, at least in the Eastern tradition, where each one of us is the divine spark, of awareness. Each one of us is that divine spark of divinity.

And if people could just touch into that for a moment and my time at Naropa, which I'm really blessed. I don't recommend grad school in your fifties, but I did it.

But You know, I can really coalesce the whole three and a half years, the most profound teaching for me from Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche was the founder of Naropa in Boulder.

And his teachings really still like pervade the classes. retreats. I mean, that energy is there. And for me, the key teaching and coming back to your question, and everybody I feel so far that I've shared this with can really touch into this.

There's a teaching, it comes from his book called Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism. It's one of his famous books. In it, he talks about the genuine heart of sadness.

And what he describes is this wound that's so deep in each one of us. Everybody in a human body carries this deep sadness, this deep hurt, this deep pain or shame or fear, like it's all wrapped up.

And we spend our whole lives armoring it and covering that up and pretending it's not there. And we live in fear. If I found somebody and I just opened a little bit and they saw this genuine heart of sadness that I'm carrying, they wouldn't love me.

If they really knew how bad I was hurting, they wouldn't be my friend. But we spend our lifetime avoiding that. But His teaching is you go into it. You see that as a doorway into your own divinity.

He describes that place is so raw and so tender that if a mosquito were to land on it, it would be excruciated. That metaphor is so rich. We can feel that.

You can feel that in your body. But instead of covering that up or hiding it, we go into it, we set with it, you know, and we learn how to hold our own pain and our own trauma and acknowledge that it happened, but realize this is the portal for great transformation.

You know, this is the fire refining the steel, you know, like this is our opportunity. And I had an experience once actually quite recently where I really was in touch with that.

I was sitting in that pain, you know, I was sitting with it and it hurt. And I just have this feeling that this being was with me, like a guardian angel or something.

Microdosing, Psychedelic Training, and Healing Containers

And I remember thinking, would you just take this just for a minute? Like, will you take this and just let me breathe for two seconds, like this wound, you know?

And the awareness that came from that was, no, this is the cost of being in a human body, of having this opportunity to come here and Live out your life and do your work, you know, do your what's called Dharma or your

right action for your life.

And I think if we can really get in touch with this place, call it what you want and learn to exist in there, all the fear goes away. Because once we drop into this tender place, we look around and realize, There is nobody different than me.

There is no different skin color or language or national. We're all deeply wounded human beings. But again, it's not a sad story. This is our opening.

This is our opening to greatness, really. to become a fully actualized human being and not languish in the pain. That's not what life is supposed to be.

And even with challenges and trauma, we can learn to just, what my teacher called, just be in the wow. Just look around and say, wow. even if it's good, bad, and different, just to learn to really see the magic in all of it.

I spent decades grasping for I don't know what enlightenment or just relieving my own suffering through singing and chanting and feeling my heart opening.

I was bypassing a lot of things and everything can be a bypass. Psychedelics can certainly be a bypass. But they can also be such a wonderful tool to remember our own divinity.

And jokingly, one of my longtime chant friends here in the Dallas area, you know, somebody asked once, what's Kirtan like? And he said, you'll come and Rudra or Jared will just spend 90 minutes telling you you're God.

That's what it is. And that's absolutely true because you connect into your wisdom place that I'm describing and you look at everybody and like, how I am surrounded by the most magical divine beings, you know, and what a blessing.

The separation is such a beautiful way of describing that place that we're most afraid to go into, the place within each of us that we all contain, that ability to recognize that common humanity, common spark, and to recognize it's mixed.

It's painful. There's suffering. There's a sadness. I love how you brought this sadness because there's an existential sadness. We don't know why we're here.

We don't know how we're here. We can connect to each other on that level. And so I'm being reminded, as you were talking, that when we meet that person who awakens that in us, The first step they may take just as maybe Ram Dass has described, you know, when he went to find his guru, Baba Neem Karoli, he describes running up the hill to this mystic man in India in the foothills of the Himalayas, being this white man, you know, in the 1960s, a white gay man, right?

He was a professor at Harvard. He had had an opening through psychedelics and then started his spiritual journey. And the way he describes that Babaji reached into his heart and was love, was absolute.

I'm just getting chills even as I'm speaking because when we feel that, like, unconditional beam of love from somebody who has done the work, both inner and outer, and has walked the path for so long that they are a transmitter of this pure essential goodness and nature and acceptance that says, oh, even though the world tells me I'm broken, even though parts of me are rejected by the world, here's what it feels like, or here's an experience of being completely held in all my imperfections.

and yet loved, right? And so I know that you have a Guruji that you've been with for a large part of your journey. So if you would like to bring in what that experience was like, because one of the things that we, you know, I think don't talk about enough in our Western ways of healing, is we talk about a therapist, you know, a therapist who's doing the talk therapy, but this is not that.

This is somebody who's walked the path in front of you and is practiced, has done that inner healing to where it just radiates and it attracts, like connects with you at a level which is beyond words.

So if you can relate what that was like and what that relationship has meant and you know, maybe some things you want to share about. Wow, big topic. So I've been encouraged.

I'm eventually going to at least write a memoir about so many of my stories and travels in India with Swamiji Guruji column. because he was such a character.

There's so many funny stories and maybe I'll write a memoir someday if I find that that could help people. But I met Swamiji in July of 2009 and I don't remember dates at all.

I barely remember my anniversary, but I remember that date because it was a really pivotal day for me. I was practicing a lot of Tibetan Buddhism at that time.

and I had arranged to go on a one-week retreat up in New Mexico, in the mountains, just north of Taos. And actually, oddly enough, it's where Ram Dass wrote Be Here Now, where he wrote all his memoirs at the Lama Foundation.

The Genuine Heart of Sadness and Inner Transformation

So I had been told that there was a Hanuman temple in Taos itself, named Krolibaba Temple, and I had gone to Kirtan College and learned all about Maharaji, At that time Durga Das, who recently left his body and Bhagwan Das were our two instructors.

This is way back in 2008. So I thought, okay, I'm 15 minutes away. I'm going to take a little side chat. Even though I'm a Tibetan Buddhist, I'm going to go and visit the Harman temple.

Just to be in it. You know, I'd heard so many stories about Ram Das and Maharaji. And so I got there and introduced myself to somebody who was kind of giving me a tour.

And I saw this little Swamiji. He was dressed in all white, little short Indian guy. And he had a big red turban on top of his head. You could tell he had his dreadlocks.

And I told the guy, I said, you know, I just really feel a heart connect. I just want to say hi to this gentleman. I don't know who he is. He was surrounded by these early 20 somethings, you know, who were just like lopped onto him.

So this guy tells me, don't bother, you're not going to get a word in with that group. And I said, well, be that as it may, I'm just going to follow my heart.

So I went and stood in the back of this kind of crowd gathered around and firing rapid fire questions. And I just remember surrendering in my heart, just a heart smile inside.

I had no expectations. And then I see this little head come out around this crowd of people, you know, this big stack of hair. And he came, he walked around and he stood in front of me and I went to touch his feet.

And he's, nay, nay, nay, nay, nay. Don't, don't do that. And we just shared some pleasantries. It lasted maybe 30 seconds, you know. We said goodbye. He took his place back amongst the crowd for the young folks to ask him questions.

I finished the tour and had a great time. As I was leaving, maybe half an hour later, we still had keys back then. I put the key in my truck door. The car right behind me, the passenger door opened and he said, hey, come here.

I turned around and it was this Swami. I walked over there and I put one knee in the dirt because he was in the car. He said, tell me. What are you searching for?

And in that moment, I told him, I said what came out of my heart, but there was nothing further from the truth. I told him, Swamiji, I'm not looking for anything.

I have everything right here in my heart. Now, why I said that, I can't tell you, but that was just my response. And he said, this is the most excellent answer.

And he wrote down his email address. And then I went on up to the mountain and I spent a week praying to the universe for a teacher. Like I beseeched the universe.

I was tired. I'd read Autobiography of a Yovya. I'd read all of the books, but I needed a human being to connect with to correct me and correct my mistakes.

because I was making many of them, and I was following this path, this path, you know, I mean, as Westerners, what we do, like, we're collecting these things, you know, this is what Trungpa called spiritual materialism, it's what we do.

We collect methods, but we never just get to the core of the thing. So in an auspicious way, when I returned back from that retreat, he did send me an email just, it was nice to meet you.

He said, I happened to have a village boy from the Himalayas where he was from, who lived 10 minutes from me. This is the next week. He said, I'm flying to Dallas.

Do you live in Dallas? I'm like, oh my gosh. He actually came and stayed in the town where I was living with at the time and we spent that whole week together.

Then the moment it changed for me, I found out he was an astrologer, a Vedic astrologer for many years. He asked me for my birth details and he pulled up my chart.

That moment changed. He said, you should take a cursory glance at Vedic astrology. This is the way he spoke. Immediately, I thought, why in the hell would I do that?

It looks like all math to me. Come on, give me a break. I just want to sing. I want to sing Hare Krishna and Jai Maan. But it just planted a seed. Then from that time together, we really formed this really beautiful bond.

But he was the guru who wasn't a guru. He didn't want followers. He himself didn't have a guru. He just in his mid 20s, he finished his master's degree to finish that family kind of pressure to get a master's.

And he walked off into the jungle and he lived there for 32, 33 years on his own. But what he gave me, what his living example was, and he had just left his body in March of this year after a very brief illness.

It was very unexpected. He taught me how to come back into my body and be present in this, you know, what one of my teachers calls the bone temple. Like this is what we have.

This is what we have to work with. And yeah, I've had hilarious and fantastic stories and miracles of going to India and being in the Ganges, being the only Westerner and everybody taking my picture, you know?

But what's more of a miracle is how he was able to bring me back into my own body, into my own lived experience with a sense of I am enough. My experiences, what I've learned and my own wisdom is enough.

Like I don't have to continue grasping and searching you know finally 25 years later have called off the search you know like it's just right here and it's about connecting like we're doing in this moment really as as human beings finding connection finding that heart connection you know and i really As we all know, it feels like our world is just wobbling right now with the societal structures, the governmental structures.

We're all kind of watching in horror, but this, I feel, coming together in honest heart connection and dialogue, this is

how I feel we're going to heal it.

Yeah. Sharing these stories. Absolutely sharing these stories and what a guru carries, right? What Swamiji carried and what he was able to bring to his community.

And we've heard many, many stories of how many lives a person like that can touch, right?

Meeting Swamiji and Finding a Guru

And leave behind. And it's interesting when you said that when you first did that breath work in 2003, That was the first time you came back in your body.

That was that moment of like, this is possible or this is something I respond to or this is available. And then it takes 15, 20 more years to get to the place of actually feeling welcome and comfortable and connected and this bone temple, right?

I love that because as we know, temples and churches and cathedrals, they're built as a technology. You know, the neurological technology, when you walk into a space like that, you feel awe instantly because your entire personhood expands to fill in that space.

And all of a sudden you're called into a greater sense of yourself. It reminds me that, you know, our ancestors built temples over multiple generations because you can't do it in one generation sometimes.

Right. The wonder and the kind of expansiveness that we carry is beyond what one life can apprehend just by itself. And so that necessity for a guru, a Swami to kind of bring you, invite you, tell you that this is…

And also, like you said, pointing out your mistakes. Because that's the other piece that I think we miss in psychedelic medicine is there's going to be lots of different off-ramps and on-ramps.

on these highways. And we're going to want to go off on one or two of those. But the main thing is coming back to the freeway. That's right. Right. You can take an off-ramp.

Don't get lost in it. That's your work. But then sometimes we get off on an off-ramp and think, well, that's it. I'm done. I've arrived. and the call back to this bone temple to honor it.

So just as you're talking about this rebuilding of the self-worth and some of these ceremonial practices as a way back to the heart, because it comes back to the heart and that warmth, that energy that is part of the portal of transformation that we've been connecting with, the agony, the fire.

And I know that some ceremonial practices do include fire. as well. And you know, we have this way of connecting with fire. I remember there was this one vivid image that you gave me of when you were a firefighter and you confronted the energy of fire, like the God that was in fire.

the spirit of fire and what that is. We end up sometimes, you know, in our 50s and 60s looking back into our lives and going, oh, that was a breadcrumb there.

That was why I went there. That's what appealed to me. So can you talk a little bit about this relationship that you have with fire? Sure. It's funny when you started that story, I knew exactly what you were going to bring up.

The anecdote that you're referring to in the fire service, there's a phenomenon called flash over and it's a firefighter killer and we train how to identify it.

Back in the nineties or whatever, the movie Backdraft was really popular and you know, backdress are a thing too, but they're not very common. But a flash over is very common.

So everything these days is made out of plastic, which is a petroleum product. So if the fire is burning in a room, everything can ignite simultaneously.

And so we train how to look at the smoke in a room and we can see the ripples of fires beginning to move through the smoke and it gets really hot really quickly.

They set up training scenarios so we can practice this and they're really hot, even the training scenario. And so I remembered the story I shared with you is it was my turn on the end of the hose and we went into this kind of concocted trailer situation where they could create this so we could identify it, right?

So you walk in and there was this column of fire, just burning. And you could see these fingerlings of fire going past us. And in that moment, I could see like the goddess.

I mean, it was like a goddess of fire dancing, you know? And I was just in awe of it. And I was like connecting to it. And this is really about bringing your spiritual life skillfully into your mundane life.

Because before I put that water stream on it, you know, I chanted a few mantras for just a split second and just like bowed to it and said, you know, I respect you.

I honor you as an elemental, much more powerful than me. But at this point. You know, I have to use the water element, you know, so let's all blend with that together.

It happened really quickly, but it's really about bringing the spiritual life into the mundane. And that's where we can create magic. You know, I don't know that I'm the only one, but I would think at least in America, I'm the first firefighter to be doing kind of a Kali puja in a fire training facility.

Maybe not, I don't know, but that's just who I am, you know? But I think kind of your question about honoring these elements in our body and honoring even like bringing ceremony, kind of what we're talking about, bringing this ceremonial aspect into our life, even if we're setting in traffic, you know?

Like what direction are we facing? Are we facing the north, setting in traffic? Are we facing south or east or west? And that's a good way to just begin to orient in our physical world, you know, like getting a sense of which way does the sun come up in the morning and where is the sun in the sky?

And, you know, that's again, kind of a little bit tiptoeing onto astrology is connecting with what the ancient Rishis called these grahas, these planets that grab this piece of our life and kind of manage that.

How do we embody as divine beings these things? Learning the four directions and becoming oriented in your body, not in your mind. People don't need more things in their mind.

We're all full. We're full up in our brain stems. And it's easy. We all have a compass on our iPhone and it's just a little bit of a practice to, wow, you know, hey, the store is east of me, you know, and this is.

Simple, but this is how people can begin orienting to the physical reality that we're in instead of screen time and Netflix and chill and all the things we do.

I do it too. Like I'm not walking on water over here. but it's about coming back into our physical body like you suggested. I think that's so powerful because when we are in our resting, in our source, resting in our physical reality, we're a lot less easily swayed by mental contagion of programs, hysteria.

It's like, no, I'm safe right here, right now in my home, surrounded by people who love me. We're all imperfect, but I'm not going to fall for that." I think bringing people back into their body, because as psychedelic practitioners, we see most people come dissociated.

We had a client once who during her journey took off her eye mask and she was staring at her hand. She was just

so enthralled with her hand. She's like, it's so weird to be in a body.

And I remember asking, how long do you think it's been since you've been in your body? And she was like seven, since I was seven years old. I mean, she knew it, you know?

And that's most of us, you know? So learning, you know, like kind of from the shamanistic tradition, the indigenous, you know, religions about just the basic nature spirits, where you are, you know?

I still do a morning meditation and I put flowers on my altar. And the next day I collect all the flowers and the cashews and the cardamom pods and I take them to a tree where I do my walk and I sprinkle them in the four directions of this tree.

You know, just for the ancestors, the indigenous people that occupied this land where I live and saying thank you to them. but then the four directions and just finding a heart connection.

In that way, there is no line between the mundane and the spiritual. Everything becomes spiritual. Our whole life becomes the chant, the song of divinity.

I loved what you said earlier about building the temples and building the shrines and the cathedrals and one generation beginning at knowing they're never going to see it to completion, but they gave it their all.

How much more spectacular is our physical body? We can't create one of these. Maybe someday AI will 3D print one or something. But our body is like, what is it, a trillion cells?

And something in the universe has this force to keep each one of us together.

Fire Service, Fire as Sacred Element, and Embodied Ritual

First, we should be flying in every direction, right? I mean, our atoms should be spread across the universe, yet there is this force that has molded us into this shape and this form for just a blink of an eye.

And that's amazing. I mean, that's profound, but we don't think about these things. And that's why I jokingly said earlier, you know, just go to Kirtan with Jared, he'll spend an hour telling you you're God.

And this is what I mean. Like when we can connect with this in ourselves, for me, I've found it just a better way to be and to be open, you know, for other people.

That was a long way around. That's, you know what, I love that about it because it's talking about how things are beautiful. It's not just about, oh, here's the answer.

It's actually about the construct of the answer and what it contains. And I think that's a lovely way to talk about ritual because it is making something beautiful, making the mundane spiritual.

And as you're describing it, I'm thinking about the veil that we talk about, the veil that exists that keeps us from seeing this amazing thing that we're in.

this creation is there for all of us. The veil is there. Some of us may die without ever having recognized that that capacity to thin the veil existed.

But when trauma, when spiritual practice, when something shakes us, could be a near-death experience, something shakes us enough to say, well, uh-oh, you're not only that.

There's an actual veil you can cross over into. And that starts to inform how this mundane world becomes more spiritualized. It's almost like we're clearing the space.

We're saying that, yes, this can feel mundane, but it can also feel spiritual in the exact same place. You're going to the same tree, you can look at it as tree, word tree, a tree that I've learned about from the book, which all kids learn about in a book.

But then when you're with the tree being and you're being with the tree and saying, oh, you are a hundreds of years old. Yeah. being an actual being and you have been through more cycles of existence and yearly seasons than I will ever see.

You know, that humility that comes in, that right sizing of our ego, that, you know, coming into the container of our own self and saying, oh, I'm here.

And that's north and that's south and that's east and that's west. And above me is the sky and below me is the ground. I'm reminded that just this last weekend when we had the coronal mass ejections, these huge aurora that showed up, right?

And everybody is outside taking pictures. you know, seeing this phenomenon because it reminds us, eclipses and auroras and, you know, full moon, new moon reminds us that we are part of a cyclical experience that's constantly changing.

And yet we feel stillness because of just the scale of things. We're so small and everything is so big. We can't look at it, but when we are under the Milky Way at night and we look up and then one minute it's on this side and the next minute it's on that side, nothing about the sky changed.

We moved slowly, you know, kind of just coming into awareness of that. really sitting with that is a way back to our true essential selves, absolutely.

And so, as you're talking about this, and Kirtan being one of those ways in which we thin that veil between the spiritual and the mundane, we can How are you, you know, let's talk about community.

You've talked about being parts of different communities and we've talked about how important community is. And we've even, I think, just touched upon the fact that it's about safety.

It's about knowing that spiritual awakening is in and of itself a fraught experience. We can get lost in it. There can be bypassing, there's materialism, all of those things, but there are ways through.

And it seems like community is one of those structures that shape it. So if you can just talk about what's your community. Yeah, that's just a wonderful segue there.

I heard a quote recently, young woman was giving a speech at our commencement actually. And she said, in this time of great division, When we are being separated by political party, skin color, ethnicity, language, when we're being driven apart, to come together is a radical act.

To come together in community is radical. And that stuck with me so much that just landed with me. And I was like, yes, like we have to come together.

A couple of years ago, kind of felt an intuitive inspiration and I reached out to some. kind of evolving men in my area here and said, Hey, would you be willing to come on a Saturday?

I'll make some food and just talk about, you know, like connect really as men working to spiritually evolve or, you know, become authentic like we've been discussing.

And I was a little tentative, you know, women do a much better job of connection than men do. I think because the uninvolved, unevolved, it's competition, you know, in some genetic past of ours.

But anyway, I sent out 10 emails and immediately got 10 yes responses. I couldn't wait. So held that here in our

home the last couple of years and sitting with just as equals and men arriving from every different kind of life and lifestyle and showing up as equals and being a mirror for one another and being completely open to receive.

We pass a talking stick, so whoever has the stick, they have the microphone. We don't try to fix it. We don't give advice. We just listen fully with as much presence.

That in itself is just being able to see the other and experience the other in their authenticity is such a healing thing to do. I hadn't done Kirtan in many, many years.

I just got caught up in life. busy.

Community, Kirtan, and the Guru Principle

But I realized we did a fundraiser for a dear friend of mine here over the summer, and it was just myself, a drummer I used to play with, and a Bonsori player.

We came together, we raised, fortunately, a bunch of money for our friend, Fide and Cancer. But in that moment, I realized this is something I can do.

I can throw the harmonium on the floor, I know a few chants, and this is something I could do. And what I was really amazed at, yeah, I had some of my old ringers that I've been chanting with for 15, 20 years.

There was a whole new generation that came. They were wide-eyed, like they'd never experienced this before. And in particular, one of the women who were raising funds for her oldest daughter, and I've known her most of her life, I would just see her in passing, you know, going to visit her mom.

And she couldn't even come in the room. She was out in the foyer, just bawling because of the beautiful, loving energy the community was creating. And at the end of the night, she came up, she goes, I had no idea, like what Kirtan is, what you do, what any of this was, but I loved it, you know?

And I've witnessed that so many times over the years. I did a kirtan in upstate New York, and there was a gentleman sitting next to my wife, Michelle, in the audience.

And these people, I was at a fruit festival actually, and they didn't even know what kirtan or bhakti yoga was. Half of them showed up with a yoga mat.

They didn't know. And I launch into a simple chant, Jai Ma, praising the divine mother. And this guy. 10 seconds in is just crying profusely. and he leaned over to my wife and goes, I don't understand what's happening.

And I'm like, it's coming together in community through music. And this is what our ancestors have always done, always come together around the fire and sang and danced and cried and screamed to get it out and to form that connection.

So I think it's So critical now to wherever you are as a person listening to this, you know You can be the hub on that wheel to create community and wherever town you're at because I can promise you there are people out there just praying for community because we really really need it and the last thing on the community piece we were talking a little earlier about swamiji and Off-camera, you mentioned how the guru principle, especially here in the West, it's a little slippery because there's been a lot of harm caused by these people in structures that place them above everyone and they take advantage of that in every religion.

It's awful and it's inexcusable, but I think or I feel for myself, I think to really connect with the Guru principle, which we all carry this wisdom inside of us, the Guru is actually within you.

You know, it's really within. It's just about surrender. and asking for help, just that little pause of opening again that genuine heart of ours and saying, I need help.

I need somebody. I don't know everything, even though I think I do. And I need somebody that's willing to help me, you know? And I think that's such a great metaphor for the psychedelic experience as well, because, you know, we see people like they've taken the medicine and now they're gripping, they're holding on and If we can prepare ourselves to surrender, before that time comes, we can alleviate so much suffering for ourselves.

So one quick practice that I've always done since I can remember is, and it sounds a little morbid, but every night as you're falling asleep, use that moment to stay aware as long as you can.

you'll lose the battle every night because you'll eventually fall into sleep. But it's about letting go and surrendering. Nobody's afraid to fall asleep, and that's the ultimate surrender.

We don't know where we go when we're in deep sleep. I mean, this is a near death state every night, but we're not afraid of it. So we can practice that surrender and maintaining our awareness just as long as we can.

You're going to fall off into the abyss and hopefully have a good night of sleep. But that's another really easy way of practicing to maintain and focus that awareness.

Absolutely. You're talking about how through these practices, what we're doing is strengthening networks, strengthening abilities. Surrender is a way of saying my ego is not everything and I can minimize it or bring it down a little bit or not lead with it.

And then a road opens up, a connection opens up, an ability and an aspect of ourselves and that practice. And so ritual and making it daily, making it more intentional over time.

I mean, I'm just imagining that that's why when we do fMRIs of long-term meditators' brains, we see that they have this amazing connectivity. They have these connections that are strong, have been built up over time and are easy to access each time.

So just like doing reps, you know, easy reps in the gym builds that ability of the muscle to achieve that action over and over again. And it gets easy in the same way.

There's a neurological pathway that we're rebuilding, you know, away from isolation, you know, into connectivity. And yes, that's difficult. That's why we need that support.

And I loved what you said about mirroring with your men's group is we just need to be mirrored back in our process to say, you're okay. You're on the right path.

Keep going because we can get lost in it. We can kind of forget where we are. Like, has anything changed? Because it can sometimes feel like we're going through our same traumas and we're confronting them again, right?

And so to know that, no, I'm different now. My drama hasn't changed, I'm different now and I can approach it from a different way. That's something that we see as a capacity opening up in the psychedelic journey.

As we're coming to a closure of our conversation here today, having brought all these threads here at our podcast, we like to ask the guests, what are you curious about?

What's the next thing that you're curious about that draws you towards it? What are some questions you're asking yourself and others? Wow, that's fantastic.

So what's coming up for me in the moment is coming back to authenticity and embodied awareness. Inexplicably about two months ago, I started running, like jogging for the first time in my life.

Curiosity, Running, and Living Authentically

I hated running. and I have just began running and I'm not doing it for any reason. I'm just observing myself and just

watching it arise. Yesterday, I ran eight miles and I'm just like, wow, look at this being just running for the first time in my 50s.

Now, I'm training for a half marathon next year. That's just a goal. So for me what I'm curious about is just my own like life's process unfolding and I'm not trying to direct it or say this is right or wrong or this is stupid you know or I shouldn't be doing this or something like I really have that childlike curiosity of just allowing what's arising to arise and just say, man, this is fantastic.

You know, like I feel so grateful to have a healthy body and the ability to, you know, mobilize this energy and express it in this way. And I'm not saying I'll do it forever, but it's what I'm doing now.

And yeah, I'm curious about what we were talking about earlier about stepping into community, you know, is asking for help. I mean, those are two of the same things and.

I really want to continue and I'm curious about how can I actualize more community, you know, you and I are professional community, you know, how can I actualize that group more that I love spending time with?

And then, you know, personal relationship, how can I show up? more authentically you know and by freeing myself from my own mental prison how can I free others just from that presence and that's really what these actualized people do is they they do by non-doing you know which sounds very mystical, but there is something in there, you know, like to bring in a little bit of spirituality in the Bhagavad Gita.

The biggest teaching of Lord Krishna to Arjuna is you just do your Dharma without any assemblage of the results. You just do it. You know, it sounds like a Nike commercial, but there's really a truth there.

You do it and you don't worry what happens, you know, as long as you're doing obviously the right thing and being helpful and sincere with others. So yeah, that's a great question.

Thank you for that. I'm just curious about how do I continue to openly share, connect with others? And I really want to be everybody else's cheerleader because I know what it's like to haul around deep, deep pain.

And now I'm learning what it's like to transmute it. And it's a very different experience. And I just want to be more skillful and empowering others to do the same thing.

Yeah. Oh, beautiful, beautiful. I'm just resonating with that when you said the freedom to allow others to experience their freedom starts with experiencing your own.

And what you just described with the running, it's like, you know, the freedom to run if you choose to without those external, you know, that trap of the mind coming in.

And then as we're kind of wrapping up the lifetime, journey that this is, that this has been the journey of a lifetime and that it takes time to come to a place when we really want to approach it from that place of authenticity.

I don't want to just go running because it'll feel good and I'll do this for myself and everything, but the quote from the Gita is, you know, doing the right action without worrying about The outcome is that training that we do in mindfulness meditation is like let go of attachment to the outcome.

Do something for the sake of doing it. Do something because it feels good. And do it fully. Do it fully because you're here right now and your body is healthy and you have this energy and you are in this beautiful reality.

which allows for it. So with that, I think we could come full circle to this moment and just this immense gratitude I'm feeling for the places that we've been.

Thank you so much, Jared. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thanks for joining us on the Two Curious Andy podcast. We hope today's episode inspired you to ask new questions and explore fresh perspectives.

We challenge you to ask us those unasked questions that you're curious about in your medical practice, condition, health and wellness. If you enjoyed the podcast, don't forget to subscribe, share it with somebody just as curious and leave us a review.

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