Introduction to Longevity and Faith

Somebody doesn't believe in God? Well, you haven't studied biology enough. Biology defies the laws of physics. Or you can be right and believe and know God and live a shorter life.

This feels like the most important conversation. God, who wants to live forever? That sounds awful to me. The FDA will not allow it. Yeah, our government likes to restrict things to make you healthy.

Oh my God. Everything I'm doing is harming people. And she picked it up at 92 and I used to play violin. She was horrible. Can you share your experience?

It shattered my view of reality. Is this what ayahuasca is? It's getting good at death. And my teacher kind of laughed and he said, no, it's so that you get good life.

Jason, my good friend, neighbor. Welcome to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. Thanks for having me. It was good to see you both. So you are the author of Beyond Longevity and you created with our friend John, created a documentary about some of the longest lived people on the planet.

You guys traveled around the world, met them. What were some your biggest takeaways from people who live the long. Well, I'll give you one that's not what you'd expect.

When we get old, we got old. Like people want to live to 120, 150. I hear these, these things. And there's a reality of when you're around these really old people that you kind of understand that, that there is a very delicate process at the end of life.

We age quickly at And we lose function and we had, you know, we, I remember with Julio, he was 105 years old in Sardinia and, um, amazing what this guy could do.

You know? He was able to ride his bike. He would still playing chess with his younger son. It was like 80 something. Right. So it was beautiful. And yet he.

Was fragile. He couldn't hear very well. Like he was losing his faculty, still had mental faculties. So it was impressive what he is capable of. And yet it reminds you that like where I'm at today in my forties is drastically different.

The function is lost. For me, it really reminded me of the arc. of, of aging and, um, the preciousness that we have, uh, and it goes quickly. So even in these elderly populations that sort of aspire to, there's a drastic loss of function.

That was one. Um, The other big thing that I think, I didn't really fully appreciate was, especially in this longevity region and these blue zones, right?

As they're known. is that, um, they lived in a completely different reality than we did, than what we do now. Right? So there's this idea that if we, if, we imitate them, right?

If we behave like them if eat like, then we can live as long as them. The reality is, is we live in completely a different planet than they grew up. In 1925, Icaria, Greece, or 1940, uh, in Iguana, Costa Rica, there was no electricity.

That means no refrigeration.

Lessons from the Longest-Lived People

The food processing wasn't the same. They didn't have automobiles everywhere. There were horses, they were walking 20, 30 kilometers a day. The were eating only the foods that were around them, right?

There was seasonal cycles, there was sort of famines and loss of food. So they are fasting and these type of things forced. So they, they live the different realities.

You have to kind of put yourself in the shoes of, of those people. And then you can start to understand what are the things that really contributed to their longevity and also to the demise.

So some of the people that, that didn't make it. Right. They often died early infections and various other things. Now granted they had a herbal remedies and they added a whole suite of options, but they didn' live close to hospitals.

One of things we're doing well in The West is that. We keep people alive. So even though they may not make it to 98 or 104, they didn't die at 12 at 25 at 46. so there, there starts to become this.

Like bifurcation almost in those societies is that these people that survived, They, tend to live a long time. People didn' they died earlier. There's a lot to take away beyond that, but those are some of the big ones that sort of stood out.

How have you changed your behavior based upon what you learned doing your research? What are you doing right now that you weren't doing before to either slow down aging or stay healthier as you age?

By the way, you look great, your skin looks great. You look like a very vibrant, healthy person, so I'm assuming what your doing is working. Well, it's funny because I've spent most of my life sick.

And that's actually how I got into the integrative functional medicine world was I had chronic knee pain that started at 13. Um, the traditional medical system couldn't figure out what was going on.

Even since then, you know, I have seen naturopaths and functional doctors and osteopaths, and Ayurvedic practitioners, still haven't got a clear cut answer as to what the root of the chronic pain lasted decades.

Um, and I had skin issues in my twenties that prompted me to start to investigate my own health. So that was actually, so I've, I'm actually lived the life to be able to navigate these things, which has given me, the perspective that many people have in the U S that are suffering from chronic ailments.

But, um, So, so I've been at this for a while, I guess is my point. Um, and I'd been doing a lot of things and continue to learn and continued to apply.

But one of the biggest things that I think that, uh, was unexpected was when we arrived in Costa Rica and Guana, Costa we were there for 10 days. We're filming, we're trying to find these hundred year olds, right?

Which is kind of difficult because I don't speak very good Spanish. And there's not like a list of them. There's like, a hundred year olds and you can just call them up on a cell phone.

So we went door to door knocking, essentially. We had a, what we call the fixer, somebody who spoke Spanish, spoke English. He was American, but he was living down there and he can kind of translate for us.

And we just start trying to find old people, right. In these little villages. and so it was kind, of a fun process, But nevertheless, it, was 10 days and we had, limited time that we could do this to, find them, to film, To get the content that, we needed.

so, It was a little pressurized, Right. So we were working, it was a pressurized environment. And yet the environment was, was so paced. It was. Relaxed that even in a pressure.

Setting. I didn't feel rushed. Like I felt more rushed, um, on vacation in Los Angeles than working in Guanaca state, Costa Rica. So the environment really communicated to me that how much it affects my nervous system, how it effects my mental processes, my emotions.

And of course, anything that affects our nervous and our brain is going to affect our Digestion, detoxification, hormone production, right? Sleep. So that was a big wake-up call.

And look, I've been on, uh, around the world on vacations and doing some work and these types of things, but this was the first time that I had a pressurized situation in a sort of vacationy type of spot and realized that the environment really dictates how my nervous system responds.

It was, it was actually in the moment, so it, was down there and then the contrast appeared when we landed in Houston airport. And we landed and we're in going through customs and I could just feel the craze.

Like there was just this buzz. This stress was in the air. It was the environment. So it really landed for me that how much my nervous system is a tuning fork to the.

Sounds like almost culture is what you're describing. What's culturally normalized in the US or in The Western world is this rushed, harried experience that we're always late somewhere.

I certainly experienced that day to day, whereas that you can land in cultures where everything kind of slows down and there's a much more relaxed experience.

Now, culturally, there's other things that come up as well. Rites of passage are something that you talk about in your book and in you experience, learning from people who grow old and grow well, like you talked about him losing faculties, some of these people and this preciousness, but there is also a joy in the experience.

There's meaning in experience of growing older. Can you tell about how rites passage contribute to that? Yeah. It's really interesting in our Western culture, some, you know, these sort of terms that have come up in the past decade or so adulting, right?

I'm just adult thing. And these are coming from like mid twenties and 30 year olds, like, ah, adult is so hard. I think it's so fascinating, if we go back in, even in Western world, just a couple of generations.

We were much more adults at 15 and 18 and 22 than sometimes I think that we are in our thirties. And I Think part of this has to do with the fact that, we don't really have an integrated way of marking these transitions.

Right? How do we mark from childhood into young adulthood? Right. One might say puberty. That's one. And I think that's a good marker. That's natural biological marker, but we don't really integrate it into our experience.

There's no process. It just kind of happens and we learn what to do about it.

Purpose, Rites of Passage, and Aging Well

And we're kind. All over the place with it, right. Um, and then of course, into adulthood into full adulthood, separating from the parents. How do we mark that?

These are important milestones because they signify transition and behavior, signified a transition in the life arc. So where are we in our story, right?

And viewing life as this big arc, even into the elderly population. To me, this is where we're really missing things. Where are elders in The West? We don't think of people as elders, right?

Most, I would say most women, especially, but men and women really fear or really distaste stepping into elderly population. They don' want to be called old or elderly.

Right? We think about it as a retirement age, this sort of 65. That was, that's probably our rite of passage is like retirement. Now then what? Then we're just, we wait to die.

Most people. And I think this is one of the biggest areas of, uh, that we're missing in the West is that that chunk of life from 60 to, to death. What's the point?

What are we doing with that part of. Okay. We finished our working. And so a lot of people are missing the meaning or the purpose from in that of their life.

Look, we may be happy to retire and be done with this work that we've given most of our life to, but now what? And if we don't have a purpose, if don' have day-to-day meaning at that point in our lives, then we're sort of signaling to our own biology, I'm ready to go.

I don"t really want to be here. So if we're signaling that subconsciously or even consciously, then I believe that we are going to die faster. The evidence seems to point to that.

If you talk to people in their older years, um, you find this. Um, I remember talking to a 94 year old gal in, this was actually in Loma Linda in California, one of the sort of original blue zones.

And she's 94 and her husband's passed away. Her kids are gone. She doesn't really have any friends. I mean, this is the thing, by the way, when you get old, you got like 95, 98, 102, basically everybody you know, tends to die.

Right. So it's kind of a weird thing to think about that you kind about outliving many of the people, many, your friends, maybe even some of your kids.

It's a very bizarre world. And I think you find yourself in, and I asked her about it. You're 94, Your husband's gone. Your kids aren't around. What gets you up every day?

And she said, well, I have to learn this song for the violin class on Wednesday. And I was like, Oh my God, what I like. It made my heart melt. Right.

Because first of all, she, s she picked up the violin at 92. So like talk about inspirational, like learning a new instrument, even as a 40 year old is a little bit intimidating for many of us.

And she picks it up at 93 and I used to play violin. She was horrible. Cause I asked her to apply. I said, we play something. Oh God. This is really bad.

But, but it was irrespective of like Her point was that she needed to show up to class. That was community. She was there to learn. she had, she has a purpose.

And that to me was one of the reasons that. Remained so healthy in it at 94, She read her Bible and she put it on her little exercise bike. So she had a little, uh, stationary bike in her house, put her little Bible up there and she would probably very slowly, you know, spin on this bike and read her passages from the Bible.

She would do her classes. Uh, I think, think she has singing classes as well as, as violin. So these are the things that were missing, um, in terms of, and I point to that in, of meaning.

And one of the opportunities that I see comes from being amongst indigenous cultures. And even in village cultures, there's a role for the elders. They really, really serve a purpose.

And in a more rural or agrarian or indigenous society, they are the central pillar of society. The elders really dictate how everything flows. So I would love to see this.

I do believe we are starting to this more and more, but this acceptance of growing old, the value that we can have in our 70s, in 80s and 90s to guide the youth, not just our children and grandchildren, but other people's children or

grandchildren.

And so, if we could venerate that aspect of our life, and look, it actually takes wisdom and people that have gained wisdom, that are willing to share that wisdom to stand in that, for the youth to actually want to listen and to follow.

So there's sort of two parts to this, right? The youth need to be willing and open to that. But I think as we start to see these elders step into that, it'll not only serve the use, It'll serve that the elder as well.

It's interesting because we see this in the research. The elderly adults who have a life purpose or who a purpose have better health, and in particular, they are less likely to, I don't know if it's all cause of mortality, but certainly it is risk of dementia.

So if you wake up and you have purpose, you've got stuff you gotta do, whether it be feed the dog, take care of grandchildren, or learn the violin, so you can be part of your violin community, those people have reduction in their risk to dementia, Absolutely.

And, and if we think, I think one of the main areas that starts to go, one the big, big reasons that we start to fall ill as we get older is the immune system starts go.

Right. I mean, the thymus gland alone, right. Responsible for T cells really important gland for the system. It's peak function is like a puberty. So we lose thimus, gland function and actually actual mass from puberty on.

Melatonin is actually one of the things that preserves and restores thymus gland function. So another good reason for sleep and perhaps even dosing with melatonins.

There's a lot of good longevity research there, but if we're losing our immune system, well, we know that the research shows that purpose, meaning, relationships, affect immune system in a dramatic way, right?

And cancer, if nothing else, we can describe it as a failure of the immune systems, to clean up the body, simply. And so the system becomes really, really critical.

Of course we have the new system as it relates to the brain as well. So, yes, meaning, purpose, excitement, joy, relationships, God. Like these are the things that you find when you go to the Blue Zones, when go indigenous cultures, they have an integrated way of working these into their life throughout their arc, the arc of their lives.

Not just in their 20s, not just their 40s. You know, it's really interesting. We focus on the middle part of our life, like when it comes to longevity.

So when I'm 50 and I 60, okay, what can I do to live long? That's great. But what about childhood? So it's the two areas. It's like the bookends of life to me seem to be really, really forgotten about and really important.

So what are we doing between conception and let's say 15 when we're developing? And then what do we do in our really late stages? 70 to 90. Those two time periods to meet are really critical because The, the early life stuff, we don't really have a lot of control of we're kids.

Right. And the later life. We kind of get tired of life, most people get to life that's the part of the reality. So, um, can you keep going? Do you have the will to actually live and how does your.

How does your, um, your day-to-day operation sort of show up when you're kind of in pain, you don't function as well. You can't do some of the things that you used to do.

Your family may have departed. So like there's real challenges that show at that part of life that I've noticed. And it's like, how do you respond? What is your data day?

Do you have the will to live? what excites you, what can you engage with? Can you do something, something

that's new, right? Like that. Those are the opportunities that see.

Did you see themes and mindset in these longer lived people? You're talking about this will and it's almost like there's a characteristic, there is a trait in people who live longer.

What is the role of mindset? It's actually different than what, what I'm seeing in the West. When I've seen in The West and to call out kind of like the Brian Johnson or the biohackers or it's like, I I live to 200 or I am not going to die.

It is like this very masculine, forceful, like controlling way of viewing aging and death and health. The way they approached it in almost universally, the people that I talked to was.

It's up to God. It was like, they just let go. They relaxed about it all. That's not in my control. So they actually let it go of when they're going to die, what's going happen to them.

they didn't worry about that. What they worried about was the things that they can control and they. They, they realized that life was precious. So it was a gift and they, and enjoyed it.

It's like, it's a, I'm enjoying it and I can't control when I die. And like so simple and it like was so obvious to them, It was not this micromanaged control of what I could do.

Mindset, Religion, and God Control

Now, I'm not saying that in the West we may actually benefit from some more awareness around some of these nuanced things, but they also grew up and lived in an environment that was a little bit more natural, a bit conducive to health, the environment itself.

So it wasn't front and center of their awareness. What was important to them was generally their relationship with God or creator, relationships with others.

And, and the, the wisdom that was passed down to them. So it was like, it's very simple. And that's, that all they worried about. How many of them talked about God specifically?

Was it all of the? Most. In Okinawa, which is one of The Blue Zones, you know, they're more of like the Shinto kind of vibes, right? Which was not really a religion.

They honor their ancestors. So it's a little more Buddhist in nature. Not traditional religion, but in Ikaria, in Sardinia, and in Guanacaste, You know they have more that Christian background.

That tended to be a central pillar for many them. But of course in Loma Linda, which is kind of a blue zone, it's obviously important. The Seventh Day Adventist is really the community in that area that was really known for their longevity.

It's interesting because there's great research by Christopher Ellison, who used to be at the University of Texas. I think he's at University Texas San Antonio now.

about the health benefits of religion. Those who go to church regularly, especially black Americans who got to a black church with the great music, they have tremendous health benefit.

There's community benefits to it. Reductions in depression and anxiety. Something called God control. If you believe that God is control of your life, how does that affect your mental health?

Well, as you mentioned, people are like, well, I'm here as long as I am here. You know, God's in control and I like living, so I'm here as long as God chooses and it's not up to me.

And that's shown to be related to a reduction in depression and stress because people believe that a higher power is kind of responsible for their life and guiding their lives.

Yeah, and you know I didn't grow up in the church. I would say I've become more religious and spiritual as I got older. And so I think, you know, staying away from, is there an aspect of like religion itself?

I can't say. But what I could say is all the elements that are related to religious practice are beneficial. And I thinks science has proven that. Modern science is overwhelmingly shown this, right?

Even to things like meditation. So meditation and prayer, so we know the benefits there. You know community, of course. Letting go. Right. I'm not in control of this, um, forgiveness, right.

And these are central pillars in some religions in particular, in more of the Catholic and Christian religions, this idea of repentance and forgiveness.

Um, you know, uh, these, and then of course fasting. So there's even sort of modern practices that are weaved in. And even in the indigenous cultures that I have come to know, they view some of these things as spiritual payments.

So fasting is a spiritual payment. Right? And so however you want to look at these, it just seems that no matter what the culture, there is these practices, that we've been to the religion, we we weave into the Indigenous societies that kind of universal.

There's a little bit of crossover and a bit differences. It's all the same stuff and now we're we've seen it in the biohacking movement in and the Western societies as well.

So Yeah, it seems to be very obvious to me that that following a religious Approach is good for your health. It is obvious. Its it's supported by the data.

I have some very smart friends and family members people who I love who are stubbornly Atheists yeah, and I'll say to them and one of them is a lawyer who's also kind of an engineer He does patent work say look you're a smart person your beliefs that there's nothing beyond your physical self and that There's no God It's shown in the research that that lowers your life expectancy.

So you can either, let's say there's no God, you have to be wrong and believe in God and live a longer life, or you could be right and believed in no god and lived a shorter life.

Like what bucket are you going to choose? Consciously choosing this one your beliefs which are not supported by the data. By the way, I mean talk to anyone This is a friend of mine at Burning Man talked to him in a camp about a spiritual experience They will tell you something that does not make sense just regarding regular probability and statistics so there's something beyond this this meat this meatsuit that's affecting our lives and affecting Our experience here on planet earth and you not seeing it is actually First of all, it's purposely ignoring the data on people's spiritual experiences.

Number two, It's hurting your lifespan. It makes no sense to me. I don't know if you know any stubborn atheists that regardless of how much- Yeah, yeah.

Yeah. And I used to be more, I would say, in that camp, right? It was more scientific, logical. The religious didn't make sense, and the other stories.

Where I've landed is actually all my experiences throughout life has pointed me toward A higher power, a creator. Now, I will never push any of you on anybody else and say I know the answer here, but what I would say is that the more that I've looked at biology and the complexity of humans, the points to me, to a Creator.

So it's like, if somebody doesn't believe in God, well, you haven't studied biology enough. The other comes from

physics. This is more of my background in the engineering and physics world.

you know, the laws of physics, biology defies the law of the physics. In other words, we organize. We organize and we create coherence and structure and complexify.

This is the opposite. So in other words, life, the life itself is opposite of what physics tells us everything should be. What is that? What does that opposing force that allows for this organizational complexity, that allow us for elegance to show up, for things to continue to move forward?

I think it was Terrence McKenna who kind of pointed at like, The science will just say, give me one miracle and I'll explain the rest. And it's totally accurate.

It's like, well, how did anything really get to this level of complexity? I have a hard time believing that there's not something really intelligent at the source.

Life's absolutely miraculous. This feels like the most important conversation. So I am hesitating to supplement. Well, actually, I want to go technology.

Technology, what is the role of technology, both good and bad? There's the phones, the iPads, screens, computers, all of it. But there's also neural feedback.

How do we navigate our relationship with technology to live longer, healthier, more joyful.

Technology, Biohacking, and the Limits of Control

I actually think this is a pretty interesting segue because it actually gets to the heart of God, creator, technology, technocrat. And this was one of the reasons that we created the Human Longevity Project.

What I saw was this idea and this desire to live forever. Aging is a disease, aging doesn't need to exist, we can live for ever. And I thought, God, who wants to life forever?

That sounds awful to me, right? And so part of it was the sort of Silicon Valley approach to aging and to disease and life. And so how do we preserve these wisdoms and the traditions and their reality of sort of biological life and also welcome in and usher in this technological revolution that's happening, right?

And we see it in regenerative medicine. I mean, we've seen amazing things that are happening. And I'm so excited for the next 20 years when it comes to these biologics, right?

When it come to stem cell therapies and, you know, some of these natural things like DMSO, that require dimethyl sulfoxide. So organic. Molecule like it's totally organic really really effective for detoxification for pain for cancer Yeah, is this a supplement is from food.

Yeah. It's a supplements a something that you can take it and usually people take in the form of MSM mostly because MSN doesn't make you stink and If you take a lot of DMSO, you can put it on your skin.

You'll actually start to smell like garlic and maybe even worse. I actually got an IV injection recently. It's actually illegal in the States to get IV.

The FDA will not allow it. Yeah, our government likes to restrict things to make you healthy. And this is so organic. It's literally just organic molecules.

That's not a synthetic thing at all. Your body knows what to do with it. You actually make it in the body. Again, it makes you really stink. My wife, she smelled me.

She was coming into the garage, just like, oh my God, I smelled you from the garbage. I was like sorry. So, but

anyway, this stuff, and it was, it, was used back in the seventies.

Athletes would use this, um, for, uh, pain management. So you can take it. You can get it orally, you could take a topically, or you take an intravenously.

People do bladder installations of it? Yeah, You take suppositories. Anywhere you put it like your body will accept it on your skin if you want to detox your.

Yeah. And you have to dilute it a little bit. Um, people will do it over the liver sometimes with a castor oil pack. Yeah, it's really cool. So my point is with some of these things, like DMSO and EDTA, there's a whole host of things that we can look at.

But it requires maybe a little bit of technology, whether it is IV or whether some other stem cell technology that were using. We're using light, UV light and red light in very interesting ways.

My view is that going forward, we're going to use things like the healing methods of the future are light electricity, magnetism, and sound. So to me, those are the, these, this gets into biophysics and we're starting to learn how to use these intelligently in the body.

These get below the molecular sort of level, the billiard ball understanding, The Einsteinian reality that we have, that, we've, We have laid or rather the Newtonian Reality that We've laid down.

And so how do we use These things intelligibly? in accordance with life's principles. That becomes the question when we start talking about nanobots and we'd start about these, these injections of God knows what, because technology has gotten so microscopic.

This has me, you know, Neuralink, right? The we're starting to get into some really interesting questions. Um, and so I think the guiding principle has to be, um, It has to come from a moral place.

We have to understand who we are, what we, are be very, very cautious of some of these places that we step into this sort of singularity that people like to talk about.

I don't know that that's really what most people want. In my view, there's a beauty in the finite arc of life. Knowing that we are going to die is what allows us to sort of have this preciousness, right?

Knowing I'm essentially as healthy and young looking as I'll ever be today is a really important thing to meditate and recognize within ourselves. that this is as good as it gets.

Enjoy it. You know, recognize that everything fades, right? We get into sort of Buddhist philosophy, nothing is permanent. This is to me a better way to go throughout life, to enjoy the sweetness of the present moment.

So I think we have to just be very careful of the technologies that we use, right? They become essentially very sharp swords, they have two edges to them and they can cut us really bad, or they could be used for good.

And so it's really a cautious approach that I we ought to take. And I think people are waking up to that. I Think, you know, the last five years have shown us some of the benefits and maybe the disadvantages of modern technology and what we're doing.

Just because we can create some interesting things, with CRISPR technology, and we create designer babies now. This is phones, right? The impact of having our phone with us all the time, of social media, computers and screens.

What was the relationship? These exist in the world and you're going to these long-lived communities. Did they have phones? Did the have TVs? What were the relationships with technology like?

I mean, look, it's really interesting. I think I was my age group and I'm 44, was kind of the last group to graduate

high school without cell phones. So I remember the old world, right?

And these kids, my kid who's five, he's never gonna know reality without artificial intelligence. Like this is weird, so your question is very important.

And in these older lived populations, Again, they didn't have electricity, didn' have screens. They didn have cars that they relied upon, no refrigeration.

So they operated with the natural cycles of the earth, right? When the sun went down, I asked them, what do you do when the Sun goes down? Oftentimes, this is in Costa Rica, they'd work in the fields and the women would pick off bugs from the guys.

So this was almost like apes. And so they would just pick of the bugs and they tell stories. And then go to bed. And that was it. When you compare that to our reality now, very, different.

Now, how do we measure or understand the implications of these things? In some ways, we have no way to quantify these. We're just now starting to see the ramifications of what social media and screens and phones looks like for our teenagers, right?

And we're seeing higher rates of depression, anxiety, especially in women. We're saying, uh, eating disorders, we are seeing self harm, Right? We are saying drug use, suicides, like this is, these are all ramping up dramatically with the use of these technologies.

So, There's, I don't think there's any way to predict what's going to happen going forward. Uh, we're going have to navigate these things as they come.

But I think the way we do that is from a frame of reference. This first principles that we are, We are from nature. We cannot escape nature's principles.

This is fundamental and Ayurveda really helped me drill a lot of this in that we must operate on these cycles. So even people that work in, you know, swing shifts or any kind of overnight shift work, we see all cause mortality increase dramatically, right?

We see hormonal imbalances, autoimmune conditions, cancers, dementia, Alzheimer's, everything skyrockets because we're not sleeping at the right time of day.

There is no way around it that we, we must, uh, yoke ourselves to the sun. We must entrain to solar cycle. And if we don't, there are ramifications. These are nature's rules and there's really no.

Way around. It, and we can try all these hacks and try to do all of these things. Right? We fly across the world and speak at different conferences and visit people and then.

We think that, oh, that's okay. Our circadian rhythm is just going to catch up. We call it jet lag and it'll be fine. Just a few days. This like dramatic impact on your health.

The immune system goes down. And we see it, we get sick, right? Uh, We make poor food choices. So these things we cannot avoid. we just deal with them.

and so the more that we can understand that. Part of nature that must stick to nature's rules. Um, the better we engage with these technologies. So what recommendations do you have for people here in the United States?

Let's imagine we're policy makers. It seems it'd be a good idea to honor the elderly and also give them something to do. So instead of retiring to Florida, I live in Florida.

A lot of very nice retired people there who play a fair amount of tennis and don't do much else. Giving these

people something do, giving them mission and purpose, and then our circadian rhythms sync those up with the sun.

What do recommend? individuals do or if you could redesign society, what would you do? Would you break all the Edison lights and so that way we all have to be home by dark so we're in bed?

Well, it's actually interesting that you bring this up because before wandering into the integrated functional medicine world, I was a mechanical engineer and specifically energy efficiency engineer.

And some of the things that we did was to actually replace the old lighting in street lighting with new modern LEDs. Everyone does and they're horrible for your health.

And what's interesting is where we're at in this sort of North County, San Diego area, I remember coming down here and seeing these big bright orange, like deep orange lights.

I'm like, ah, that's what we need.

Circadian Rhythms, Elder Care, and Community Design

So these are some of the things that the progression that we are making in an effort to save energy is actually harming our health and the other thing that would do in schools is we'd put CO2 sensors in.

So in other words, we allow the CO2 in the, in a classroom to rise to a certain point. And then as that we hit that upper limit of the co2 known for health, then we'd open the outside air dampers in our, you know, our units to bring in more outside.

That was all in an effort because outside is typically colder or hotter and it has to be conditioned, which requires energy. So this is an energy efficiency measure.

We were doing all of these things in that world. and that was the crossover point where I was starting to learn about health. I'm like, Oh my God, everything I am doing.

is harming people. Because you keep people from opening the windows. Well, they do that anyway. This is the funny thing, is that human behavior is human behaviors.

So you can try all these electronics and these control systems and we do, that complicated. And then people would open a window and they're like, crap, we're losing all our energy savings.

We're, like don't do. But the point is, all of this was in an effort to save energy as this green movement. And so that was a big sort of, aha, wake up call for me at like a choice point that I had to make.

It's like, I can't keep doing this because I know that it's actually doing damage to people. So I think this energy efficiency thing is, it contradicts a lot of the elements of health that.

But honestly, the first thing I would do is get rid of daylight savings time. It's such an obvious one. 100% of the people are in favor of this. There's no reason for it.

We see it harms health by switching this time, even an hour. So that's number one, super easy. But to your point with the elderly, what we noticed in like Okinawa specifically was that they have these elderly care facilities that have different levels of care.

If you're 70, 80, 90, you might be in that facility, Um, but then there was these people that, that are in there locally. So there might be like an 85 year old that was able to take care of herself, which she'd come in for, um, for some level of care.

Maybe it was a bath or something, or maybe it's just a hangout. And so this became like a central hub for these old people to hang out. They were doing dancing.

In fact, they think. They invited me on stage to do some dress up and dancing with them. Um, they did karaoke, They did these movement things. So they were always kind of playing.

It was like a community center of old people. And I just haven't seen that in the United States, right? I know Heather's got an amazing facility that incorporates more of this intentional way of, of caring for the elderly, but it doesn't, you know, every old person that I now, and I've had a couple of grandparents that, It's like, they don't want to go into these homes.

That's, like a death sentence, right? And of course the food that we're feeding them and just the way that they are, it's a hospital type of setting, and if you're entering a hospitals setting at 75, What does that do for your life?

You know, like it's just every time. And again, this isn't all of them, I'm sure, but the ones that I've been into the West, they just feel depressing.

They just. In the, in the people there are amazing, by the way, the caregivers are, are. But it. The way that they're structured and the ways that are set up.

So to me, it was like, how do we integrate the elderly into a place that, that. Like suits them and that actually brings some vitality in life. And hopefully it's integrated into the younger populations, because we see that the young people benefit from being around old people, right?

The wisdom that they can pass on. And of course, the old actually even just being just around younger people start to express younger genetics. Their genetics start express as if they were 15, 20 years younger.

So I think we can do a better job of that. And it's not my realm. I don't know how, but I just know that the what and it really does need to happen. So there's an interesting community in Florida.

It's called the villages. Don't if you've heard of the villagers. They are famous for having. golf carts that have some sort of communication that let people know about their availability for sexual relationships.

And so there's a variety of colors that says like, hey, I'm new to this. Or I am interested in learning. One of them is like yeah, open for anything. So they all have their golf cart.

They're all driving around. This is 55 plus people. Nice place in Florida. It's not too far from Disney World. Like an hour outside of Orlando. And so there's a community of people there who are mostly retired, and that's the thing.

Everyone's driving out with a golf cart with the flag showing where they are on this section. I'm down. Right, right. What's your level of down from kind of to, oh yeah.

Full on. This is great, so sex, play, art. creativity, exploring new things, curiosity. These are all related to our youth. And we kind of lose these things.

Right. In our documentary film series, I forgot who it was that said it. Maybe Dr. Matthew Curso, who's down in the sort of, Atlanta area. He said, you know, it seems to me that the whole point is that we're trying to get back to a child.

And I think that that is true. It's like the real wisdom is as we get older, how much closer can we become to a child, be childlike, right? The curiosity, the wonder, play, openness, non-judgment, ability to be fluid with our emotions and our mindset to fully cry and then be back to joy, that's what we want to get to.

And so much, and I've noticed it myself, as you get old, we go the opposite direction. We get more serious, more cynical. Right. We get more tired and bored.

Right? I mean, I've been to so many countries around the world. That's like, how do you excite somebody when you've done so. So many things, right? So this is, this becomes a challenge that as we get older into our eighties and nineties, like how did we inspire life at that point?

And I think this was a fantastic way, totally unconventional. I have never heard of it, but I love it. They're breaking the mold. Yeah, there's a lot of ways to rethink that phase of life and what the environment that we create is.

Is it a place that seniors want to be, right? That sounds compelling, that sounds joyful, it sounds engaging. And I think at The Villages, I love it. It's fun and exciting, but I I feel like the people who I've talked to who have lived there, they lack purpose and meaning.

There's sort of a, I'm going to kick my feet up and be retired. I am not going work anymore. Im going play tennis or golf or whatever it is and have sex.

Just vacation. And I think that we miss something with that. We need those bicep curls, we need to lean into some challenge still. And I don't, I didn't claim to have it all figured out.

I think duty, like, so whatever that looks like. Right. And this would be in the village setting, the grandparents would. Their duty was to actually look after the grandchildren, right.

Or even the great grandchildren depending on where you're at. So I. Think some sense of duty in that, especially the, that would say the men that I've talked to that are older, they still have a mission, this one guy in Costa Rica.

He was in his nineties. It looked great. And he, his whole, like what he loved to do was just go out into the fields and the various places with a machete and just chop things down.

Right. There's like a teenager, right? He just, but that was his role and it was physical. it served a purpose with what, what they were doing. And it had value to him.

Right. So this, I think is correct. Like we need some kind of work, some of duty. And I guess this gets back to the religion topic as well. This is a big, big aspect of many religions.

It's the sense of. Duty and work. How important it is for human health and flourishing. I. Think having whatever that is, and it can be creative. Can be somebody who picks up art and learns to paint.

It can be anything that has to do with whatever you really love to, but that intersection of love and duty, I think can really be critical of that period.

This theme in India, they call it dharma, right? In Hawaii, where I grew up, it's kuleana. It's this idea that there's purpose, there is some duty that you're designed to show up and do in your life and to maintain that as we age that helps us connect to that youthful presence.

You have worked with indigenous cultures around the world and as we age neuroplasticity is something that we all aspire to and psychedelics are something you've done some work around.

I'm curious what you learned about this connection between aging, brain health and the role of psychedelic in that. Yeah, it's an interesting realm that is full of many rabbit holes.

We're taking a different approach in the West, right? With psychedelics, we're using things like MDMA, psilocybin, ketamine. These are becoming popular in a sort of therapeutic setting.

I think there's value there. It helps us to open up to certain aspects of our reality, certain aspect of ourselves that we may have been missing, may been blind to.

So it can be very valuable in showing us a little bit more about what's happening under the hood. Some of the

unconscious processes and the beliefs and, the way we view reality in ourself.

So in that way, it, can shift things tremendously for us. Kind of like, you know, Dorothy landing in Oz. It's like okay, this is what reality looks like.

it's different than I thought. And this can be a specific reality or reality as a whole. So I think in that way, it's invaluable. There are so many elements to this world.

You know, um, would I, what I've sort of come to appreciate more is the indigenous ways of using these plant medicines. Things like ayahuasca, things like, Um, San Pedro or Wachuma, you know.

Uh, peyote. They're used in a different way than how we're using the psilocybin and MDMA and these types of things. Um. I don't. Boy, it's so, so big, this topic that we're trying to study it in the West.

Right. And I love it. It's almost like, um, I view it at us as children. We're like cute little children kind of trying study this thing.

Psychedelics, Ayahuasca, and Spiritual Insight

Nevertheless, we're learning stuff, but when you hang out with the indigenous and learn some of their wisdoms, the depth of understanding of these things and how, how much it impacts who we are and.

How it can be used in a positive way is so vast. Um, one of my teachers, uh, from Columbia, he says that, um, you don't know ayahuasca until you've drank it for a hundred years.

And that came from his teacher, who was 110 years old, still drinking and serving ayahuasca. Can you share your experience on ayahusca? Yeah. If you've taken that medicine.

Yeah, I've taking it many times. And it completely opened me up. Like it shattered my view of reality of what I think this is. Um, and it showed me that there is something divine, that, there's something beyond this material aspect of who I am.

Some people don't need ayahuasca to understand that. I did apparently. And, and, once I recognized that I was able to operate differently. Um, there's different forms of ayahuska.

So, um, it can be called many different names. Uh, uh, ambiwaska, ayawaska, Um. Yeah. Hey, There's. Different forms and different. Names depending on where it comes from.

um And it, It can even include different sort of plants, right? It's generally a combination of two plants. The ayahuasca vine itself, and then a DMT-containing plant, a leaf, the chacruna can be many different sources.

And they have different effects depending on what's used, depending upon the intention of the practitioner. So the person serving ayhuascas is very much like a doctor.

And they are guiding the experience and how it affects you. So it's not like. If I have, if I had two cups of Ayahuasca from the same batch and I serve them to both of you, and in other words, I'm delivering the medicine, the Ayahua is the vehicle for the.

It isn't the itself per se. It is the vehicle for the medicine and the doctor is prescribing the medicines via this, this cup. And I can give a different medicine to you and a difference medicine do you, even though it's the same substance, eventhough it is same liquid, I could be giving two very different things to each of you.

Of course you have intentions. So now there's an intersection of my intention for you your intention, for and some might even say the ayahuasca intention.

For you so now we're starting to get into this very weird realm of how this stuff works. And so the way you come into it is really, really important. Of course, all your karmas and past histories and all the things that you're bringing in.

But the practitioner is very important, and so this is why I think the indigenous cultures and the wisdoms are so important how, who you're, we're receiving this from because there's a lot of people in the West now serving ayahuasca, a little Westerners.

And I think that's fantastic. Just recognize the level of care that you are getting from each person is going to be vastly different. I don't mean this person's going cause harm necessarily.

There is that, there, that risk too. So there is an element of sort of safety on a energetic, biological, spiritual level that is there. But also the levels of, um, Like how, how much healing can be done?

So the skill level of the person serving, like I said, they're the doctor and the vehicle is the ayahuasca. And so they actually. In relation to you during the process.

So how healing and, uh, How much can they cut through the nonsense to give you what you're looking for? That depends on the persons serving. Uh, it's a very deep world.

They can also target different aspects of their nervous system so that they can target the enteric nervous. with certain brews and certain mixtures and.

Intentions, and they can target the heart nervous system. They can talk, target, the central nervous. And they could target that peripheral nervous and I realized that one time I'm like, Oh my God, do you guys know what you're doing?

You're hitting all four. Like, yeah, we know. I was like. Oh, my god. I thought I was really smart bringing my Western knowledge into their, you know, uh, ancient stuff and like, yeah, we know how this works, and they view the gut as this rainforest.

They view it as more complex and more, um, vast than the stars. So they know just like Ayurveda, just Chinese medicine, it's like we pat ourselves on the back in the West.

you know, about how much we're learning and discovering about the gut and all these things in the brain. They've known this stuff for so long. And it's through these types of experiences that they say that the plants taught them.

Um, and so it, it it a very fascinating world. It, I think the value of when it comes to longevity and health comes from the waking up to who you are, to the reality of yourself and how you're integrated in this web of, of nature.

And so it, it. If you drink it enough, you continue to get pulled more and more into nature. You start to appreciate nature, and you start. Feel the subtleties of nature started to become in tune with foods, with the cycles, timing with reality.

So when I say reality, It's like deep, deep nature reality and. And you know, what's funny in the West, like. What do I eat? What's the best diet? Like we're so far removed from our own nature that we have no clue how to, how, to feel into what is good for me.

And that's what this stuff does. It draws you back into yourself and into reality in terms of nature so that you know how you behave. You know, in fact, there's a common experience on ayahuasca, right?

The ego death or the death. And this has happened to me many times. Um, and it's a really weird experience to, to go through death. And, um, I came out of one experience and I said, is this what ayahuasca is?

It's getting good at death, get it good and dying so that when the real death comes, you you're experienced in this.

and my teacher kind of laughed and he said.

No, it's so that you get good at life and death is just a part of life. And of course, as soon as you said it, I was like, Oh my God, what a dumb question.

Obviously that's what it is. Right. But it was, um, but it sort of took that, that little lesson for me to recognize that that what is it. It's teaching you how to live life now.

Look, ayahuasca is one path. It's not the only path to learn how to truly live life, right? There's the Buddhist path, there's that the Vedic path. There is the Christian path there are so many different paths that we can walk.

So it's, not only one, but for me, it has been such an integral part of my reality, how I show up in the world and how understand health. Most people I talk to about ayahuasca don't understand that it is one of the oldest spiritual practices on planet Earth.

It predates written history. And so, you know, people will say, I belong to this church or this religion that dates back, 2000, 3000, 5000 years. Like this thing predate all of this.

I kind of view those who practice, who use ayahuasca in a traditional way and many of those traditions are so old. That's like the original spiritual practice is we got these two plants.

The plant said, hey, humans, mix these together and drink this tea and you'll have an interesting experience. They did like, whoa, this is cool. I mean, that gets down to the origins that many people have wondered about.

Like, how did you discover this? You took chacruna, this leafy plant, and you took this vine that, you know, gets pretty big, relatively perfect ratios.

It doesn't have to be perfect. The likelihood of that happening at random is exceptionally low with all the plants in the Amazon. Exactly. So how did one finally stumble across this?

And we can say it's intuition. They say that the plant's taught them. There's all these stories about how it originated. And I don't think we in The West really know.

I think they may have an understanding in their cultures. I agree. I think my perspective is that this was the fundamental religion, is it these plants and these experiences, whether it was mushrooms, there's the ergot, and there are so many of these things.

And in fact, you can study the historical nature of the psychedelics, these plant medicines in Buddhism, in Vedic culture. in pre-Christian religions, right?

It's all ancient stuff. In fact, you can actually, there's still churches today in Europe that have murals of, look to be pretty obviously mushrooms. It is in Egypt, so these are everywhere.

Paul Stamets talked about that. A friend of mine went to Egypt with Paul stamets on a really cool trip, and Paul's pointing at the Egyptian hieroglyphics, like look, those are mushrooms, this is part of their religious ceremony.

And it seems obvious to me, having experienced a lot of these, that it's almost like if I didn't know anything about religions and I went and had these experiences that I've had, I would have come to the conclusion that God exists and that there's a creator.

So it sparked a religious understanding naturally within me without all the pretense and the stories. So, yes, I actually believe this is probably the origins of many of our modern religions and spiritual practices.

And it can be achieved without, as I think that the plants were our original teachers, you could say. Then we understood, okay, we can use drumming. That'll actually get us into hypnotic trance as well.

So we achieve the same results without these drugs, without the plant medicines. We can drum to achieve these results because we produce DMT. We are the drug, right?

And then we figured out, I don't know the timeline here, but we also figured that we could spin. The whirling dervishes do this. They produce DMT that way and get into altered states that.

That's the practice by the Sufi. We've figured out all these things and of course we've got other traditions in Asia, various traditions that we can get into altered states.

So this is me surmising and putting the piece together that the plants were probably our original teachers. We figured out we can get into these states through meditation, through yoga, breathwork, chanting, drumming, spinning.

So we figured all these ways to get to that same place. And what's interesting is that we universally around the world recognize that there's a value to getting there.

I actually think that a lot of the churches, the Catholic churches probably in particular, they were built in such a way that the acoustics are really interesting.

So in the Gregorian chants and the chanting and singing and organs produced sounds in a such way to help alter these states. The acoustical engineers have gone into some of these old buildings and said, well look, it's actually all focusing on the congregation.

It all seems to be pointing to this idea that we can alter our state and it's valuable. Why is it valuable? Because it helps us understand who we are, our place in this world, and how to behave in a sort of organized, cohesive fashion that facilitates, that is pro-life, right?

That really is facilitating life and vitality within us. So if something has survived thousands of years, and is seen across the world. It's a pretty good bet that it's good for you.

Right. I would say music, these plant medicines. Uh, sleeping sex, right? Like it's these basic things, the sun, Right. Um, breath works, you know, You see this in various traditions.

Do you can count on those? You know? Will we see, um, Red light therapy in its current form for thousands of years. Maybe, maybe not. Right? I'm not saying it.

I just saying, go back to the fundamental things. This is why I say that I think the healing of the future is going to come from electricity, sound, magnetism.

These are so fundamental to who we are and how we operate in this world. I think we're going to figure out really creative ways to use those. So I mean, I love the plant medicine world I've learned so much from it.

It has guided my experience. Um, it's even in those experiences I have learned more about health and biology and, um, and some of these sort of, uh, integrative concepts that I, that have sort picked up and adopted.

Amazing. Jason, as always, such a pleasure to talk to you, to catch up with you to learn what is getting you pumped and excited these days. Thank you so much for your time and for joining us today.

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