Introduction and Background

Dr. Ewers, welcome back. It is such a pleasure to get to chat with you again. You're one of my favorite people to have a conversation with, so. Welcome.

Thank you. It's so great to be here. And likewise. Okay. So first of all, you have a very, very interesting background, a very diverse background. You've done a lot of different stuff.

You've been involved in trauma, in psychotherapy. You are a deaf dula, which I think is super cool and is a really important aspect of I think it's a really important aspect of of human life that we are really neglecting in the modern Western world.

And so I think it's amazing that you've gone deep in that area. Tell us your story. I want people to hear your background and how you came to do what you do.

Mm hmm. Well, like everyone, there's always a reason, right? So I started out as a as an r n at the age of 19, and I was kind of pulled towards the high adrenaline junkie, sort of life in the ICU and did a lot of skydiving and marathon running in that decade of my life.

And then I got diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and I was in my early thirties. I'd had four children and I was in that like trying to be perfect wife, perfect mother, perfect everything.

People pleasing all things. I had no self-awareness around. I didn't know what drove me, what motivated me. I was just doing it. And when I got diagnosed with an autoimmune disease that was in my genetics, my grandfather had been wheelchair bound with it and died. At the age I am right now.

I'm 58. And, you know, I thought, oh, okay. I, you know, I all of a sudden had to become self aware. And then it went on that Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, the the physician that diagnosed me and gave me a couple prescriptions for methotrexate, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug and said, when you get worse, come back.

And I just remember saying, well, hang on. Is there anything else? I'm very disciplined. I make my own food, you know, is there anything else I can do is said now it's genetic.

And so I remember driving home thinking there has to be something else here. And it's not in my framework of medicine. And so let's start exploring. And I went on to pub Med and quickly found yoga in Vedic medicine and started practicing bowls and realized quite quickly when I learned that diabetes as autoimmunity, as undigested anger, which was quite revolutionary to me, what you have to digest your emotions, your memories, your experiences, your thoughts, you know, in the same way that you digest food.

We don't think about that in our culture in that same way and that how we do that. If we do it well, we develop healthy tissue layers. If we don't, we don't.

And it was just so intelligent what I was reading. And I thought, okay, well, I'm not an angry person. And then after that, that followed was, well, maybe that's a problem.

The fact that I don't recognize anger and that I start running shoes on and go and pound it out. So that got me to start really investigating. Autoimmunity means I'm an attacking my own self.

That means I'm killing myself in a societally accepted manner. When did I want to die? You know? And that was a really good question, because at the time I didn't and I thought there must've been somewhere along the way that I told myself that I want out.

And so as I had learned, I'd started meditating and I decided to go backwards in my my little life stream of

memories and see if there was a time that I had wanted to die anywhere in there.

And I found this ten year old little girl version of myself who was being sexually abused by the vice principal of my elementary school. And as I looked at her, I thought, Oh, you did one off the planet.

You didn't understand what was going on, didn't have the right language to tell people. Tried to tell people, my dad was out to sea in the Navy. You know, and I just probably didn't have the right words.

I was raised with no TV. I just didn't I was very naive, didn't know anything. And so I remember thinking, you know, I was busy talking to angels. I was out in spiritual realms at that age trying to figure things out and really didn't really want to be on this planet.

And I thought I put these things are connected.

Defining Trauma and Stress

I'll bet that something in my cells made it and said, okay, you know, and science tells us it takes you 20 to 30 years to develop a full blown autoimmune disease, which was about time.

And so I thought is like a turkey timer went off and me my genetics upregulated that we're coded for this particular disease and it's like if you want out here you go and and I just turn everything.

But that's not my reality anymore. And so I must have to do some work here and started diving really deeply into that. And my R. A. was done within six months.

So, you know, and my vitality returned everything back that I had had, but also a whole lot of self awareness. And so that set me on this track of, hmm, I bet there's a different way to work with relieving the suffering of all beings that does not involve matching a drug to a symptom.

Let's go explore that. And so I always tell people whenever someone's come into my practice and stomp the chump, the chump goes back to school. So that's why I have a array of letters behind my name.

Is this because they're trying to figure things out? Yeah, well, you know, I'm I'm somewhat on that spectrum. I have I don't have a lot of letters on on the back side of my last name, but I have a lot of years of schooling that went into it.

I went to medical school for two years, decided I didn't want to do that. It was disgusting to me to be in to in an internal medicine ward and seeing patients with heart disease and diabetes and other diseases of lifestyle being fed a garbage diet, being taught nothing about nutrition or lifestyle.

When we know, you know, for example, with diabetes, the condition can be reversed in a matter of weeks or months by altering diet. And to see someone there in the hospital receiving zero education on.

The red just. Described, you know on 12 or 15 different drugs, one drug after another, seeing these patients come in, you know, a month later, getting a new drug for a new side effect from another drug. And it just seemed mad to me and I was like, you know what this is?

This is not for me. I'm out of here. I did a PhD program in clinical psychology, completed all three years of coursework for that, and then decided that I wanted to go do my own thing teaching people about nutrition and lifestyle.

And so I didn't I didn't do the dissertation and internship years for that and then did a master's degree in human nutrition and functional medicine. So I have all these years of school without all the letters.

After my. Answer letters. I mean, that's the thing, right? Is you just my dissertation happened to be a study on what

the impact of unresolved trauma is on female sexual desire.

And it turns out it's very similar to if your note heal your trauma hair, things that also happen with your immune system, you know. And so my dissertation was interesting to me.

I would never finish the things I finished if I weren't interested. So bravo to you are for not just, like, slugging and slogging through something that you didn't believe in because the impact you're having in the world is so much greater.

Had you not done it this way and gone through internal medicine, for sure. Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, it's all it's all part of the story. And it was good, good learnings and good experience and wisdom for me along the way for sure.

So let's talk about what trauma is. So can you can you define this word? Because I think there's so much discussion now of trauma. And I think in the younger generation, it's we now have a culture in the youngest generation of adolescents and teenagers that I would say is almost obsessed with trauma.

And yet I would imagine that if I took any of those people and actually asked them what trauma is, I would probably object to most of their definitions.

So I'm curious how, given your vast experience in this area, how do you define trauma? That's a great question. And, you know, the same generation is bandying about the word narcissist, too.

And, you know, I my dissertation had a lot to do around forgiveness and people can't really define forgiveness very well either. So I think this is a fantastic place to start.

The way that I define drama is that, you go through an event in life that you don't have the skill set to manage, and it's overwhelming. And so that can be a capital T trauma, it can be a lowercase T trauma.

It's why some people come out of capital T traumas or gigantic natural disasters or war, and they have a different way of being in their nervous system, in their body, in their genetic expression.

Then another person that has the same exact event. So this just happens to be does it match your skill set of being able to manage it, to navigate it?

It's going to be traumatic if you don't have it. Mm hmm. That's that's a very simple way of putting it. And I think I think if we can dig a little deeper here, there's an important distinction, because I find a lot of people have a misconception around this and they have kind of a bad relationship with stress and with adversity, where stress and adversity become these things to to fear.

Yeah. And that that oh, god, you know, God forbid we might encounter some adversity because that would be really bad. We would suffer. It would be bad for us, it would be stressful for us.

Or the parallel from the the wellness and functional medicine side of this is like stress is bad, stress harms your physiology. And I think what we're missing in this story is, yes, of course, there there's very serious kinds of of trauma that leave a very lasting impact when it when it exceeds a person's capacity to to handle it.

And it's also true that adversity is what shapes us into stronger and wiser people. And we shouldn't wish for a life without adversity, like no one becomes their fullest, grows into their fullest potentials and capacities by sitting on a beach, sipping margaritas in a totally stressed and adversity, free life.

We and the attachment and wish for that is actually a big cause of suffering. Yes. Yes. So what what? There's such a thing as post-traumatic stress disorder.

There's also such a thing as post-traumatic growth. Yes. How would you distinguish between those? What's the

difference. In the hurt model, the healing, unresolved trauma work that I did in 2013?

There's this initial loop that happens where you have an event here, you have a feeling that happens in your body, whether it's fear, anger, sadness, whatever it is, and then you're going to have a nervous system.

Upregulation We always say fight, flight, freeze or faint, but in childhood it's freeze. Usually you're not you're not autonomous, you're not powerful.

It freezes, and then you make the meaning immediately to fit whatever just happened with a brain that in childhood doesn't have a fully developed prefrontal cortex.

So you're going to be operating from the developmental state you're at at that moment. So that then gets frozen in your system, creates a belief, and then you have an adaptive behavior that you create to go with that in that moment later on, when that button's pushed again and again and again in adulthood, when you do get through more developmental states, you have a fully developed prefrontal cortex.

There's a bifurcation in that model where over here it says willingness to self confront.

Adversity, Parenting, and Resilience

Over here, it says unwillingness to confront post-traumatic stress disorder will continue in this looping of maladaptive memory processing, where you get the same feeling you had, you have the same meaning to it.

I'm not safe. Whatever it is that happened with your meaning and your belief, and then you're going to go into your now maladaptive behavior response system, automatic negative thoughts that ruminate and loop judgments that those things will all lead to disease eventually because that cortisol breaking down, you know, you know the drill.

So that's post-traumatic stress disorder. When you have willingness to self confront with curious compassion, with an ability to have enough self-awareness, is that you can recognize every time I'm unhappy, I'm present.

Maybe there's something here and a willingness and a desire to, instead of being living an adverse free life, to say, oh, bring it every single time that I learn something is because I've gone through this cycle and I've come out on the other end with a new skill set.

I've integrated it and now I have an expertize there with a knowledge that life is going to give you another one soon, right? When you have that like here's the capital t truth of life.

Hey, that you can you can't have attachment aversion to suffering because as part of life or attachment to your happiness or everyone that's in your life is going to remain there permanently or your house will be permanent or your financial status will be permanent.

These are called the three poisons in Buddhism. You know that you you have an ignorance, that there's impermanence when you can enter into life in the stream that acknowledges the reality in these capital t t truths, things will die.

Everything that is born hatches, you know, is planted. Everything we can see right now in our screens, it will all turn to dust and die. That's that's a life reality that we're never presented with when we're children.

And so when you enter into that stream of truths, then you get into a place where you are excited about post-traumatic growth. You know, that's the difference.

It's a willingness to self confront and a willingness to integrate. Those two words are so powerful and without them, it doesn't happen. Post-Traumatic growth.

You can have all kinds like this is in the plant medicine world now. Right. It's a lot of people will have spiritual

experiences and insights and breakthroughs, but then they don't do the integration process and there's no growth that happens, no transformation like in spiral dynamics moving into the next level because they're taking their developmental state viewing from that perception that's always been there and not understanding that that perceptual field needs to broaden and change.

And that's what the whole use of plant medicine is for, not just for you to have pretty experience with a download or an inspiration that then goes out through your nervous system like a sieve if you don't have a stabilized nervous system to hold it and a willingness to say, All right, here we go.

Next level. Yeah. So that's part of post-traumatic growth. Very nice. There's an expression this is a bit male centric. I don't know who said this, but it's a it's a it's a circular thing.

And it says hard times create strong men. Strong men create good times. Good times create weak men. Weak men create hard times, hard times create strongmen and so on.

So this this moves in a circular pattern. And if we think about this outside of that context, let's imagine I my brain goes to childhood development and parenting.

And I think of like the example of a super wealthy, super wealthy parents who live in a mansion and drive fancy cars and they have enough money to do whatever they want and buy whatever they want and their kid give their kid whatever they want and do all the nice things and protect them from the bad things.

And, you know, and you contrast that with maybe a kid who grows up in the inner city, who has a very, you know, in poverty, who has a very hard life. And it is it is very often that the you know, there's certainly lots of exceptions to this rule.

But as a generalization, it's very often the case that the the kid who was spoiled rotten, who was given everything without having to work for it, ends up being disabled or dysfunctional or not highly functional adult because they they never had the striving and the that the hard work attached to the rewards.

The rewards were just given. And I think, you know, what we know now from modern neuroscience is that actually giving strong rewards without it being preceded by hard work is one of the most toxic things we can do for our brain.

And, you know, obviously, the modern world technology, the processed food environment, porn, all these kinds of things are essentially that it's like here's a super potent neurological reward without having to do any work for it.

Right. And that that is is what is is a big driver of of dysfunction in in the modern brain and conversely, a lot of kids who who grow up in difficult circumstances end up being super strong adults, end up being some of the most inspirational people, successful people, you know, and who who literally their drive was created from all the difficulty and adversity that they had with a kid as a child or created from the fact that they were poor, their parents were poor and that they hated being poor so much that they dedicated their self themselves to to being successful and making money and became super wealthy again.

I know there's many exceptions to this kind of rule, but these dynamics often play out in this sort of way. So it's it's interesting and kind of counterintuitive and paradoxical, the way that, you know, the hard times often create something beautiful and doing doing what we all intuitively feel is to be a good parent is like to protect our kids from any harm and stress and adversity and suffering and make their life as easy as possible, actually oftentimes creates dysfunctional adults.

Do you do you have any thoughts on that kind of landscape? I remember I presented my work at Harvard years ago and every but there were a whole bunch of people who were doing the same thing.

And as I was listening to each person present their work and do a back story about how they got to where they got to, this hypothesis, this study, these outcomes, I turned to this person who's sitting next to me who I didn't know I

was another scientist.

And I just I muttered under my breath, my kids did not have enough adversity in their lives, you know, because every single person in that room had gone through some kind of adversity that had created the problem in their mind that they had to find a solution for.

And then I went and I sat in a ten day Vipassana silent meditation retreat. And throughout the course of that retreat that percolated further. And I came home after that ten days and I sat my kids down.

My youngest was seven and I said, There's a new sheriff in town. My job is not to make you happy, unlike what I thought it was. My job is to give you the tools to be able to manage life when it is inevitably unhappy and and challenging for you.

And that is the new mandate of this parent. Yeah. And you know, they were not very happy about that to start with. And now they're just very cool people and, you know, with a lot of great tools to manage life's inedible challenges, you know?

And so I think you're absolutely spot on. And, you know, in those two instances, I just remember sitting in that that room with all these scientists going, Oh, no, my kids still have enough adversity like this is not good, you know?

But I feel like this is a core truth of human development. And it's like we have left this piece of the story out of our collective cultural narrative.

I agree. We have we have. We have created a cultural narrative where we're afraid of adversity, where we're afraid of encountering challenges in our life.

And we see it as a quote unquote bad thing that, you know, we it's like we wish, especially for our kids. We wish for them to go through life where everything is just easy and adversity free and stress free and suffering free.

But actually, if we really understand human development, the only way we become stronger and wiser is through challenge and adversity. And again, it's like we've left this out of our story.

It's exactly the same principle as like, Hey, you want to grow your muscle bigger, you have to you want to get smarter. You have to spend time learning and challenging your brain to learn new information.

It's you want to be more energetic. I talk about this all the time. It's like you have to build your mitochondria to be bigger and stronger. How do you do that?

Or medics stress you have to challenge them. And without the challenge, these systems just shrivel and atrophy. And that's that's the other aspect of this is our bodies are and brains are living dynamic systems and they're always changing and reshaping themselves to respond to the inputs you're giving them.

For better or for worse, they don't just remain stagnant. So it's either you're in you're either challenging them to grow bigger and stronger, or hopefully challenging them at least enough to maintain their strength.

Or they are going to tend towards atrophying and getting weaker. And here's the thing about that. Like physically, if you are focused on fear about a challenge, fear, you're going to lose all your money, fear you're going to lose your relationship, fear you're going to lose your fame, your fortune, your reputation.

But whatever it is, your ego identity, you got these little micro glia in your brain. They're going to let early go in and start carving away matter in your brain.

They're going to carve it away. Well, this isn't necessary. We're focused only on the horizon. You know, she's a zebra being chased by a lion. And then we only need to worry about that safety.

So let's carve away anything else that, you know, the body is so amazing that way it will adapt to what your perceptual field is giving it. And I always tell this to people like.

Yeah, cortisol, sure. But you know what? What gets that activated your perception is same with mitochondria like your perceptions are first people will start talking about now like limbic system we have to we have to heal our limbic system, you know, and I'm like, Oh no, you need to heal your perceptions because that's what activates the amazing.

So, so we keep coming in over the top right? So in, in ancient Eastern philosophy called the Abbey done right there, it says there are 17 steps for one perception, 17 different steps that you go through.

Cultural Narratives and Self-Perception

And they say, like, however, you have been perceiving is how you will always perceive, unless halfway through that midway point, you can create a little gap.

They call it the gateway to karma, and you can, instead of react, respond with a new skill. And that little gap right there is what we achieve when we're doing contemplative work, when we're slowing down, we're really bringing a wake and self-awareness that's consistent and stabilized.

Then we don't activate the limbic system unless we have someone chasing us and we need to activate the learning right, which is so fascinating because no one is talking about look at God and we talk about mindset, right?

Yeah, change your mindset. But this idea is your perceptions as you bring in an object through your five senses. I call it your five minds. So you see it.

You can't see and hear at the same time it's going like this, right? As you bring in an object, if you collapse around it with an emotion, they call him one of the five afflicted emotions fear, anger.

If you start to attachment, aversion. I love that you've landed on aversion because whenever you you collapse around the object with aversion. Now you've just sent your perceptual field into the zero being chased by a lion, and now the whole thing's gone to the races, and you've got little guys carving away your brain's mast cells activating your immune system, starting to go nuts, you know?

And it's okay. This is where we have to start, right? This is where we get mastery. There's another piece of this related to what we're talking about here that's a that's a modern phenomenon.

You know, I kind of alluded earlier to this to the issues going on in the youngest generation. Now, specifically, it seems to be kids born after the year 1995.

And with the rise of tech and cell phones and social media, I think has has greatly accelerated this. But I think there's also a narrative, a cultural narrative that's like, you know, with there's so much talk of trauma now, so much talk of people being triggered and things like that.

And when we're teaching kids to think this way, we're we're teaching them that someone else saying words. Yes. Has control all over my nervous system.

If someone else says the wrong word, they need to be censored. They need to be prevented from from expressing that thought because that thought controls my nervous system.

And and I'm a victim of it. And I'm exactly. And I'm a victim. And I need to be protected from from this from mistakes. People. Exactly. And so somebody else do some some authority, come in and censor this.

I'm an impasse. I'm highly sensitive. I'm executive. And those toxic people, those narcissists out there, I have to be kept away from them. Exactly. And and this idea, if you think about it, is essentially the opposite of resilience.

You're getting you're teaching people and reinforcing them that what is desirable is to be as fragile as possible and to be victimized by everything, and that you don't have control over your own reactions, perceptions.

What happens with your own nervous system? It's someone else saying a particular word or doing a particular thing controls your physiology. And it's it's like, what could possibly be more disempowering than that?

What what could create a generation of less resilient people than that? Jonathan Haidt talks about this as reverse CBT, like the opposite of cognitive behavioral therapy.

And he he describes why particularly the mental health why mental health issues among especially young girls are suffering so much right now because they're being indoctrinated into this kind of paradigm, this kind of self-perception, where your whole locus of control is external to you.

And if people outside of you do or say things that it it has so much power over you into. The developmental job of an adolescent to switch locus of control to internal not external.

Right. That is the developmental state. I think parents don't know enough about this and they're so busy helicoptering and cocooning kids, you know, and supporting this.

I, I say all of these things too. I think we might be two people up on the walls yelling, come on, this is really causing a lot of trauma in our culture.

It's damaging to our species. And so we're in this blame and shame victimization thing when in fact, nobody has the power to activate your nervous system except for you.

There's a saying that, again, I go to these ancient places because Eastern philosophies, what I studied for so long. But the attribution goes to shocking money.

Buddha, who said rather than have the whole world mother covered in leather, rather put your own sandals on, you know. And and this is I say this a lot these days when I teach is this is what when somebody takes a quiz online and says, oh, this is it, I'm highly sensitive or, oh, I'm an impact, I'm a light worker, I am a light bearer or I'm whatever it is. Yes.

And it is up to you to strengthen your own channels, your own nervous system, so that when you are in this world, you're not that fragile, because actually you're not.

You are a luminous being that is vast and infinite in your consciousness and your brain and nervous system. Act like a funnel dampener of what you can manage when it comes to the light in the sound that's actually present in the universe.

And so when you leave your body, you're going to get all of that light in that sound. And so if you don't practice here, you're going to go into a few responds at that time of death, which is very painful.

I've watched it a million times. And so part of our practice here, we practice really hard to bring our children into the world as mom, you know, birthing classes, really breathing, being present, being conscious that it is the same thing to die because that's another birth canal.

You're leaving this one and you're going into the next. And, you know, that makes us of strengthening your systems so that when this downregulated nervous system that filters everything for you is gone, you'll freak out as your consciousness is released.

So this is just like a microcosm of a macrocosm that we're seeing when people are so fragile and so hyper reactive. This is one of the root causes of viral immunities, is as your mind, so is your body. Yeah.

So if you are hyper reactive in your mind, then you're going to be hyperactive in your body and that if you feel

betrayed by your body and you feel betrayed by your parenting and you feel betrayed by your culture and the world, then that's going to be the life that you self perpetuate.

So it's really important to strengthen this, to heal it, to come out with your I call it the spiritual gymnasium, you know, as you were just saying, like you can't expect to develop a bicep just going like this.

You have to put something in that hand. And it's this is the stuff that creates your strengthening. So, yeah, it's really important. I'm so happy to hear you saying this.

Sometimes I feel like I'm in the vacuum. Well, to be honest, I mean, we now have a culture where people are afraid, including myself, to to voice this, at least among some people.

And to be honest, I didn't know how you were going to react to me voicing it, particularly because I know that you live in an area where this it's one of the the places where this kind of ideology is the most present.

So, you know, there was an element like, should I even voice this? Maybe she's not going to like what I have to say and maybe she's going to maybe this is going to turn into an argument.

Who knows? So I'm happy to see that you share my my my perceptions on this sort of toxic cultural narratives, especially in the generations now. I'm really there's a really good book called The Narcissistic Narcissism Epidemic.

And it's a couple of scholars from two different universities who have done a study on this, where there are four root causes for the rise in narcissism in our culture.

And this is a form of narcissism. It's called maladaptive covert narcissism. When you're over occupied with your story, you're over occupied with your health, you're over occupied with setting boundaries with other people.

You absolutely. If you're in a damaging, toxic relationship, get out. Absolutely. That's not what we're saying here. But, you know, the problem is, is if you take that and you make it the ground you stand on, then you're going to have like in the drama triangle, right?

If you're a victim, there's a persecutor, there's a rescuer, there's always going to be drama. And so going into the durable triangle, you need to move into being a resource, being vulnerable and persevering, strengthening all of this.

So in this this book, it was before a lot of the narrative that's happening right now, which I think is healthy, it's great. We need to be having these discussions.

Just try to find yourself on that triangle. Where do you land? Can you move into a post-traumatic growth place? Can you say this adversity is actually fantastic for strengthening, you know, and find your luminosity instead of obscure yourself into a tiny little creature.

That's the problem that really only bugs this instead of blossoming into butterflies. Probably a terrible mixed metaphor, but whatever you get the idea that, okay.

I wasn't going to go here but you what you just said it brought this up for me. I know we want to we want to talk about mitochondrial health and I want to get there.

We are, by the way, this is mitochondrial health right here, guys. For sure. All of this ties it to mitochondrial health and there's a field called mitochondrial psychobiology and led by a researcher named Martine Picard, who I've had on the podcast.

And we now know there is a strong, basically instantaneous connection between what's going on in the mind and our mitochondria. So it is true what you just said is absolutely 100% true.

Whatever is going on in your mind is also reflected in what's going on in your mitochondria. So that's true. We'll get there. I want to come back to that. What you just said about maladaptive covert narcissism is very interesting to me.

And there's a phenomenon that I've observed over the years. I bet you've observed it, too.

Mitochondria, Perception, and the Cell Danger Response

And I wonder if maybe you can put better words to this than I can, because it's something that I have observed for a long time and many people that I know, but I never have really heard somebody talk about this.

There's almost like, you know, part of part of healing is like doing the work. It's like, you know, self I forget how you described it. Self Confronting something, something like that.

Passionate curiosity. Self Yes. Willing to engage in that. Yeah. Right. Yeah. So there's an interesting paradox I've observed where like there's certain people who are not willing to go there at all into this introspection type of place where they're willing to engage with their stuff, work on their stuff, work on healing, at work on growing, changing, evolving.

Like even being willing to to consider the possibility that your ways of being in ways of thinking and behaving and ways of relating to others are causing some of the problems that you're experiencing.

Like some people just never go there and are even willing to consider that their ways of being are a problem. On the other hand, I've also noticed a segment of the population that seems to be endlessly stuck in a loop of trying to fix themselves, where almost their whole life revolves around this constant pursuit of trying to heal their trauma get over this change, grow, become more spiritually evolved, and the blindspot of this kind of the shadow side of this, that that I've observed is that it is a it is a very deep form of self-centeredness, of like self-obsession, where your whole world and all your waking hours are poured into yourself and trying to fix yourself and heal yourself of whatever various thing.

And it's a never ending stream of things that need to be fixed and healed. And you can't like the conversation that you constantly have is, is, oh, I've just had this amazing breakthrough.

I'm healing this. It's, it's so profound, but it's like it never quite gets there. There's always something else that needs to be healed. Lack of operation.

And, and it's like it never arrives to a place where, okay, now I'm good and now I can work on relating to the world, giving whatever it is that I'm here to do, whatever my gift is, giving it to the world instead, it's this constant inward thing.

I need to fix myself. I need to fix myself. Can you. Can you talk about what that is? Yeah, that is what I was talking about. Where it's it's a form of maladaptive conversion narcissism.

So it's a constant absorption of self. And this is again, I'm going to come back to sort of ancient philosophical places where masters who have spent centuries studying the mind, written it all down, practiced it and are passing it down through lineages, have got this.

And one of the things that they talk about is Westerners are so wounded because of this, it's either the ego will make you feel superior or inferior. Either way, when one of those voices is happening, you know that it's it's a false self that's chiming in right now.

Does it make it bad to be aware of it? It's like, well, hi. Right. Good to hear from you. Can you just sit in the corner for a minute? I've got this right.

And ability to be able to recognize who's coming to the table out of your personality instead of at the root of my

personality, at the root of everything, I'm flawed, I'm broken.

There's inside of the paradigm that in stone Tibetan Buddhism is that you are this vast, luminous awareness. You are consciousness unbounded. You you don't have abundance, you don't have love, you don't have compassion, you are those things.

And so at the beginning of every single practice that you sit down in and participate in, engage in on a daily basis to strengthen that nervous system, engage those channels is the willingness to dedicate this practice to the relief of suffering of all beings, that this isn't something that you are doing for you.

You are all beings, and you're sharing the planet with whole bunch of others. And there's I mean, we can talk about interdimensional, too, right? And so if you really sit down with that, they call it the mind and heart of Boteach at that.

It's this open heart mind that goes way beyond what you are. Tiny little problems are what your tiny little breakthroughs are. And so then you're not so focused on this.

I call it going from mouse to eagle. A mouse, you know, a child. There's a lot of danger out there. You go to school and you don't know which lunchroom table to sit out because you're the new kid in class.

That's dangerous, right? It feels awful. And so there's just a lot of mouse scurrying around and trying to figure out how to get needs, how to be a mouse, how to survive.

When you get into adulthood and you go to these different developmental levels and states, you can have more of an eagle perspective. You can see the whole thing.

Then it's not so narrowly focused. So if you're practicing from a place that I'm getting this for me, then it's very narrow in focus. It's very tiny. It's still mouse practicing rather than eagle.

That was excellent. I really like that. Okay, let's let's shift to mitochondria now. So can you explain how all of this stuff around trauma and cycle suffering relates to mitochondrial health?

I'm going to pull out of where that comes from. Okay. I'm going to finish up a little bit of what I was just saying. This is a Segway. Yeah. And so there's a thing called the near enemy of truth.

So a lot of new age psychology, spirituality, you know, new thought has a lot of near enemy to truth, like everything's true except this one little element, you know.

And so the law of manifestation, there's a lot of there's a lot of language about like scarcity versus abundance, making, duality, polarity, paradoxical things.

So in that near and immediate truth and we start talking about mitochondria. So everything is microcosm of macrocosm of the universe. So when you think about cells on a cellular level, if you go back to that mouse little analogy that I was just using where your consciousness is in this scree, I don't know if I have enough.

I don't know if I'm going to survive. I don't know if this is going to be okay. Then that is translating directly into the cellular biology that is making energy, you know, like your energy, right?

This is your energy grid. So if the captain of your energy grid doesn't have all the tools that it needs, if it can't get what it needs, as there's this creating a barrier in your cell membrane, then you wind up having the exact same thing happen on a physical layer that you have here.

All your Vedic medicine calls this the punch of cookies. So if if your, you know, your physical layer is only one of five, five layers, you have your energy body.

That's next. You have your mental emotional body, whatever is in your mental emotional body as far as what your

perceptions are. I'm not good enough. I'm not safe.

I'm not whatever it is which you can go ahead and link back to a trauma response from a long time ago. But that's not where you stop. Now, I'm going to I'm doing a 28 guided, 28 day guided detox journey with a group of people right now.

And they're like, what? We're not talking about smoothies. You are not talking about like, yeah, we are for a couple of days of the 28 but the foundation is this your mitochondria don't get what they need.

They can't activate in the way that they need to. If you are engaged in what are called like the ten negative karmas, right. And that's inward and outward where it's harsh speech, you know, your thinking thoughts on a rumination loop that are based on I don't have enough in this world.

And so if that happens, then your body will believe you. You don't have enough. So this is trauma, unresolved trauma. And I would imagine particularly big trauma gets essentially encoded into the nervous system and is maybe even encoded at the mitochondrial level.

As you know, we now know from the cell danger response, and I teach a lot through that that paradigm, that danger signals whether they be toxins or an infection or poor nutrition or sleep deprivation or psychological stress or trauma or rumination on negative thoughts.

And I to say that's 50% of it right there. Yeah. Yeah. And so a lot of people, maybe more than that, it may be most of what's going on for them. You know, in some cases is essentially creating a constant stream of danger signals that your mitochondria are processing and saying, hey, you know, we're not safe.

It's not safe to be producing abundant energy. It's like the analogy is if you're in the kitchen chopping vegetables and then you're preparing dinner and then, you know, a burglar walks in and puts a gun to your head and says, give me all your money.

You're not just going to keep chopping vegetables and prepping dinner. You have to deal with that threat. And if you've got a constant stream of threats originating from your own mind, 24 seven that's a pretty big problem to deal with to get your mitochondria turned back on.

Your six minds. By the way, five of them are sensory. And so and then there's the the large mind that synthesizes all of it. So this is interesting because studies show that what you look for, you will see.

So if you look, I go hiking every morning and my daughter and I will say, oh, there's a dog lover because my three dogs are off leash. And as I spot somebody, it's very rare that we see anyone at 5:00 in the morning.

But sometimes we do. And I'm always looking at their face because there are people that have been traumatized dogs in their past. And what they will see in my fluffy, amazing dogs, you know, is danger.

And so so it's like what comes in gets collapsed without a flip of emotion. Now it's a reality for you whether or not it is for another person. Yeah. And so that affects immediately your mitochondria immediately.

So, you know, that's it's three of those six minds you taste that made you throw up when you were a child. And it's like that right in your body is going to think danger.

I had that happen after staying up all night in seventh grade for a skating party, and my mom fed me French onion soup the next day and I vomited it. And I can't stand the smell or the taste of French onion soup.

Now, today, at age 58, my mitochondria will respond at the outset. Oh, sorry. So, you know, it's like, oh, wow, can we not unhook from that, please? Right.

That's that's that's the thing that will happen is an instant. Right. And so if you were to say French onion soup is

bad because of that experience, rather than having that eagle awareness that says, oh, I see where that came from.

Okay, it's all right, but we can try this. You know, it doesn't it's not poison. It's okay.

Resolving Trauma and Practical First Steps

And so you get to calm your own nervous system. You get to create a different perception if you're willing to do so. That is happening through six different minds, which is pretty fascinating.

I was I was I went for a walk with my wife on the beach this morning, and we were talking about some some good friends of ours who are who are constantly kind of in a struggle.

And there's there's built up tensions and resentments and, you know, little things kind of trigger it and bring it out. And then they're fighting again with each other.

And I've been in that place in relationships before, so I know what it's like and, you know, I was chatting with my wife and we're in a really beautiful space together and we've been for a while now, and it's almost like a different plane of existence and way of relating to each other.

That's like free of all the tensions and the dramas and the built up resentments. And it's like it's just, it's a different modes of operation that you can be in.

And when you're in one, you can't get to the other. And, you know, if you're if you're stuck up here in the in the good one, it's really hard to go back down and relate in the other one.

And if you're in that other one kind of in the in the muck, in the in the difficulty of it, it's really hard to transcend that and for both people to kind of get to a different way of relating this, this process of overcoming our own stuff, like overcoming our own traumas of the past.

And there's so much cultural narratives now really encouraging people to, to, to dig up the stuff from the past. And I would even say to, in some cases, to like create narratives of their own life that emphasize their own traumas.

And there's an aspect of this that's necessary to do the work. You first have to confront it, but you don't want to just stay stuck there. You don't you don't want to just stay stuck forever analyzing your traumas and your stuff and trying to fixated on that as, as we've alluded to earlier, with certain types of people that do do stay stuck there, what is it that we need to do?

What's let me phrase it this way. What's the difference between resolved versus unresolved trauma? So it's not a straight line, it's not one and done.

There'll be layers and layers of things that will arise throughout your life. As I said, Joseph Campbell's hero's journey. You're going to get another challenge, right?

And that might bring up another layer of here's the next one to work with. It's always a cycle. It's always everything goes in cycles, right? We have waveforms of sound, of light, of nature, seasons, our life span.

Everything is going to be a world that's always churning. And so sometimes we're in the mud and sometimes you're not and you're never going to be able to stay out of the mud.

You will go back in there again. Yeah, and relationships are that way, too. There is a season in a fall, winter or spring and summer. If you're able to stick with it and recognize the larger picture eagle view again, then you know, Oh yeah, we're in the muck.

It's time we're doing another grow up process and we will come out and be in the spring and summer again if we're

willing to do it together. And so story for me, story of trauma is important and I do it in the retreats I hold.

You tell your stories. Stories important. I don't ever say don't ever tell your story. You tell your story for one purpose, and that is to track what you made up about it, where it lies in your body, and what the adaptive behavior response was that you created and certain ages and stages so that you can now self confront and go through the processing so you never want to have an undigested.

So resolved trauma is digested. Trauma is where you go. Oh yeah, thank goodness that happened. You tell that story without tears, without an angst that comes up.

It's like, you know, that happened and my goodness, this is what transpired as a result and I wouldn't wish this on anyone, but that is probably the best thing that ever happened to me in my life as a result of trauma.

Okay, what? So what is it that we need to do to move through it? What is it that we need to do to get there? What in your experience, like what? What is the biggest needle mover for people, for them to to get there, especially for people maybe who have been stuck, who are adults now, who are dealing with with traumas from the past, from ten, 20, 40, 50 years ago.

You know, I know. People, too. In my in my family and who are in their seventies now who were like, for example, someone very close to to me and my wife was sexually abused when she was a child.

And she's in her seventies now and she's never dealt with this, you know. And so there's certain things that probably have led to our. Way of being. Her her whole life. Over is willingness.

That's it, right? You can't make somebody want to go to the mat. You have to let them come and you can do the invitation. Yeah. You know, I remember one time in a plant medicine journey, I was told you sing your song.

People that will will hear the frequency and wake up that are ready to wake up. And it's not your responsibility to wake everybody up. And that was so freeing to me.

I was oh my gosh, I had no idea is carrying that on my shoulders, my mother being one of them. Like I was feeling responsible for waking my mother up to be able to do this work.

She's not interested and she's told me that a zillion times. I am not interested. I can imagine you've tried. Oh, yes, and I don't anymore. I just love her and I accept her and I'm devoted to her just as she is.

Right. And so there's not a need for everybody to resolve their drama. Mm hmm. People have to be willing. That's the biggest needle mover. So let's say someone is willing let's say someone is hearing this right now.

They are willing they feel intrigued by what you've said in this conversation. And they're saying, okay, maybe it's time for me to to to do this work that I've been resistant to it up to this point.

A little exercise. I have to go in one minute here, but I have a little exercise that I give to people to start everyone off. But everyone's different because some people will have a high level of neuroticism, some will have the five personality right there.

There will be different traits in them, different genetics. So everyone's different and what will work for them. But what works across the board for the very first step is just for 24 hours.

However many of those you are awake that you start to track your own thoughts and then move that to a week and keep a little journal and start noticing the tone you speak yourself and what the content is like, what repeats itself again and again, how you feel in your body as a result of that conversation that's being had.

Start having, you know, you're developing a wake awareness, stay awake to it and you can gather a little, little bag of dirt pebbles and a little bag of light pebbles.

And then at the end of each day, sit down and for every life affirming thought that you had put a little light pebble there and on the table or on the floor in front of you.

And for every part that was ruminating, you know life destructive thought really put that there. And in the beginning what you'll notice is you have a lot of different proposals because you haven't been aware of your patterns.

And then the next day you'll say, Ooh, I don't want to put a bloody dark pebble in there, so make sure I change that thought right, and you'll start to master your own thoughts.

A lot of people think that they're sitting down on the couch looking at the big screen TV, and that their thoughts are like a video going past and that they're just passive observers.

And every thought that they have must be stellar. It must be a pearl of wisdom, and that is completely, fundamentally untrue. So just because you have a thought doesn't make it a great one or something you should share with everybody.

And so what you get to do is you get to change the channel. You learn that you have control over your own thoughts, and it's absolutely the only thing have control over.

And so you start to learn to master that. And then from there, once you have those that schematic kind of, you know, like the background behind there, you start to see you have a little pattern of your own.

Then I work with people from that pattern because everyone's different and they have needs for being able to break free of this. Doctor of yours. You are a very wise woman.

I enjoyed this conversation tremendously and let people know where they can get in touch with you and follow your work. Dr. Kiesha Doc on the Arc SJ icon and thanks for having me.

Thank so much my friend. Absolutely. I look forward to the next time. Bye bye.