Podcast Introduction and Episode Overview

So my question for everyone is, how can you find your nature and how you can grow out of the way you are, what your natural is into being a life of service and of love and compassion and vitality?

I think these are old choices and let us each find our way to make those choices well and wisely. Welcome to the To Curious MD podcast. I'm Dr. Ali Ahmed.

And I am Dr Surya Ravan. With the wisdom from holistic, alternative, and these conventional medicines, we are here to challenge the status quo. We're curious about the connectivity and complexity between diverse fields of knowledge as a relief to consciousness, chronic illness, mental health, resilience, learning more about the art and science of healing, or listening to stories of extraordinary healing.

You're in the right place. Let's dive in. Welcome to our podcast, The Two Curious MDs, where medicine is more than science, it's story, art, and connection.

Today's episode, we explore what it truly means to stay healthy in an increasingly complex and chemically burdened environment. Our guest, Dr. Russell Jaffe, shares insights from decades of experience in integrative and preventative health.

Dr. Jaffeu2019s Background in Integrative Medicine

And together, we want to really unpack how modern living exposes us to these hidden stressors from environmental toxins and inflammatory foods to chronic stress and metabolic imbalance.

and what we can realistically do about it. Rather than fear-based messaging, this conversation focuses on empowerment. And I hope we learn about the daily choices in nutrition, recovery, stress management, targeted testing that can shift the body into a resilient mode rather than a stress mode.

We also want to explore Dr. Jaffe's philosophy behind his company that he has and the practical framework for buffering inflammation and supporting immune balance he provides in his work.

So welcome, Dr. Jaffe. Thank you for that gracious intro. Let me start with I had very conventional training in internal medicine. Then by great good fortune, I was invited to the National Institute of Health, known as NIH.

I eventually became the head of the residency program there in laboratory medicine, and I stayed on the permanent senior staff until I migrated to what I'm now doing.

So my background is a bit unusual. I am considered to be a father of integrative functional medicine. And I'm very grateful for those who consider me that, and I would like for us to have a conversation about exactly what you were talking about, which is how to be healthy in an increasingly toxic world.

Yeah, thank you for that. I want to ask what got you started in thinking about this question? Well, that's a very important question from my point of view.

I got started because in the early 1970s, I heard that acupuncture could be helpful. And we at NIH thought that Acupunctur was a placebo. So I went and found a guy named Quang Nguyen Wu, who was really seminal in bringing acupunture back to America.

and I spent seven years in an apprenticeship with him. And then I taught a program called Oriental Medical Strategies in Western Medical Practice at State University of New York.

The first year we did five element theory, which is integral to traditional TCM, Chinese and Oriental medicine. The second year, we Did Yin Yang, Which is balancing forces.

And the third year I wanted them to become as good as I was at reading pulses and therefore understanding what's behind a person's quality of life. That's a bit about me.

That is amazing. It is a really early experience of what a lot of physicians are going through right now, which is that our training didn't quite cover everything.

Well said. And just for full disclosure, Patch Adams, who was famous in the movie Patch, was part of our small but high quality group. and Queen was a most remarkable guy, some other time I'll tell you more about him, but he was Taoist priest and he nice enough to do one of the commitment ceremonies that Rebecca and I had, probably one the few traditional Taoists ceremonies ever done in Vienna, Virginia.

Beautiful. Amazing. I'm curious about the word toxicity, and I'd like to know for our audience, too, what kind of exposures impact our immune function, our metabolism, or even our resilience.

What would you say? Well, thanks for asking, because that is a good place to begin. Everything that involves you as a person, as soul, being, involves every aspect of who you are, and what you, are and why you.

Early Curiosity, Acupuncture, and Traditional Chinese Medicine

Who, what, where, when, how, why. And so I became interested in the nature of the human healing response. I was conventionally trained in internal medicine.

And I have double boards in laboratory medicine, courtesy of NIH. But that left me confused and rather limited in being able to evoke human-healing responses.

That was when I met Quing. and did this very traditional apprenticeship in Chinese medicine and in acupuncture. And I'm still a student of life, of being in wonder about the nature of human beings.

I think to some extent, I've been helpful to others by being curious and listening deeply to who they are and what they aspire to become and, what's behind what, they know about themselves.

I love that. I also kind of bring together as you're talking about internal medicine, which is the training in the mechanistic diagnostics. What can we read?

How can be sensitive to the story and the processes of the body? And then you bring in laboratory medicine where you are actually measuring things. where you're actually saying, oh, this is out of range, is it significant?

And is its significant, on what level is that significant. And this kind of bringing together this idea of toxicity, like Alia is asking, when is something toxic and when it is not?

So when you are thinking about that question, even bringing in the full self, Because something can be toxic to your soul, something could be a toxic your body, or your environment or mental health.

And how do we parse those things out? And sometimes it's hard to tell at what level something is occurring at. So yeah, Arya, would you like to ask the next question?

Sure. I am fascinated by what you said as well about kind of going back to the sciences. And I think in integrative medicine, we do talk and really highlight that there is more to conventional way of learning and there's more science in the ancient sciences and in sciences of practice for thousands of years.

Why aren't we applying that in conventional medicine? Why have we kind completely separated our learning to one bucket? of knowledge. So I really appreciate that you actually being the father in this process.

Or the grandfather. The grandfather or a leader and the pioneer in kind of bringing this together, especially at NIH and especially in places where that sort of mindset isn't necessarily there.

So the question that I have has to do with the kind of exposures and how do we actually know what is a toxic exposure? When does it become a toxics exposure and what are its impacts in the body and in soul and spirit?

Well, let me start with what you have just said. What is right for one person may not be right every person. In internal medicine, I was taught how to do certain laboratory tests and how mechanistically to interpret them.

And then I realized in my own life, in the life of those I lived and loved, that was helpful but limited. helpful and limited in the sense that, if you listen deeply to the story of someone's life, you first have to be receptive to that fact that they are a unique being, a person, that one size does not fit all, and therefore what we learn in internal medicine is helpful but insufficient.

Defining Toxicity and the Importance of Deep Listening

and I have been a curious character for all of my life, I've wanted to know deeply why some people are able to thrive and why people in the same seeming situation seem to be crushed by the burdens, the traumas, and the aspects of their life that leave them bereft.

And guess what? Almost all us have had traums in life. Some when we were young, some when a little bit older. But it is not possible to get through a life without traumas.

My question is, how can we turn the trauma into an opportunity to thrive? Not just to survive, because there are many people who live lives of quiet desperation.

They live life doing the best they can, but not realizing that they feel deeply unloved. that they feel deeply at the mercy of their prior early traumas.

So what I feel about functional integrative medicine is that we must embrace all of that in order to find out where the healing can begin and be rather complete for the individual.

Thank you. You're here, so I'm just kind of doing a bit of an imaginary going back in time. Here you are at NIH. You've got patients that are coming to NIH or part of research studies.

What kind patients are leading the way? What are the stories that grabbing your attention for, oh, this is an unsolved problem or this a more complex problem?

Well, thank you for asking that. The first article that I published in the Annals of Internal Medicine was about a woman named Doris who had had 400 occult blood tests and they were all negative.

But fortunately, their clinicians felt that she was losing blood through her intestines and so I did something at the time that was a little unusual. I went and talked to her and I said, Dorice, I want you to tell me something that you've never told the other doctors.

because I can look in the chart for what the others have heard. She said, don't take it away from me. I said ma'am, I'm here to be helpful. And she opened a drawer and she had vitamin C, ascorbate vitamin c.

Every time the doctors take this away for me, i feel worse and then I go back to it and I feel better. I went down to the lab and I thought, well, what's a little bit unusual about this?

We're getting poop from her and it's negative for blood. Maybe the vitamin C is falsely inhibiting the ascorbate. You may know this because we published in the annals the fact that not only did vitamin c inhibit the occult blood test at that time, but when you took the vitamin C away, you could see the harm, the blood loss.

That was the first article that I published in the Annals. I will tell you further that the editor whose name was Ed Huth, calls me up and says, we'd like to publish your article.

And I stop at that point because when an editor calls you up, and he says this is okay, You say thank you. But then he said, would you mind if I rewrote your articles?

Now, no editor had ever called me to offer to rewrite my article. They might make a critique and then you revise the article and resubmit it. He said, you have written this in such a terse scientific way that mere mortals will not understand it if you let me rewrite it in the English language so that other people will understand.

I would publish it. It was the second most popular article of the year because of him. I have been very much graced and fortunate to have people who, advertently or inadvertently, looked out for me and made it possible for my to be a curious, inquisitive, hopefully helpful individual who can step outside the usual paradigm to find out where healing can really occur and what is really toxic for that individual.

Thank you for sharing that. What a powerful story of curiosity at the bedside and problem solving and noticing and saying, well, what if it's not that or what it is this?

And so who inspired you? I'm curious to hear in your journey through life to this curiosity. Who inspired? Well, who I will jump forward to my biochemistry PhD under a man named Karl Franzloh.

Now, Karl was very famous for collagen and elastin cross-links. It turns out that these cross links are derived from the amino acid lysine and they come together when they do.

And what my project was, was to find out why they did not come using something called D-penicillamine. Now, penicilamine sounds like penicylin. It is not penicellin, it's not an antibiotic.

But in my thesis, we figured out how cross-links are inhibited by peniciolamine and then we found out, how to reverse that process. So that started me on the path of saying, maybe we don't know too much about too many things and maybe, and deeply listen and then take our background into how to help someone recover from their toxicity, from the fact that they have lived a certain amount of life and maybe that is more a burden at the moment than an opportunity.

So my position is to find the opportunity in the midst of the burden. And that sometimes means removing the toxicity that is physical, but it turns out that toxicity can be emotional or spiritual.

Trauma, Chronic Illness, and the Limits of Conventional Medicine

I'm a very traditional spiritual type of person, so I don't assume that everything is mechanistic or everything can get detected by the usual laboratory tests.

I'm kind of now coming back to our present time post-COVID, you know, which is a massive, I think you could even look at it from a scientific perspective of like, oh, we have a population level study of what happens to all these different bodies when they go through this massive inflammatory response, right?

Some people endured an inflammatory and it took their life. And some had a less severe response. And now we are left with things like post-COVID syndromes, long COVID, and even this idea of POTS or, you know, kind of Earles-Danlos and Pots being the postural orthostatic hypotension that I think is kind what we're calling it now.

You know those are the names we've attached to it. But there's some signal here that something happened on that trauma level that we were talking about.

And so if you can talk a little bit about what your understanding is of what these kind of sometimes unusual chronic disease processes that can show up.

And we call them different things because we test for Lyme and it's positive and we just for this and its positive, and then we make a correlation not really understanding if it is a causation or not.

So I've just opened up this big can of worms, which I think is big curiosity in the medical field. Please take that as much time as you want with that one.

Well, yes, thank you very much for that because I think that is a seminal question of our time. On the one hand, if you're conventionally trained, you know a lot of different parts.

I Think today that the education of physicians is quite inadequate. We learn mechanistically about certain things, but we ignore the subtle side of life.

we Ignore the early childhood traumas that may have shaped the person who is in front of us today. So when I said deep listening, what I really mean is to be respectful and humble in the presence of another human being whose life hopefully will be made better by you and therefore you have a responsibility to being intuitive as well as competent.

to be caring as well as competent. I think today many young physicians, those graduated in the last decade or more, they are more comfortable on their PDA or their personal device than they were with compassion and ethical responsive.

Evoking the human healing response requires that we be at the level of the person. Not above them, not below them but deeply interested in the story of their life.

So I am curious about everyone's life story and that often helps me to put together whatever I know about laboratory medicine or analysis and intuition.

But then you have to apply that very personally to the individual. and I've had the great good fortune of coming upon things that other people had heard but not really understood, or maybe they ignored because they didn't fit the conventional medical paradigm.

So I'm, on the one hand, very grateful for my conventional training and understandings, but I feel that that is very limited when it comes to a complex person.

and say with regard to the recent traumas and the recently epidemics that we've had like COVID. And as you said correctly, for many people, COVID is just like the flu, it comes and goes, and it doesn't really embed deeply into their psyche or embed into deeply their being.

Then there are people some of whom have passed because of COVID, so for them it was a life-threatening advance. or event. And I've had several what are called NDAs or NDEs.

These are near-death experiences which have made me more compassionate, made a better listener, and made better understanding of the spiritual aspect of people, of inside that individual.

And very often people have said to me, I think you're the first physician who has been interested in the subtle side of my life. I'm very curious about life and each individual, but I also have deep concerns about the way young physicians are trained to look at the laboratory results, and I do have double board certification in laboratory medicine, but that's a beginning, that is not an end.

So I am deeply interested in the story of individual's life. And I don't care what the status or the quote importance of the person is. Yes, I've had the great good fortune to meet governors and presidents and some of them have confided in me because they found me to be a good listener.

On the other hand, i have been helpful to people who have no official status in but our human beings. And if I can convey my compassion, my interest, and my willingness to hear deeply what the story of their life is, then maybe I

could put it together in a way that reflects back to them their importance as a human being.

Not necessarily their important in an objective, mechanistic world, but each of us is a unique human-being. with a unique potential to be of service to others, to expand and extend love and concern.

And so to some extent, I have felt the privilege of evoking that human healing response, that natural human capacity to live and be healed and therefore to serve and to love.

I'm going to ask you a question related to what you just mentioned and talked about is the story of a person and how they present themselves to you in their story.

One of the curious questions that I have is that everybody has some level of exposure to trauma. Some in the early life, some in a latter part of life some, in continuous chronic state of I'm very curious as to why is it that some people present with trauma and it affects their gut, or it effects their heart, it effect their brain.

I am bringing this up because I used to take care of children with Down syndrome. It was very interesting to me to see that in the Down's syndrome I had about 300 patients that I use to follow and track.

that there was always a cohort of children who had either cardiac conditions but they wouldn't have GI, or they would have autism but wouldn t have any, you know, cardiac issues, there were always this kind of collection of type of conditions that tended to fall into a certain way and it didn't seem random.

And I'm curious as what's the connection with trauma and its impact in the body? Like, why would it happen that way for this individual versus the same trauma could affect somebody else in a different way?

Well, at a high level, what you say is exactly correct.

Psychedelic Medicine, Safety, and the Physicianu2019s Role

The trauma is an event that imprints the being, the person, their soul or their spirit, and in order to understand how to be helpful, you have to be able to relate to different aspects of the human being, the very human fragile person.

One of things that near-death experiences convince me is that we're all fragile. And fortunately, I have survived, which means I'm here to talk with you about these issues and to hopefully expand upon them in a way that opens up some possibility of thriving, not just surviving.

So at a high level, I want to know what they know about the story of their life and I am horrified and mortified at how many young people are traumatized in a way that imprints the rest of their life without them necessarily understanding the connection.

And so to some extent, I feel that people like me are connectors. We help people to understand that the trauma does not have to control their hormones, their immune defense and repair system, So at that level, the first thing that I feel it is my responsibility to do is to establish my concern and my willingness to hear what their life story has been.

And when you hear the life stories of many people, your first response is, oh my gosh, how did they really survive? And I think it is helpful for me to extend compassion, extend goodwill and good wishes.

And this is outside of the medical frame, but it has allowed me, to be helpful to people to get through and to understand that they are lovable and that, they can love again.

that they can forgive those who traumatized them. Not that the event goes away, but the even no longer controls their hormones, their emotion, and their heart.

And yes, as you correctly said, if you get to that deep level, you can begin to see why it is that, they have digestive

problems, why is it that have heart irregularities or heart pathologies.

Now I am a pathologist, but that was only a beginning for me. I'm now integrative. Now functional. Free people from the thought that I have a certain authority.

Encourage them to confide in me what they fear, what think has happened, because there's the objective truth of what happened to them, and then there is their memory of it.

And very often I can help the person to transcend, to go beyond the event that happened. It did happen. Sometimes people make things up, but that's not what we're talking about.

We're taking about the fact that many young people are emotionally or physically traumatized. My own dear parents lived such a horrible childhood that they visited upon me and my siblings part of what was still traumatized in them and I think I have been able to use that to understand more deeply what has traumatize others and to have them understand that I'm really deeply listening and want them to understand that they are loved by me.

I know the love is a very subtle aspect of life, but people have reflected back to me that, they felt that I was, quote, the first person who really accepted them as they, are and love them.

Because I do, I love everyone. I'm really very fortunate to be able to explain that, but it is I think part of what a physician who's supposed to the servant of the process of healing is able to do if they can.

If you can't love, if you cannot forgive, then get help. But when you CAN forgive others, when YOU can love everyone that you come in contact with, that doesn't mean I like them.

That doesn' mean they are a good person in an objective sense, but they all can receive and hopefully be benefited from love. Where do you want me to take this?

So beautiful. I want to bring it in because Alia and I work in psychedelic medicine. This is a very active space, what you just mentioned. The ability for a person to feel love is that first step of saying, I feel safe with you.

Feeling safe. That's so important. Right. And that's what you're doing. Oh, yes, I try to do that. I humbly would like to feel that I can do. That I've just read articles that low dose psilocybin can be helpful to help people get over their liver dysfunction, their weight problems, whatever it is that burdens them.

So I've had very limited experience, but I have had some very profound experiences with the psychedelic world. I had only one experience with ketamine, But it absolutely expanded my compassion and my ability to be of service to whomever it is that is interacting with me.

So if I can expand in any way on that, I'm happy to. Yeah, thank you so much. I also want to wrap in that you've mentioned, you know, that young physicians these days that we all interact with, we've both been medical educators with medical students and residents and nurses.

And there is this recognition in medicine that when we get to the extent of our capabilities with the science, with kind of materialist piece, it's like, oh, all oppressors, everything.

And there's nothing more to do, right? We've entered the edge of our expertise. What do we do then? You know, what is the job of the physician in the moment when all of your thinking mind, and everything that you know you've tried everything and I feel like we come to that edge.

I think that's when the questing begins. for a young trainee to say, well, I'm not going to abandon this person. I am not gonna all of a sudden say I have nothing to do here, nothing contribute.

What more can I contribute? And I think that is that portal that opens to what you just described. It's like, oh, actually, my heart is here. My heart is connected to this human being in concern, in kinship, and I'm here for you

and won't let you down.

Environmental Toxins and Practical Detox Strategies

And we've experienced that, that when we can be alongside, even as the most horrible thing is happening, something magical appears, some sort of inner healing capability is unlocked.

And you're talking exactly about this inner healer, inner intelligence that is there if we create that safety, if allow love to flow, like you said, deep listening.

You are listening for all the way down to the level of the soul in this person, which they may never have had the opportunity to feel connected to another human being on that level.

So I think what you're coming to is kind of like a spiritual practice of medicine almost. Well, I no longer distinguish the spiritual from the physical.

I feel they are intimately related and for some reason I remember a short story by Harry Stack Sullivan. He was one of the most famous psychiatrists of his time and he gave a talk that I heard and said, there are only two reasons why people go into psychiatry, one to cure their mother and the other to care themselves and they're rarely successful in either case.

So that is to say that we should remain humble and of service to the other person at whatever level they need. If they needed psychedelic therapy, we could guide them towards that in the most wise and intuitive way we can.

Whether we've had experiences or not, they NEED to be healed. They need to feel compassionate love, they need feel that someone cares deeply about their essence as well as their physical being.

And this is what I have been mentored to do and what i do my best to repay the mentors that I had. by being that way towards everyone that I come in contact with.

I think I appreciate that the fact that toxicity isn't just about chemicals or our environment, which it is, but it's also about connection and not having that kind of trusted reliance or alliance with your person that you go to to get help with and how that's such a vital part of hearing.

So thank you for bringing that to light. Right, so there is the external toxin, the PFAS, mercury, cadmium, and the other toxins that we get exposed to just by having the birthright of being alive today.

Now, how does our body manage to detoxify? How does it manage not to be permanently impaired by these environmental, chemical, real toxins? I'm a toxicologist.

We haven't talked much about that, but I am considered to be a rather creative toxicologists, which means understanding what the physical and emotional and spiritual toxins are in a person's life and then opening up to them the fact that someone Me cares deeply about them enough to help them transcend or be no longer at the mercy of those toxins.

We're going to be exposed to microplastic, for example. Many people far too much. I'm glad to tell you that in my world, in home and in life, We have managed to eliminate microplastic almost entirely.

And what that means to me is that I have the privilege to point out to other people where they might be exposed to these permanent disabling toxins and how to no longer be at the mercy of them.

It's no longer necessary to be exposed to PFAS, to exposed microplastic, exposed heavy metals. You can live a life rather free of that and the little bit that you get exposed too, your body can detoxify.

Right. So it's about the total dose and the exposure over time. And I'm curious about, okay, you see, microplastics,

when I think about we found micro plastics now in every tissue in the body.

This compound is now, in some way, embedded within us, within our cells. What is the spiritual impact of that? We have some ideas about the physical impact of it, maybe, that we're still discovering, but what is, yeah.

Well, for full disclosure, I have friends at the Center for Disease Control and still at NIH, and so I get to be measured for these toxins. And I'm glad to tell you that my body is pretty much free of them.

I want everyone to free them because it is possible. Recently, I had routine measurements like cholesterol. My cholesterol was 123. That is low, but not too low because too-low is too lo and too high is to high but just right is just-right.

Despite my cholesterol being 123, by convention, the physicians who were taking care of me put me on a statin drug. Now, statins are very common. They're a $50 billion industry in the United States, But they also deplete fat-soluble vitamins.

So they're a double-edged sword. They can be helpful, but they can potentially be harmful or risk-inducing. So part of what I try to do is to find out where people need medicines, where they need love, and where to be detoxified.

which might mean low temperature saunas, it might be green dichromatic light, It might things that are a bit unconventional, but for that individual, they might the keys to removing from them the toxicity that they have.

So as a toxicologist, what I have tried to do is to be sensitive to the wide range of things that remove toxic burden, because we all do have some. But I'm glad to tell you that the last three times that my microplastic was measured, mine was absent.

Mine was zero. Why? Because I have done my best in my life to be not exposed and therefore not at the mercy of these very common and the average person is exposed to just much too much of those kinds of toxins.

So I'm here to say that it is possible to live a life that is free of micro toxins, like micro plastic, which means pretty much free plastic. Because if you drink water out of a plastic bottle, you will get exposed to microplastic.

But if you drink the water that we have here from our well or from glass bottles or a steel bottle, you might be able to avoid microplastics. So the things that are necessary as part of 21st century living, I challenge.

I think we can live a life that is free of most of these toxins and our liver and our body can remove the remaining small amounts that we get exposed to.

If you expose your body to too much of heavy metals, you will be at the mercy of that. And very often the toxic lead or mercury or cadmium or arsenic came into an individual when they were a child just teething on white paint.

Today, unfortunately, in many states, white pain is allowed to have more lead than I want in my living, my life, and my home. So I live in an old house and therefore I have to repair things in my old House.

But I've had toxicologists and mold experts and various other people come to visit with me and they consistently said, Oh my God, you're not having toxic mold.

You're avoiding these things. And I say, yes, it is my privilege to recognize the potential toxins and to stay away from them. Now, as you have probably understood, I have the privilege of understanding where many of these toxins come from and how to avoid them.

But I want everyone to have the understanding that I do how, to live in the toxic world without being intoxicated. Intoxicated. That is such a double word there.

There is this notion and you touched upon it a little bit and I just want to say when we talk about toxicity, you know

the dose matters, the frequency matters and the body is able to take care of some of it.

Like it's not that we've evolved all these hundreds of thousands of years and all of a sudden we're like super vulnerable to all kinds of toxins. It's like, no, actually our environment has now devolved to such an extent that the amount of dose, the duration of interaction with these toxins because of the way of our lifestyle and the constituted is overwhelming our system.

And so it's that overwhelm that we're talking about, because as you said, there's more privilege and less privilege. There's some people who don't have the ability to understand this.

When we talk about globally, they're so many toxins that are revealed or picked up out of the soil because of mining operations. and the water table gets contaminated and lots of people are being kind of overwhelmed in that way, that intoxication that you talk about.

But what we're trying to say is behavior changes make it so that, you can withstand a certain amount of a smaller, so it's almost like a window of tolerance.

And I've started to talk about a lot of things in this window of tolerance way, even mental health. Even what you're describing is like, when does something become an illness is when I feel like it's crossed over the threshold of my window tolerance.

And so we can respect the fact that the body has its own innate ability to take care of a lot of things and that we up-regulate that ability, we could help it along, and we get out of our own way.

But also that there's a time when that gets kind of overwhelmed. And that's when being more aware of thing. So can you tell me a little bit about what are some of the most common toxins you talk about?

You mentioned microplastics and cadmium and arsenic. What else is out there in mold? And I wonder if it also moves by region. But what are you seeing out there that you would like people to know more about or pay attention to?

Well, as you implied, very often people are unaware of the toxic burden that they're exposed to. Very often, people aren't aware of heavy metals, the lead, cadmium, mercury, arsenic, and the like.

And very, often the things that have chosen to be exposed are also sources of these toxins. So what I have done, fortunately, is to live a very simple life with a well water, therefore I don't have city water.

We have been offered the chance to be plugged into citywater, and I said to the person who came to offer this, but the city-water has toxins in it, everything from fluoride to heavy metals, for a variety of reasons we could get into the details of that, but very often the convenience of our time is also a source of burden and toxicity.

And so I have chosen to live near a creek, and my exposure is very limited by choice. What I will say is the following. Avoid plastics and get things in glass.

Lifestyle Choices, Food, and the Alkaline Way

When we drink sparkling water, which I do like, it's Pellegrino water in the glass, not in plastic. So these are choices that we make every day, and if we're informed, I think we can make wiser choices, that therefore reduce the amount of the toxin to the level that our body can traditionally detoxify.

what you said is profoundly true. We are immersed in many potential toxins and if we don't take proactive discerning choices in our life, we'll probably be marinating in a sea of these toxins.

Because I am a toxicologist and because I have friends, I'm able to measure my own level of those toxins, and fortunately, I am pretty much free of them and whenever they find anything that is potentially toxic that I'm being

exposed to, then I find out where am I being expose and how can I eliminate that from my life.

So I understand that I am privileged with my background and with interests, but I want everyone to know that there are simple choices you can make to avoid unnecessary plastic.

For example, don't buy food in styrofoam. Don't buy anything that has flexible saran wrap or plastic wrap around it because, especially if the food is warm, and many times you might want to get something that is a warm and I do too, but I want make sure that I'm not inviting the toxins into my body and into life.

What are the ways of clearing the toxins, as you talk about in some of your work, and I think for our audience, specifically other ways and means besides just avoidance, which is also a challenge these days.

How do we clear our toxins for a body and what's the safest way to do that? Well, the safest way to do that is to be good to your intestines and your liver and body organs.

Fortunately, I have a strong liver. Why? Because I don't abuse it. I do not let fat accumulate in my liver Half of Americans have too much fat in their liver that has come because of convenience and convenient foods.

Around my life, around my place, we eat whole foods, organic or biodynamic to the extent possible. Fifteen years ago, my dear son started a permaculture biodynamic food forest in our front yard.

We don't have anything that needs to be mowed or chemically treated, but we do have a wide variety of herbs and healthy food that we walk outside in the evening and harvest and take back in and consume.

So I think the kinds of choices that I'm implying are what I mean to live a life well and fully be able to enjoy the advantages of our civilization and our time without the burdens of toxicity.

So I'm trying to say that most of the toxins come from convenience, and I have chosen to live a simpler life with less convenience and more I think nature, nurture and wholeness provide us many guides to what is good for us and what isn't.

And today, unfortunately, many of the things that we accept as part of 21st century living should be avoided and you will live a life better, healthier, and more advantageous to your being.

I'm now of an age where most of my friends and people of age are burdened by fatty liver, by digestive disturbances, problems and I'm glad to tell you that I do get measured on a regular basis because I want to know if something has crept in, but they come back and say, well, you're functioning at the age of 40. I am almost twice that, by choice.

I want to live well and long. My main mentor, and I've had a number of extremely fortunate to be mentored by a numbers of people, but my main mentors live with me from the age of 80 until he was 110. And I am planning to outlive him.

if I have the good fortune of doing that. But I also want to live a life that says to others, you can have a joyful, fully alive, very much engaged life without accepting the toxicity of modern living.

Thank you for sharing that and bringing in how much that is an intentionality, how everyday practice and awareness. Absolutely, there's an increasing movement towards growing our own food, of looking at our soil as part of our health, that the health of the soil is the healthy of bodies, just expanding the awareness that we are not just within these bodies but our bodies are so intimately connected with everything around us that taking care of that aspect is what will lead to long-term health.

And I love that image of, you know, living beyond 110. What I want to ask is, where do you find the joy? Where do find a joy in life? What keeps you motivated?

Well, I find that the simpler aspects of life are very joyful to me. When I'm interacting with people that I loved and are my friends, that really vivifying, helps stimulate my joy of living.

When I go out and eat from the garden in our front yard, I am very grateful to have much of our food come from a garden. And if you can't or you're not able to do what I do, you could at least go and get organic whole foods or superorganic, which is called bio-dynamic.

And that is, if you are able to get bio dynamic foods, that will be certified by the Demeter. That's D-E-M- E-T-R, Demeters Society, Which was founded by Rudolf Steiner many years ago.

He was a guy of great intuitive wisdom who founded bio, dynamic farming, He founded Anthroposophic Medicine and he was a guy who lived a quality of life that for me is a good example of how to live our lives today.

The fellow that I was mentioning, my mentor for 30 years, we've done a book about Bhante Dharmawara, a most unusual Buddhist monk who was beloved by the Sihanouk family in Cambodia, by Nehru family, in India.

by the royal family of Thailand. The first time that I saw him with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the dalai lama came over and put his forehead on Bhante's toes as a sign of respect and reverence.

And when that happened, I was standing next to Bhanti, but when it happened I said as soon as His holiness went to the receiving line, this was on Capitol Hill where senators and congressmen were waiting for him, I said, what just happened?

He looked at me with a little smile and he said well you see I outrank him. Now I had been for many years his devoted student, his aide de camp, but I did not know that in the Buddhist world there are actually three monks who out rank the Dalai Lama.

and he was one. He was the head of the World Buddhist Fellowship which brought back to India Buddhism and a kind of socially engaged Buddhism which is what brought me to him.

And if you're interested, we've done a book about his most remarkable life and I've had the privilege of writing four books and hopefully more to come about how fortunate I was to fall in love with life.

to fall in love with other people that have mentored and inspired me. And I want others to be inspired in the same way because we all deserve to love.

We all deserved to treated as if we're special. When a woman is pregnant, I think she should be treated like a queen. And I was very fortunate to find, at the age of 40, that I finally found Rebecca.

We did not expect to have children, but now we have two wonderful young people. She came from a different culture, she came form a difference society, and she come from different religion.

But we found a way to be respectful of each other and to express our love for each and have the gift of children. I have a personal question here because you've brought up this idea of longevity and longevity in relationships, you know, longevity, in the heart, the relationship to the Heart of really sustaining that love for life.

And so what do you do, or if you can just leave us with a pointer towards what's the skill when we're not able to do that? Right? Like sometimes we find ourselves in a place where we can't do that or there's a barrier there.

What brings you back? Well, every barrier is an opportunity to remove the barrier. I was fortunate to be mentored by people who said, just show up and do something.

We're too busy doing what we do. And in many cases, that was really, really true. So from my point of view, we all have the opportunity, to feel and experience forgiveness, To feel an experience the love of life, and therefore the love of everyone around us, whether they be good or bad.

I'm not saying that bad people are not bad, unfortunately there are too many of them in the world. But what I am saying is that we can use discernment, we could use intuition, a sense of, this is a person that I like, I want to have more interaction with.

This is a person who can help and inspire me and the opposite is also true. I've met a number of people who were powerful and elected in prominent places and I didn't want to have anything to do with them and i have met other people.

who I have been inspired to get to know, to find how can I be of help to them and of service to, them so that they will allow me to have the privilege of interacting with them.

So I feel that we are never bereft of the opportunity to be detoxified, of modern living. Yes, today we have too many toxins that we are exposed to until we wake up to find out how we can avoid the toxins, that it is possible, and in most cases it IS possible to avoid, but also how to be good to our liver and our biological parts of our body that are designed to meet the toxin and rid us of that, to make the stress of high tech living and let us still be living, loving, and joyful in the face of all of them.

Yes, I understand that life has challenges and stresses. My daughter's godfather includes the Dalai Lama, Amory Lovins, and a third person who you wouldn't know of, but all of them have been very gracious to help her survive her parents and to be innately spiritual but also very functional, high-level functioning human being.

Longevity, Relationships, and Living with Purpose

Her company grows out of MIT and Stanford. And until very recently, she was the chairman and CEO of a very successful ethical AI company. You may think that artificial intelligence and ethics are not compatible.

She and her cohorts, her people around her, have shown that it is possible. So I take this as an opportunity to always be curious about what is the part of life that is meant for us to live and what does the of our life, that it's meant us for to say no, thank you.

I think too many people feel that they are at the mercy of these toxins, of the stresses that adversely affect their hormones, their quality of living.

And I'm saying no to all of that, And if you have the good fortune to have a few good friends who hopefully can inspire you to be more of yourself every day, as I have, it makes life much more joyful.

It makes the flow of life, much alive and possible. I really want to say, I definitely agree with the sense of empowerment that I'm feeling from listening to you.

And this idea that we can say no, that should say No. We can't say NO to plastics. a bottled water plastic bottle. We don't have to accept plastic wrappings for every little utensil and every item that has to come from a store that we can go back to the basics, that can use, reuse.

and refuse. Well said, very well said. My son is also a woodworker. We sent him to the Port Townsend Woodworking School and he came back and made wooden utensils that we use every day.

And I think of him fondly because of the gifts that he has given to us. As you said correctly, there is very often a non-toxic possibility or a toxic exposure.

When we know what the toxins are, we can choose to avoid them and to not be at the mercy of them. And I know I've said that several times, but I feel that saying that repeatedly can hopefully inspire people to live a life that is well-lived and inspired.

I want to bring in one more piece. I think you've hit upon all the points that you had put in your form. The only point that maybe we haven't touched upon is the alkaline way.

And so if you want expand on that, please feel free. Oh, I'd be happy to. We have a book called The Alkaline Way of Living. This is to inspire you to avoid the toxins and to embrace the possibility of living what's called an alkalin way, which means that you eat a diet that is net contributing to the alkaline mineral rich, a way of your body thriving.

The alkalin way is a ways of simplifying the complexity of modern living so that, you can have more whole foods and less processed foods. It turns out that my colleagues have expounded upon this more than I have, but ultra processed food which Today, incorporate 50% of the calories that most people eat are excluded from my life by choice.

So simplifying your life, embracing wholeness, which means organic or biodynamic foods, Which means staying well hydrated, but with healthy water. Water that either comes from a well or from glass, not water that comes form plastic or convenience.

And unfortunately, most of the water that we get from commercial sources or urban sources is contaminated. I've said it, and it is. Now, I know there are people who are more erudite than I, who were trying to reform the process.

But in the meantime, we should be very careful about the Water we drink, about The foods we eat. And to keep it simple, the more whole, more organic or biodynamic the foods that you eat, the more herbs that you include in your diet, your body will say thank you by being more alive, being joyful in every way throughout the day, and will reward you with sustainable good health.

Yes, I've had my challenges, but as I kind of indicated, when you measure my functionality, i'm functioning at the age of 40 when I'm twice that age. I want everyone to be able to continue to live well and long and joyful and able too embrace the good fortune we have today is that we can make these choices for our life, for loving, our relationships, and our soul.

And these are all for me important aspects of a life well lived. The balance of alkaline and acid, you know, bringing in the idea that it's the pH, it is the kind of balance that exists in our entire body and that we have the ability to change it from acidic to alkalin and there is some value there that is realized on a systemic level.

Tell me about that. What is that concept? Well said. Most people today are living with too much acid in their environment and in our lives. And you can measure this because we now have the technology to do it, either in blood, venous blood or arterial blood.

You can confirm that most people are today living an acid-forming life. With the book that we have written, The Alkaline Way, We want people to know that they can choose to live in a more alkaline, sustainable, joyful, loving way.

All of it is part of a whole. A life well lived includes what you eat, what do you drink, I've had more than 50 years of mindfulness meditation under mentors that have been willing to put up with me.

And I think we all deserve to find someone who is wise and loving and find how to be of help to them so that they can be a help too us. I am saying very specifically that the people who have molded and mentored me have been very willing to impart to me their wisdom, their lifestyle, and their joy of living, whether it was prominent or not, not important, but it still was a life well lived.

And I think we all deserve to have a well-lived life if we choose, or can choose those patterns that make for an alkaline way of life, for example. not too alkaline, not to acid, just right is just, right.

And as I said, most of us are under the burden of being too acidic in our biology, in blood, and we can choose a diet, a lifestyle that is alkalin forming and therefore reform ourselves at whatever age we are and I have been fortunate to know people at 80, 90, and 100 who are alive and well-provisioned.

When Bonte was 110, he had highest frequent-fire status on three different airlines because he was asked to go

and serve many parts of the world and he very grateful for the opportunity to do that.

So take a look at the book, Bhante Dharmawara, An Extraordinary Buddhist Monk, take look in our book The Alkaline Way, and hopefully benefit from what we have been fortunate to convey in writing and in the joy of living.

Thank you. And with that, I think, you know, that's such a lovely way to leave our audience and this conversation is with some tools, some follow-up that they can do.

I'm hearing very clearly that being aware of the kind of people that you allow into your space, of quality of your own being, being commensurate to the quality to people around you, and that deep well that we can really resource from is very important.

And we say that, right?

Closing Reflections on Nature, Service, and Curiosity

When we're talking about teenagers, it's like that your life is going to be an amalgamation of the five people that are closest around you is one way we kind of think about it.

Well, think who those five are. and what they contribute and talking about this kind of relationality, which is bidirectional. It shouldn't be one-directional, it should actually be something of a give and take and how that can be nourishing, that we're nourish each other through those connections.

So thank you so much for this conversation and for- Thank you for having me. Absolutely. Absolutely, Adia, would you like that? Thank you for the questions and for compassion that you obviously live and express to those around you.

And yes, relationship is, for me, very important. So let us go forth and prosper in knowing that we can be healthy even though in a toxic world. As we close, we usually close with a question of curiosity.

We may not be able to answer it, but it'll be something for audience to really listen to and maybe stay creative and curious as well. So what would be a curious question that you would have about this world, this topic that we talked about, and or what you're noticing in your environment and your world?

So my question for everyone is, how can you find your nature and how you can grow out of the way you are what your Nature is into being a life of service and of love and compassion and vitality.

I think these are old choices and let us each find our way to make those choices well and wisely. I love that question. Thank you. We find our way back into nature, into vitality.

Nature is there to nurture us. Yeah. we have too often forgotten our intimate connection with nature nurture and wholeness. So let today be the first day of the future because the past is behind us, the feature has not come.

The future is full of choices. Let them be wisely made. A privilege to be with you. I've enjoyed it a lot. We challenge you to ask us those unasked questions that you're curious about in your medical practice, condition, health and wellness.

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Post a comment with a question or curious inquiry that have and seek to explore or learn with us. Stay curious, and we'll see you next time.