



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 93 with Asia Suler

Mirrors in the Earth: Self-Remembrance & the Non-Stop Nurturance of the Natural World

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[Excerpt from today's show by Asia Suler]

I really deeply believe that we all have incredibly unique gifts that we are meant to bring to help this time of evolution on our planet. And I do think it is a time of evolution, not devolution. And the only way we access those gifts and begin to understand them is by really seeing ourselves and learning to accept ourselves and hold ourselves with the kind of compassion that the Earth holds us.

(Intro music: acoustic guitar, folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Intro]

[0:00:30]

Amber: Hey, friends, it's Amber. Welcome to the Medicine Stories podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth. This is Episode 93, and this interview is very aligned with that theme.

I'm speaking with Asia Suler, a writer, herbalist, Earth intuitive, and the guide behind [One Willow Apothecaries](#), an online hub for learning, healing, and connecting with the living world, and author of the beautiful new book, [Mirrors in the Earth](#). Asia was one of my first ever guests, Episode Four, I believe, [Multidimensional Plants & The Fabric of Consciousness](#). We also spoke on Episode 42, [You Are Your Own Healer: Earth Intuition & Self Knowledge](#).

Before we get into it, I am so excited to tell you that our Mythic Medicinals St. John's Wort Herbal Body Oil is out. The 2022 batch has been released unto the world. This is something that hundreds and hundreds of people wait for every year, and it has happened. So the link to that will be in the

show notes. You can listen to Episode 79, if you haven't already, to learn more about the [Sunshine Medicine: The Healing Magic of St. John's Wort](#). It's such a special plant. And if it's sold out when you click that link — I don't think it will be, but if it is — we have a lot more coming this year. If this is spring of 2023, it might be sold out for good until the next year's batch. But we made so much this year. In fact, I'm sitting in a room right now recording this with I don't even know how many, like 60 gallons of St. John's Wort brewing.

Okay, so the Patreon bonuses, there are two that go along with this episode. Patreon is a website where you can support the work of creators you love. And it is what makes this podcast possible. The minimum monthly subscription rate is \$5, and all the best things are released there at that level at the Acorn level. There's tons and tons of previous bonuses for other episodes that you'll find.

And for this, the first bonus is a half-hour, extra conversation between me and Asia, entitled “The Medicine of the Subtle and Nourishing a Highly Sensitive Nervous System” including babies and children, where we share our experiences and what we have found helpful with indispensable resources linked. So we touch a little bit in this episode on the trait of high sensitivity, which is related to, but not necessarily the same as, being empathic. And so we just decided to record this bonus talking about how we deal with our own highly sensitive nervous systems and those of our children.

And at the very end of that recording, I told her about this product I recently found from Milk Moon Herbs called No Worries that has been so helpful for me, and I can't imagine my upcoming ancestral pilgrimage to the UK without it. And I messaged the owner of the company, my friend Michelle, afterwards being like, “Oh, I just want to let you know that you know, I brought this up and in this recording,” and she gave me a 10% off coupon code to use on any product in their shop. So that's there as well at patreon.com/medicinstories. You'll find the recording with me in Asia, that coupon code, other resources as well as a giveaway for Asia's book.

One person will win a signed copy of *Mirrors in the Earth: Reflections on Self-Healing from the Living World*. It's just such a soul nourishing book, and you'll really get a feel for it, and for Asia if you don't already know her, in this conversation. So without further ado, let's listen to my interview with Asia Suler.

(Transitional Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Interview Begins]

[0:05:08]

Amber: Alright. Hi Asia, welcome back. This is... you're a three-time guest. Kami McBride is the only other person to reach that milestone.

Asia: Oh, I'm honored. Thanks for having me here, Amber.

Amber: Yeah, I am so thrilled that one of my friends wrote the most beautiful books of all time. I knew you were squirreled away over there working on a book, you know, even before I saw you announce it, because writing is so much a part of your medicine. And then when I saw it, and oh, my god, the cover is so, so beautiful. So congratulations!

Asia: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that. It is like a very solitary endeavor in some ways to write a book. So when you can finally, like, bring it out into the world. It's an amazing experience.

Amber: I bet. And so I'm really curious, you gave birth within the last year to your first child, and this book came out, and I often hear authors, you know, describe the process of writing and getting a book published as birthing their book.

Since you did both (*both laugh*) at the same time do you think that is an apt metaphor? Or not?

Asia: Yes, I do. I think one labor is a bit more acutely difficult than the other (*Asia laughs*), just in terms of the actual physical aspect of it. But yeah, I mean, just in terms of, like, a whole new era starting in your life.

And, you know, I think that both births — what, you know, I've heard for years — people talk about becoming a mother and how it really is this, like, deep initiation into a new phase of your life becoming a mother, and I think the same is true when you put a book out into the world. It's almost like one era of your life ends and a new era begins, especially when, you know, it's a book like my book, *Mirrors in the Earth*, where it's a very personal book. So it's really encapsulating, like, my life up to this point, in some ways. And so, it is an incredible thing to kind of literally put a period on it, and then put it out into the world and see what comes next.

I will say so far, though, that babies are more work once they're in the world than books are (*Asia laughs*). And I think that will continue to be the case, but I still think it's a good analogy.

Amber: Okay, that's good to hear because I've always kind of been like, ugh, I get it, but also like giving birth and becoming a mother are so physical and demanding that how could it even compare?

Asia: Yeah, yeah, I think the spiritual journey has interesting parallels. But yeah, there's really no comparison when it comes to the sheer effort of physical birth and then, yes, the sheer effort of having a little baby (*Asia laughs*). It's next level.

Amber: How old is she? No,

Asia: She will be six months at the end of this month. So she's almost six months old.

[0:08:12]

Amber: Okay. So, when I saw her name, Iona, I just was like, that's the perfect name for Asia's baby. I love it so much. It's so beautiful. I've always kind of tuned into that name and just, it's a gorgeous name, and then it has this meaning that I think I know, but I'm really curious.

When you were first on the podcast, we did a deep dive into your name and its meaning for you, and I would love to know about how you named Iona?

Asia: Yeah, well, I really feel like she chose her name. When my partner and I were sort of coming up with names and throwing around names, we couldn't really, like, find common ground with names until Iona came up. And really, when my partner brought up that name, and you know, there weren't a lot of names that he liked, that I liked. And so he brought that up, and I was like, I love it. And then when we we decided to find out the sex. And when we found that out that one name was just the name. That was it, there was no other name.

And it's interesting because I did a pilgrimage to England and Scotland a few years ago. And so my mother line is from mostly England, and John, my partner, he has a line from Scotland. And it was a really powerful journey for me to travel there. And so when I went there, we made a pilgrimage to the Isle of Iona, and I was completely blown away by my experience there.

One of the phrases that I use often for Iona is like blowing light. Like, to me, my experience of being on Iona, it just felt like these great billows and gusts of light, like spiritual light, just like roving across the island and like coming into my body, and just really suffusing my whole experience there. And I had just a really incredible experience on that island.

And so it's off the coast of Scotland. Iona has a very long, sacred history. So in written history, it's known as one of the earliest birthplaces or landing places really, you could say, of Christianity in the Celtic isles, but its identity as a sacred site predates that and goes back to the Druids. And I would argue even before that.

And what we know now about Iona is that it's actually made from some of the oldest rock on Earth. So it's not made from the same stone that Scotland is, or even the Isle of Mull, which is the island that it's off. So it's an island off of an island. So it's made from different stone that is arising directly from the ocean floor, and it is some of the oldest rock on Earth. And there's something about this island that really has this, this threshold kind of feeling, this liminality feeling to it.

[0:11:13]

Asia: So when her name came in, it had all these layers of meaning for me. And then I did look into the etymology of it, because, you know, that's just where I go. And there's different, like, theories, but the theory that resonates the most with me about Iona is that its name possibly meant "a gathering place of yews", like yew trees. And that really hit me the strongest because just having traveled to the Celtic isles and visited with these ancient yews, the depth of just magic and power that lives in these trees and these groves is like nothing else I've ever experienced, and it is a sacred threshold place.

Any place where yews grow, you often see them planted in cemeteries. And so to me, knowing that there is a deep history, with Iona being a sacred place, even predating Christianity, it makes sense to me that the name Iona could possibly be referring to an ancient nemeton, which is the Druids' sacred groves or maybe even something older than that. But from what I understand of the etymology, that is the etymology that most resonates with me, when I looked up Iona, as the gathering place of yews.

And so yeah, I'm fascinated to see, you know, what this beautiful daughter is going to bring into the world in terms of her, the threshold that that she is, and then this, you know, I think we are all in between places in a certain way in our bodies. We are all channels for light to come in. And it's such a fascinating thing to be a mother and, like, witness that come into form.

[0:12:59]

Amber: Yeah, I was just smiling that whole time you were talking. I love it. It's so beautiful. Is Iona where the Book of Kells was written or is that

Asia: It was. Yes, yeah.

Amber: Okay.

Amber: Have you seen the film *The Secret of Kells*?

Asia: I haven't. Now I need to.

Amber: It's gorgeous. It's this Irish animation studio is called Cartoon Saloon, which is kind of a silly name, but their films are incredibly beautiful, deep, ancestral healing films. And so the first one was called the *Book of Kells*. And when my teenager was little, we used to watch it a lot, but it's set on Iona.

Asia: Oh, I have to see this, then!

Amber: The second one is *Song of the Sea*, which is about selkies.

Asia: I have seen that one and loved it.

Amber: It's them. And then they did *Wolf Walkers* a year or two ago, which my little one is obsessed with. She thinks she's going to be a wolf walker when she grows up, which is, you know, a person who can transform into a wolf.

Asia: That's so beautiful. Oh, I can't wait to watch these. It's perfect.

[0:14:03]

Amber: Yeah. And then oh, my gosh, you know, I'm making my own pilgrimage to Britain in less than two weeks now! Did you go to Avebury or Stonehenge?

Asia: I did. Yes, I went to both. And both are very powerful in their own way, very, very different just in terms of like, yeah, how people have access to the landscape there. But I just think, you know, you had mentioned to me that you're traveling with your daughter. And I just think that that is like the most powerful. Man, it's like one of my dreams is being able one day to take Iona over to the Isles and have her visit there. And so I'm so excited for you and just what kind of experiences you two are going to have.

Amber: Yeah, we'll see, you know, because she's just about, she's gonna turn 16 the day we return in a month. And I mean, she's just kind of rolls her eyes at my interests (*Amber laughs*) and my, like, deeper ancestral pulls and stuff. But I know that I know from my own travels in the past that being in these spaces infuses your cells, and that cellular memory sticks with you, even if in your own mind, you're like, "I'd rather be shopping in London," or "my friend texted me," you know?

So yeah, I'm curious how she is open to those spaces. And I'm very, this trip for me is as much about, you know, making her happy with, like, shopping in London and things like that. But I would very much like to do a longer trip where we go to some of the, you know, deeper, and many people say, more profound, sacred sites of the British Isles.

Asia: Yeah, yeah, I think that you're totally right, that there is a download that happens in those places. Whether or not I think you're even consciously tuning into it, there's definitely downloads that happen into our bodies, and especially if you, you know, have an ancestral lineages there. I mean, it's, you think about it. It's like, you know, your people have been touching these stones, around these stones in these moving through these landscapes. And so yeah, I think it's going to be profound, whether or not she's tuned into the profundity of it.

But I can say, from my perspective, as being a child, like, travel was one of the things my parents prioritized. And, you know, there's absolutely times I rolled my eyes at the things that we did or my parents dragged me to, and all of those things are like my most favorite memories.

[0:16:40]

Amber: Yes. So I, okay, actually, first, one more question about this: what was the most, like, profound experience? What site would be the number one that you would recommend for anyone wishing to make a sane and successful pilgrimage to the British Isles?

Asia: Oh, boy, that's, that's a hard one. Because there's just, there's so many amazing ones. But I definitely, for me, one of my favorite things was to visit sort of out of the way stone circles. So for example, out in Dartmoor, I got, I think I found a book or maybe a resource online, I can't remember what it was, where it was just like they just listed like kind of lesser known circles, that you would just, you know, I think I found them on the map. And I just walked out, you know, whatever the trails were to find them. And those were always my favorite experiences, the lesser known circles.

Oftentimes, I find these lesser known circles are still actually like, pretty well tended in a certain way. There are people still going there and doing ceremony. And the people who are seeking it out are often people who are wanting to do ceremony. So it's got a different feel than some of the more well known, touristy places, because there's just a different energy when you come in through ceremony versus coming in and being, you know, sort of on that tourism adventure, which is a fun adventure, but just has a different energetics to it.

So I don't even remember some of the names of the smaller places I found, but Dartmoor, in particular, was just such an incredible magical in between place, and also a place where, you know, certain beliefs like beliefs in fairies, for example, still survive and live and are tended. And so when the belief is still alive, I think that other world is still accessible in a way that it's not quite as

accessible when that belief isn't still being held by the humans that live there. It doesn't mean it doesn't exist, that that world's not still there. It's just not as much on the surface, because that bridge isn't being walked all the time.

So in Dartmoor, I could feel that that bridge was still being walked. And, yeah, just sort of finding my way into these. They're not even very "impressive", you know. They might not even be very big stones, but just the small circles where you can just sort of, you know, sink into the moor and let the mist roll in and have that quietude and space to listen, that was always where my most profound experiences happened.

Amber: Oh, that's so beautiful. I very much want to visit Dartmoor, I'm hoping actually to do so next year to study with Carolyn Hillyer who I feel like not enough people know about her work, because she's not on social media, but I've been sharing it lately.

And yeah, that reminds me, a woman in the UK wrote me when I said I was going to Stonehenge and was like, "You know, that's great, but you should try to go to Avebury, too." And so I was able to tack that on to this tour out of London, and it's definitely going to be one of those tourist experiences. But she wrote to me this beautiful email about how there are women in Avebury who are still there, like tending the stones every day and doing the rituals and holding the space which, you know, it sounds like it's not possible to do at Stonehenge because it's basically rubbed off. But I can imagine, yeah, it's even more so in these more out of the way places like Dartmoor.

Amber: Yeah, but Avebury, too, just like you said, it has that aliveness to it. I mean, you walk the perimeter, and people are still tying clooties onto the trees. And you know, it's just what's fascinating to me about Avebury, too, is just how large it is. It's enormous. And it's a whole experience, just like the whole town is literally inside of this stone circle. And the earthworks that were done there were so major that you can imagine, you know, back in the day, when they were created. I mean, they were like, created almost these like, caverns, these like canyons around this circle. And, you know, now there's like gentle sheep walking through and, you know, munching on the grass by the stones, and you can stop and just sit and lay your back against the stone. But that whole landscape there, there's several different sacred sites, and just being there was a really powerful experience for me. So I'm really excited for you and your daughter to get to experience that together.

[0:21:11]

Amber: Yeah, thank you. Me, too. Yeah, I was just listening to a podcast about it, and modern humans didn't even realize how big Avebury was until the wars when pilots flying overhead were like, "Wait, there's a bigger outer circle!" Like, it's so massive. And of course, the ancient peoples who built it never saw it from above, or maybe, you know, maybe never even conceived that people would see it from above someday, but that's the only way we can understand now just how monumental of a task this was.

Asia: Yeah, that's cool. I hadn't heard that, but that makes sense that we were not getting the scale of a lot of things, not until now, we can fly. Like I know, even I heard a few years ago, when there was a lot of drought, that they were taking aerial photographs, and all these new sights were coming to our awareness that we hadn't seen before. But then with the drought, you were able to see like, oh

my gosh, there's actually way more circles than we even knew existed walking on the ground, because we can see them from above. It's special technology to have.

Amber: Right, I remember that now that you say it. And I mean, there's just so much mystery and medicine in this earth. It's endless. My daughter and I were in a stone shop recently here in Nevada City, and she's so into stones and fossils. And our mind was just blown. And we're just talking to the shopkeeper like, I was like, there's so much magic in the earth. I can't believe this stuff even exists. This is just incredible.

[0:22:41]

Amber: So speaking of (*Amber laughs*), let's talk about *Mirrors in the Earth*. So the way, I kind of wrote down like a sentence that I feel like encapsulates not only this book, but your work, which I've been, you know, attuned to for I don't know how long now, years and years, which is that you help people connect with their gifts and with the living world because you realize that the two are related, and that when we're connected to our deep self, we can most powerfully serve the world. Sound right?

Asia: Yeah, thank you, what a gift to receive that reflection.

Amber: And so like, when I first saw the cover of your book, I was like *Mirrors in the Earth*, what does that mean? You know, what's this book about? But it's about this reflection and this relationship; that it's all about the relationship between the two, between us and the earth, us and our people, you know, just relationships in general.

But I was really struck by this sentence that you wrote, I believe in the intro, that in the process of writing this book, you "became the person who could write this book." Can you tell me more about that?

Asia: Yeah, so I started this book 10 years ago. And at the time, I just felt this, like, beautiful insistence every day, this feeling, like I was supposed to write a book, but I didn't really know what it was supposed to be about. And I can't tell you how many drafts I started and discarded, because I just couldn't quite figure out what was wanting to move through me.

And over the years, I was collecting these stories of these profound moments that happened for me in communication and connection with the living world. And it really wasn't until I was living those stories that I realized what this book was meant to be about which is this idea that self-compassion is a force of healing for the world.

And, you know, I write for anyone who is moved by that concept, but I identify as a highly sensitive person and an empath. And I think, in particular, highly sensitive people and empaths struggle with this concept. They struggle. I know I have struggled in the past of feeling like what can I bring, you know. It's like, when you're sensitive and when you're empathic, you feel the hurt pretty acutely. And I know from so many people I've worked with that sense of, like, just really getting lost in ecological despair and grief. And it's an important movement to go through to feel that. And yet you can kind of get stuck in a place of like, "Well, what can I literally do, you know? What can I do to help?"

And I think for a lot of empaths, the negation of the self and the judgement of the self is sort of like the homeplace. And to realize that this journey of coming back to yourself, to learn self-appreciation and self-acceptance and, ultimately, self-compassion, that that, in of itself, could be a gift for this world; that that, in and of itself, is a force of ecological healing.

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Asia: And I saw it happen in my own life: that the more I learned how to, like, truly accept myself and truly get to a place of self-compassion — which is always a practice, you know. It's not like I've perfected self-compassion. I'm constantly working on it and returning to it — but the more I've developed that skill and that ability to truly see myself the way the Earth sees me, the more I've opened up to my gifts and my abilities and the things that I'm meant to bring to this world to help the healing.

I really deeply believe that we all have incredibly unique gifts that we are meant to bring to help this time of evolution on our planet. And I do think it is a time of evolution, not devolution. And the only way we access those gifts and begin to understand them is by really seeing ourselves and learning to accept ourselves and hold ourselves with the kind of compassion that the Earth holds us.

So yeah, I had to go on this journey myself in order to write this book. Because when I first started, you know, if you had asked me like, you know, “Are you someone who has self-compassion?” I would say, “Yeah, of course, sure I do.” But I didn't really understand what it meant, like the depth of what that means to actually, you know, forgive yourself, to hold yourself with gentleness.

I think so often, we have sort of a running script in our head of judgements, and it's so constant, we don't even realize that that's a running script. And so, you know, it was, I talk about it. It was really through like the nonstop nurturance of the natural world that I started to recognize these stories that I was telling myself and sort of decommission them, so that I could see myself more clearly, see myself reflected in the world around me, have the earth reflect back to me who I truly am and through that, come home to not only my belonging, but then the gifts that I meant to bring to this world.

And I have seen this process happen now with so many people. I've worked with, you know, thousands of students around the world, and it just, it blows me away every single time to see how true this is. That the Earth really wants us to embrace ourselves with compassion, because that is how we become a part of the healing.

Amber: I love “the nonstop nurturance of the natural world.” I think that's what you said. And it just makes me think how many of us are cut off from the natural world, and just really attuned to the frequency of culture, and how it is that we live in a toxic overculture. And the messages we get from that are what internalize all this self-judgement, self-doubt, self-hate inside of us. But when we are able to step away from that and just be on the earth, be in relationship with the Earth, the plants, the animals, the waters, everything shifts; we know ourselves for who we really are.

I have a quote here, “When we begin to live from our original beauty instead of the wounds that mire us in self-doubt, we bring the undeniable power of our creativity back into alignment with the wider dream of the world.” Beautiful sentence, Asia (*Amber laughs*). You're such a good writer.

You're just nodding, like "Yeah, that was a really good one." *(both laugh)* But so, you know, reading this book, and even hearing you speak now I'm like, yeah, that's my story, too. I hadn't really put it together. But when I look back, 41 years old now, on each turn along the path that has led me to where I am now, it was saying yes to relationship with the natural world that I didn't grow up thinking was normal.

[0:29:37]

Asia: Yeah, you know, there's a concept in psychology of mirroring and the kind of mirroring our parents are ideally supposed to do for us which is, you know, when we're young to mirror back to us, our goodness, to show us; to not just mirror, you know, our emotions so we can help to understand our own selves, but to mirror back everything that we project onto them, you know. Like their power and, you know, love and strength, they mirror all those things back to us and say, "No, that's actually yours. And this, this is who you are."

And, you know, unfortunately, because we do live in a very toxic overculture, this often doesn't happen with our caregivers, that, you know, for many of us, we didn't experience that kind of mirroring that we really needed. But what I think is so beautiful is that when I say in the book is that nature is the parent mirror that never forsakes us, that does not let us down, that is always there as sort of this perfect, perfect mirror, giving back to us our beauty and our power.

And I think that it's a piece that — especially, us in the Western world and cultures that are separated from the earth, just, you know, by the way that they're functioning — that we don't get that parent mirror of the earth. And that parent mirror is like a source of such profound grace and growth. And I think that we are all — those of us who don't have that connection growing up or aren't shown that this is a place to connect — that we're missing that, even if we do have parents that are really good at being that mirror for us. It's still a lack. And so coming home to that parent mirror of the Earth, it's healing in a way that I just don't think that healing can happen, really, in any other way, until we return home to that primary relationship.

[0:31:32]

Amber: Yeah, and for anyone listening who's like, "I don't have access to nature," this paragraph just struck me.

Like many who love this earth, I often long for what is lost: old growth forests, spreading estuaries, and pristine rivers. I think back on what was an ache for the depth and diversity of such ecosystems. Even though this longing is a natural response to the dramatic change of the past few centuries, I noticed that when I focus on what is gone, I forget to open my eyes to the value of what is growing now. When I was younger, I made pilgrimages to national parks, but seldom walked into the brush outside my home. I enshrined ancient groves that far into the forest, but was blind to the scruffy patch of pines next to the supermarket.

And it's true: there's nature everywhere, that there's very few spaces that there's not a dandelion coming through the crack or house plant or scrub oak on the side of the road.

Asia: Yeah, and I think that, you know, one of the things I say in those chapters, in that chapter particular, is like, there's medicine and really connecting into these, these, you know, sacred volunteers, these weeds. And, of course, on like a physical level, that's something that has been talked about a lot in the past handful of years, like weed medicine, you know, that like weed medicine is like tenacious, and powerful, and, you know, prolific, so let's use it.

But I also think on, like, an energetic level, there is such medicine in realizing that yes, like nature is everywhere, and that, you know, we can see ourselves in that mirror of that weed often of like, you know, maybe, for example, you are not, your family is not from the place where you live. You are not native to that place, and yet, you are learning, you know how to thrive in that place. It's like you are finding your feet there, and you are seeing that you still hold medicine, even though maybe you're growing up a long ways away from where your ancestry was originally rooted. And I think that we need to just, yeah, remember that these these plants that are growing up in between the cracks in the sidewalk that they not only hold medicine, but they want to be in connection with us.

And it's something that I've also thought about a lot, especially for folks who live in an urban environment, because I get this question of like, "Well, how can I connect if I live in an urban environment?" And I think because we are nature, when you are in an urban environment, you are literally the forest that those trees are wanting to connect to. It's like the trees and the plants want to be in communication with other aspects of nature and the living world, and in that cityscape that's you. As a human, like, you are a part of that forest of life in that place. And so, the forest there, the dandelions, you know, as you're saying, the scrub oaks, they want to be in communication with you.

And I think some of my most powerful plant experiences happened in more urban landscapes because sort of the hunger was there. There was a hunger on both sides, this reciprocal hunger to connect. And yeah, amazing things can happen when we just slow down and can value what is here and what is growing in.

[0:34:50]

Amber: And so your focus, you bring home the idea that when we're rooted in self compassion, self-love, self knowledge, too, then, like, our nervous systems are in a settled place. And that's what's going to allow us to make the changes and have the energy and the life force that we need to create the change that we need on the planet.

But then I'm also thinking about turning that inward and how incredibly healing, like literally, we can heal major physical ailments just by coming into relationship with the natural world, not even necessarily by like, consuming the plant constituents that might heal our issue. But like — so you've healed vulvodinia, which was incredible pain in your pelvis that you're just living with through your college years. It's so painful to read about and think about how awful that must have been and Lyme disease. And you know, I mean, I'm sure you're actually doing physical things to do that. But I mean, it really sounds like from your book that you would just go and lay on the earth and that sort of rewiring your neurology through that is what created the space inside your body to heal.

Asia: Yeah, you know, I think everyone's, obviously, everyone's journey with chronic pain and chronic illness is different. And I do think that these experiences are profound initiations and teachers that

are, I think, everything is here to help us find our path. And, for me, a huge part of that was, yeah, learning how to heal my nervous system. And in recognizing how much of a role trauma played in developing chronic pain, and then in developing chronic illness, and knowing that trauma plays a role, of course, on a spiritual level, but, like you're mentioning, on a very physical level, trauma really destabilizes our nervous system and continues to. I mean, that's the definition of trauma is something that still is reverberating within us. It's not an event, it's the reverberations. And so, it's incredibly challenging for our body to keep having these cortisol stress responses.

And, you know, I became someone who, you know, was sick often in my life, throughout my twenties was sick and in pain, and yeah, a huge, humongous part of that was was my nervous system. And I am still learning how to, you know, heal, basically, and how to have my nervous system feel expansive, and be able to just really drop into that parasympathetic, resting place. And nature is such a powerful teacher in that way.

I mean, and, you know, like I mentioned in the book, when I was in college and experiencing sort of the depths of chronic pain, it was like the only place I felt seen was in nature. And I know that this is the case for a lot of people is this sense of not feeling seen by the culture that they live in, not being seen by other humans, and yet, feeling so seen by the living world. And I think that that aspect of being seen is something that we desperately need, just as beings on this planet. I think all of us need to be seen, and it is really healing for our systems, like on a really physical level, you know.

If we're not being seen, it's signaling to a part of us, right, that we're actually literally not like, visible to our community and our caretakers. And although it can also be challenging for us to be seen, at the end of the day, it is a necessity, a need, to be seen. And with the natural world, we're always seen for who we are. And I think that the healing that can come through that, on both a physical and metaphysical level is pretty spectacular.

And you know, everybody has, like I said, different experiences with chronic pain and chronic illness. But for me, even though I ended up becoming an herbalist and getting into all different kinds of alternative healing, becoming a Reiki Master, for me, it really was more about the relationship itself that was healing for me than it was about a particular medicine or, you know, a particular protocol; that, for me, the relationship was the thing that was asking me to come into being with in order to experience healing.

[0:39:27]

Amber: It's just like this feeling of total acceptance when we're in relationship with the earth, and that is so healing, and I love that you have this emphasis throughout the book on our inherent goodness.

Going back to being a highly sensitive person, as am I, I reread Dr. Elaine Aaron's book recently for the first time in like 15 years or something. And what really struck me this time is that highly sensitive people are highly conscientious, as well. Like, you know, when I park somewhere I like make sure, is there enough room for everyone to park, or is everyone good, you know, just constantly thinking about like the good of everyone. And am I doing the most possible, you know, kind of like what you were. And like realizing, oh my gosh, that's an HSP thing! And my dad and my

sister who are also HSPs are the same way. And so that's a really quick way to get mired in guilt, self-doubt, self-judgement. And so yeah, just making that connection.

But you believe, as do I, that humans are inherently good. I feel like you know, these last few years online, it just seems like so many people believe the opposite, especially when we get really mired in tribalism and like the other side, they're all bad people, people literally believe that, you know, they literally believe that everyone who's on the other side of the political spread spectrum, or whichever belief system or specific issue you're talking about are actually bad people.

And for me, I've had a total dissolving of basically any political affiliation in the last couple of years, because I realized, no, they're not bad people. And so I was just really, really touched by your insistence throughout the book, that we have an inherent goodness inside of us. And that, again, when we're in this relationship with the plants, the animals, the Earth, where we're reminded of it. It's like this whole, we just drop the whole story that we're bad and that other people are bad.

Asia: Yeah, yeah. And it's, you know, especially those of us who have, you know, European lineages and ancestry, it's like this story of original sin goes back real far, you know (*Asia laughs*). It's like, a couple thousand years, we've been, you know, sort of hearing this story. And so, it is such an incredible rewrite to remember, you know, that we all have this goodness, inside of us.

And, you know, it's something I share in the book that Lila June had shared in a teaching that she was giving and was directly paraphrasing her elder, Patricia Davis, but just this concept in Dine, this understanding that we are all born in original beauty and not original sin. And I just think that concept of original beauty is, ah, it's so touching to me and so true.

I mean, you look around at the world, and like, when I say that, you know, this flower budding out was anything but beautiful, or, you know, a fawn being born, or, you know, the start of a river, of course, like, these are beautiful beings. And now being a mother watching my child being born, it's like, me talking about original beauty, you know, and in recognizing, like, you know, why do we think we're any different? We're not any different than every other being in the natural world. And so we, too, are created in that place of original beauty and original goodness.

[0:43:17]

Asia: And, you know, to me, I had a pretty big download at some point where I really realized, this was also through being in therapy, that I had a core belief that I was not good. And it was shocking to me to realize that I had this core belief, you know. I actually had the really good fortune of having parents who were loving and well-adjusted. And so I had, you know, that background, and so if you had asked me, like, you know, if I struggled to think I was good, I would say, "No, of course, I think I'm good." I was told I was good when I was little, but still, at the core of me, I believed I wasn't good.

And I think that there's a lot of places that this can come from, just living in the culture that we live in, you know, what we're exposed to, you know. I mentioned in the book that I went through a series of abusive relationships in my teen years and into my twenties. And I think, in particular, too, just kind of the degree of, you know, like narcissism and empathic disorders that exist in our world that we're exposed to, like that, in and of itself, especially if you're an empath, can really start

internalizing the sense of like, “I am not good, I am not worthy.” And it's really the complete opposite. But it is humbling to realize that somewhere inside of you, you believed you weren't good.

And you know, I think things like narcissism are a disease unto itself, you know, that just like cause harm in its wake. And I don't think any of us are innately, you know, narcissistic at our core. I think this is all wounding in our culture. But I think, you know, the end result of that is, at its heart — even narcissism is, if you really get to the bottom of it — it is a lack of self love. And I think that that's something people forget about a lot when we look at sort of all the harms that have been caused by narcissistic belief structures, you know, this idea that “I am primary, humans are primary.” And yet, at the heart of that, what real narcissism is, is actually an inability to source yourself in love, including self love.

And so this journey of really coming home to your goodness, to recognizing that you are good and humans are good, to me, it is the antidote to so many of these wounds that have been caused by you know, what we call “narcissism” or narcissistic behavior or belief systems. And so, to me, it is a very personal journey, but it is a journey that then translates on a global scale.

Amber: Yeah, it's so interesting with narcissism because, you know, the word comes from the myth of Narcissus gazing into the pond that is his own reflection. But really, narcissists, in the way we talk about them today — and there are a lot of them out there, there really are — they don't love themselves, they hate themselves. It is, like you said, it's this wound and this inability to — what did you say? Like source themselves in love.

And I think anyone who's ever been close to one, if you've been really close, you've seen that vulnerability, and you've seen the self hate come out in those weak moments where they're actually being vulnerable for once about how they feel about themselves and their existence and their very being, and it's heartbreaking. It's really heartbreaking, the lack of self love there, but the ripples out into the world can be devastating for the people around them, especially empaths.

Asia: Yep.

Amber: And, yeah, I mean, you just think, you know, there, there probably weren't narcissists in deep ancestral time when everyone was rooted in the earth and rooted in their community.

Asia: Yeah, you know, I recently finished the book, [Sand Talk](#) by Tyson Yunkaporta, and something that he says, an Aboriginal scholar, and this talks about how traditional Aboriginal systems and cultures were built to head off narcissism, were built to prevent narcissism from happening. Like, you know, traditional cultures were and are very aware of just basically the way that I think our psyches are formulated. We are, humans are, very sensitive in a certain way. And when we've been traumatized, the brain and the psyche does certain things.

And so yeah, the idea that traditional cultures are literally built to prevent this kind of thing from happening. I think it was very profound for me to read that. And I really feel that that is very accurate, just growing up in a non-traditional culture in that way and just seeing how, how little safety guards there really are. For, yeah, or for if, you know, if you don't have caretakers who are, you know, able to be that solid place for you; that there's no other places often because there's not

the community, and there's not that ability to connect in that way or even that awareness of you can connect to nature or that there are other even humans there for you.

And so, yeah, you know, I think as an empath for a long time I struggled with feeling like this focus on myself was selfish, and it would take away from the world to focus on myself or to, you know, really grounded in the self goodness and valuing of oneself. And it took a while for me and a lot of experiences in nature to realize that the exact opposite is true.

And, you know, I have a feeling that if you have conversations with wisdom keepers in any traditional culture, that they would probably be able to download that wisdom pretty quickly, the wisdom that took me a very long time to gather, that yes, of course, like, you know, you being able to see your goodness and value yourself is a very essential part to actually being a functional citizen in the world.

Amber: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, when I started this podcast, and you know, still the first sentence in the description on like Spotify and Apple podcasts is "The mythic journeys we undertake when coming to know ourselves." And I was like, you know, ugh, people are gonna think this is so yeah, self-centered and like, who cares? And why would that be your focus? But I just knew I was following that golden thread that was telling me that actually, you know, self knowledge really is the basis of living a functionally happy, contributing to the wellness of the whole world. And I mean, it's the, you know, that inscription over the Oracle of Delphi: Know thyself. I think you're right, that like the wisdom keepers of the present and past would have always known that this was the case.

[0:50:33]

Amber: And I was thinking earlier, too, about the inherent goodness, and yeah, I was like, Baby Iona. And my daughters, you know. You can see in the children that inherent goodness in all humans. And I saw this really powerful video, once of this woman, she was something about, like, take out a photo of yourself from childhood. And then say the things to that photo that you say to yourself now, like, "Oh, you're so stupid. Oh, my, you're gonna look at those jeans on you," or just whatever it is, "no one will ever love you." All the negative self talk that's constantly going in our head, just try to say this to your little four year old self in that photo.

Asia: Powerful. Wow.

Amber: I mean, people were sobbing, you know. How do we think it's okay to do this to ourselves now, when we would never do it to our own children, hopefully, or even say it to our own child selves?

Asia: Yeah, that's, that's an incredible exercise. It's true. Yeah. And I think even though I'm a very new mom, I can already see how powerful that part of the journey is. It's like really recognizing the stories that you are saying to yourself and the way you talk to yourself and just through interacting with your child who is like, I mean, just a embodiment of divine light, really. You realize like, oh my gosh, like, why would I ever speak to myself like that, when I would never in a million years speak to my child in that way, and I am no different. There is still the child within me that is that innocent and precious, and just, you know, still so connected to that divine light, that there is no separation. And

what an incredible journey to be a mother. It's just started out, but I feel like I've already had a lot of moments like that of like, real self-recognizing and realization.

Amber: Yeah, at this point, do you guys think you'll have any more?

Asia: Oh, gosh, it's such a question! I feel like every day, I think to myself, "I don't know if I can do this again." And then every day, I think to myself, "how could I not do this again?" (*Amber laughs*) So still a question mark.

[0:52:48]

Amber: Before we close, I want to touch a little bit on magic. I mean, this is another word that's in the description of this podcast, you know, that I'm like, "Oh, what are people going to think about that?" But I just have this deep belief that magic is real. And you write in the book, "Magic, the power to influence events by mysterious forces, is no more supernatural than electricity or compassion. Real magic, as any performing magician will tell you, is simply about shifting your perception."

And then I also want to read some words from The Cryptonaturalist on Instagram, his name is Jared K. Anderson, that I had just read when I read that passage in your book. "For me, magic is about meaning, an interpretive act and intentional cultivation of awe and gratitude. There are two paths to magic: imagination and paying attention. Magic requires our intention, our choice to participate, we must choose to meet it halfway. And when we do we often find that magic isn't a dismissal of what is real. It's a synthesis of it: the nectar of fact becoming the honey of meaning, a nod to the unquantifiable.

Asia: How beautiful.

Amber: Yeah, no, I love that.

Asia: Yeah, well, you know, I think growing up like a lot of people, you know, it's like, I wanted to believe in magic. But, you know, I was kind of trained to see magic as certain things, you know. And I grew — I was born in the Eighties. So, you know, I kind of grew up with that big wave of like, *Practical Magic*, and, you know, *The Craft* and you know, all those things, were sort of coming into our awareness. And so I thought, okay, you like, make a pentacle with salt, and then like, something amazing happens (*Amber laughs*).

And, you know, it wasn't really till I was an adult that I, you know, that I realized that, you know, and started having these incredible, magical experiences that, you know, what we talk about as magic is really just something that is innate to life and to nature. I think it's a part of all of us, and I think it's something that we haven't been trained to perceive. And because we haven't been trained to perceive it, we don't witness it until we start sort of being open to this idea that, you know, magic could be the way a tree leans into you with their branches just as you're needing to feel love, you know. Magic can be a friend calling you right after you just, you know, sort of had the idea of like, "I want to talk to that person."

And so, you know, I think the more we pay attention to these moments of magic, of synchronicity and meaning, and sort of beauty streaming in, you know, like beauty and grace, it's just constantly

streaming into our lives, whether we feel we deserve it or not. Beauty and grace is constantly streaming in, and to me, that's magic. And I think the more we pay attention to these moments of things that feel magical, the more we open up to the magic of life.

And I think I'm really grateful that this word magic in the English language has survived and has still has such positive connotations because I think that it holds like this seed of truth of something that I think we all remember; that the world is so much more like mysterious and alive and mystical, and yes, magical than then we were told, or we were handed. And I think we all know this at a young age and then are often told to forget it or leave it behind. And I know for people who are probably listening to this podcast, like, we go through these experiences. Then as an adult, where we return to that, we say, "No, you know, I actually, I believe in this."

And I've had these experiences of grace and beauty and connection and healing that are showing me that, you know, magic is real. And that sense, or that feeling of the magic, and the possibility of magic is so much of what, like keeps me going and keeps me excited about life. And I think that we are, as humans in this cultural time on Earth, that we are just starting to open up again to just the vast reservoir of magic that really exists here on this planet.

So I'm excited to keep seeing my life unfurl and, you know, this time period that we're in, because I see so many people tuning back into magic. And the more we tune into it, like I mentioned at the beginning of our chat, when you visit these sacred sites that are still tended, the more you tune into the magic, the more you're tending that magic, the more that magic can rise to the surface.

Amber: Yes, because, again, if it's a matter of attention, this existence is miraculous and mysterious. How did it all begin? How do we go from nothing to something? Okay, and not only something but an infinite amount of somethings?

Here we all are, and the life force is so strong and incredible and pulsating. And evolution is magic, water is magic. Like, I just don't know how people don't just see it everywhere all the time. But I think, you know, one of the reasons that I do at this point in my life is because of the time I've spent in relationship with the earth like that. Oh my gosh, anytime anytime you're in a body of wild water or sitting next to a tree, or just looking at a flower, every single flower is magic.

Asia: Yes, yes. Yeah, and what a gift to be able to start to pull those layers back within your own psyche to see that and experience that. And it's kind of like what I feel like I really want to dedicate myself to in this life, right, is like to keep peeling back those layers to just experience the magic of being here. And I think that that's the truth. You know, we come here to experience these physical lives in bodies, embodied on this planet, and to experience just how magical that is: that we don't need to go anywhere else besides right here in these bodies, in this place, at this time.

Amber: Yeah, and no matter how hard your external life circumstances are, if you always have your attention on the magic, on the awe, on the gratitude, it's beautiful to be here.

[0:59:28]

Amber: I said that was the last thing, but I actually want to touch on one more little thing. This is an Instagram post you recently did on how you can choose peace and still grow, and this was so

resonant. You know, you talked about how you would kind of hurtle yourself into chaotic situations are moments or points of growth to be points of growth, like, "Well, it's gotta be really hard if I'm gonna grow." But tell us about realizing that it doesn't have to be that hard; growth does not have to be that hard.

Asia: Yeah, well, I think, partially, that came in through therapy, definitely a big proponent of therapy. But I think, you know, in general, I look and see how nature goes about things. And yes, of course, there are times of cataclysm and landslide and, you know, thunderstorm. But most growth is happening peacefully and incrementally. You know, you sit with your garden, and it's like, every day, you watch the tendrils of that passion flower grow a little bit more, you know. And I think most of our growth is actually meant to happen this way.

And I think a lot of highly sensitive people, even though we have these highly sensitive nervous systems, we also tend to catapult ourselves into intense experiences over and over again. And I think in part because we have actually a couple of great capacity for intensity, because just the way our nervous systems are built, we're constantly experiencing intensity, because we experienced life so vividly. And so we're constantly capitulating ourselves into the big, intense moments. And because we think that's how we grow, we think that's how you get to the other side. Often, too, this is like, you know, sort of trauma patterning from a young age of like, you know, intensity and intense experiences is where, you know, connection comes in, is where, you know, attachment lives. But I think there's some conditioning with that, too.

But the truth is and what I have found is that I can choose peace and still grow. Like, I can choose to sit at the center of myself, and to take care of my physical body, and to pace myself and decide, you know, I'm only going to do one thing at a time because I know if I do those five things at a time, for me, often what happens is I get sick. But, you know, if I take one thing at a time, and I go the peaceful route, that I miraculously can still grow.

And I actually think that this world would be a really different place if we all knew this: that we could choose peace. We could choose to do things in a way that nourishes our nervous system and still grow, and in fact, still grow by leaps and bounds; that we don't need the humongous overhaul. Every time we want to make a growth or a change in our life, because the reality is those events, those cataclysms are still going to happen. You don't need to do anything to call them into being (*Asia laughs*), they're still going to happen in your life. So on a daily basis, I try to choose peace.

I ask myself, like, what is the thing that will bring me the most peace, that would nourish my nervous system the most? Because if I continually choose that, then I have more capacity to show up for what is happening. I have more capacity to show up when those cataclysms happen within my own personal life and within the world. So it's a mantra I live by and I repeat to myself often: that you can choose peace and still grow.

Amber: Yeah, growth is a part of the magic that's just interwoven into the fabric of reality.

Asia: Yeah, it's unavoidable. Really, it's unavoidable

Amber: It is. It's the whole arc and aim of the life force is growth.

Asia: And when you choose peace, I think you can meet it. You can meet it and ride that wave.

Amber: Yes. Keeping your nervous system nourished and intact.

Asia: Yeah.

[1:03:45]

Amber: I'm looking forward to talking more about the nervous system and the trait of high sensitivity with you and the Patreon bonus. And Asia, I'm so proud of you for writing this book. I'm honored to know you. It's so gorgeous. Y'all go look it up right now, just to be put into a moment of peace by the cover. Do you love the cover so much?

Asia: I do, yeah. And I, you know, if anyone knows anything about the publishing process, you don't often have the most say when someone is publishing your book about the cover. And so, you know, I did have actually some say and we went back and forth a little bit with it, but I just was in love with it and was so happy that they were able to capture kind of the vision you know of what the book was about. So that was a happy moment (*Asia laughs*).

Amber: And such, I mean, it's a beautiful image, but such peaceful colors, too. The color palette of it is just so soothing immediately.

Asia: Yeah. Oh good. I'm so glad to hear that.

Amber: Oh, yeah. So yeah, where can people find it? Where can they find you? What do you, what are your offerings?

Asia: Yeah, so the book is available wherever books are sold. You can also go to mirrorsintheearth.com for a list of online places where you can purchase that book. So you can find me on my website, which is onewillowapothecaries.com. And also on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube under my name, which is Asia Suler

Amber: You have wonderful online courses and just every Instagram post is beautiful. So thank you so much, Asia, for being you, for hearing the call to go deeper and find yourself, and be willing to share your medicine with the world.

Asia: Oh, thank you, Amber. I mean, literally, to be here among the amazing collection of medicine stories you have collected is just an honor beyond honors. So thank you so much for having me.

(Exit Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux - Open Sans, Normal, Italicized - Size 10)

[Closing]

[1:05:45]

Amber: Thank you for taking these Medicine Stories in. I hope they inspire you to keep walking the mythic path of your own unfolding self. I love sharing information and will always put any relevant links in the show notes. You can find past episodes, my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and a lot more at MythicMedicine.love. We've got reishi, lion's mane, elderberry, mugwort, yarrow, redwood, body oils, an amazing sleep medicine, heart medicine, earth essences, so much more. More than I can list there. MythicMedicine.love.

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" It's fun and lighthearted, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with both the medicine you are in need of and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at patreon.com/medicinstories. It is so worth your while. There are dozens and dozens of killer rewards there, and I've been told by many folks that it's the best Patreon out there. We've got e-books, downloadable PDFs, bonus interviews, guided meditations, giveaways, resource guides, links to online learning, and behind-the-scenes stuff and just so much more. The best of it is available at the two-dollar a month level. Thank you.

And please subscribe, in whatever app you use, just click that little subscribe button and review on iTunes. It's so helpful, and if you do that you just may be featured in a listener spotlight in the future.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her beautiful song "Wild Eyes." Thank you, Mariee.

And thanks to you all. I look forward to next time!