



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 25 with Maia Toll

Self-Attunement and the Myths We're Making

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[0:00:00]

(Excerpt from today's show by Maia Toll)

There are worlds within, you know. The subtle realms, a lot of them, I think, exist within us.

To a cell in your liver, your mind is a God.

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

[Intro]

Amber: Hello, friends, it's me, Amber Magnolia Hill. And this is Episode 25 of the Medicine Stories Podcast, where we explore the mythic journeys we undertake when coming to know ourselves through interviews with herbalists, story keepers, ancestral listeners, consciousness explorers, earth dreamers, and other wise folk. Story is medicine, magic is real, healing is open-ended and endless as we discover in this conversation today with Maia Toll.

Maia is the author of *The Illustrated Herbiary*, a new book that just came out, and in this conversation we talked about:

- The layers within
- A fantastical herbal
- Opening to the second song of a plant
- How a health problem, an unraveling life, and a dream message — a very strong and specific dream message — set Maia on the plant path
- Apprenticing to a medicine woman in Ireland
- When having a diagnosis isn't helpful
- Deep self-attunement for stopping illness before it becomes too big, too deeply embedded
- A major weakness herbalists face when we're ill
- The Healing Relationship

- Stone medicine & a story of healing with morganite
- How we create the sacred
- A meaningful swan sighting, union & transformation, and the myth of Caer
- And Maia and I talked about how neither of us wanted to get married, and now we're both wives. We also share the stories of our wedding rings.

[0:02:04]

Amber: So, Maia is giving away two, like, really awesome online courses as a part of this interview that we did. One of them is for everyone; anyone listening right now can access it. And then the second one is for patrons of the podcast at the \$2 level.

So first, I'll tell you about the one that's for everyone. It's called *Secrets of the Illustrated Herbiary*, and it's an online course with videos and exercises for each lesson. The description reads:

In this five-part mini-course, you'll learn all my best tools for navigating your inner cartography, so that you can connect more deeply with yourself and the world around you. I'll teach you the secrets of how I came into relationship with nature and how you can, too.

In the short video lessons, I'll walk you through the three ways in which you already gather information every day. The exercises below the video will help you come into deeper awareness of each level of yourself. Finally, I'll show you how to integrate all three levels in order to ignite the full spectrum of your senses and bring your inner wisdom online.

So that was written in Maia's voice, of course; that "I" is coming from Maia. And I will have the notes — the link, I mean, to this free online course, free to you in the show notes to this podcast. So just check those out, scroll down to the bottom where there's always links, and I'll have it first.

And then the second course for Patreon subscribers at Patreon.com/MedicineStories is called the *Kitchen Witches Workshop*. So this is 10 lessons and it's, let's see, "This self-study program takes you on a walk through the basic skills every herbalist needs to master."

I'm, like, actually truly blown away right now that Maia is offering this for free. It's worth \$300! And it's really in depth. Like, I'm just, I'm grateful. I'm so grateful that she's offering this to you guys, to the people who listen to this podcast and who support it for two bucks a month, so:

- Lesson One: Welcome and Resources
- Lesson Two: Make Yourself a Cup of Tea. This includes: What is a Materia Medica? How to make infusions, how to make the Concoctions, discovering plant energetics, and more.

I'm not going to read what goes in each lesson from here on out. I'll just tell you the name of each week.

- Week Three: Soaks and Compresses
- Week Four: Vinegars and Tinctures
- Week Five: Oils, Salves, and Balms
- Week Six: Syrups and Elixirs
- Week Seven: Flower Essences

- Week Eight: Essential oils and the herbal home
- Week Nine: Herbal Kitchen and Garden
- And Week 10: Have a cup of tea before you go.

And it looks like there's five herbs that get covered in-depth throughout this course. There's ginger, dandelion, nettle, alfalfa, and plantain.

So that link, and the coupon code to make this course free instead of 300 bucks, will be, again at patreon.com/medicinstories. I just think it's really cool. Thank you so much, Maia, thank you so much.

[0:05:41]

Amber: So a thing I want to talk about today before we get into the interview, is just this phrase that's been rattling around in my head for years now, and something I've been wanting to talk about on the podcast for a while, too. And it's a simple three word phrase, and that's: **herbalism is vast.**

Herbalism is vast; there's no one right path to take. There's never an endpoint. You never know everything, not even close, not even close. You never get to the point where someone else is going to give you permission to call yourself an herbalist or to practice herbalism at home or in the world. It's very self-directed. Of course, there are courses, and people even make up their own certificates to give you at the end of those courses, but if you're in the States, at least, they are made up certificates because herbalism is completely unregulated — which is a total blessing because, as we talked about in the last episode with Faye Johnston. In Europe, at least, where it's heavily regulated, it's really hard to practice herbalism or phytotherapy as I believe it's called. And a lot of people who do are unhappy because they're so regulated. They're, like, strangled to death by having to follow certain rules.

So it's a blessing, but it's also I don't want to say a curse, but we really need to utilize critical thinking skills when we are studying herbs, or calling ourselves “herbalists”, or making medicine for other people.

[0:07:22]

Amber: I recently saw a post from an herbalist who's a generation older than me, decades-long practice, clinical herbalism, owns a shop. She's very, very knowledgeable, very, very well-versed, and she was talking about how she had come upon, I think a website, maybe someone's post, young herbalist, somewhat new, who was talking about this book they're writing about magical herbalism, which is, of course, a kind of buzzword, very exciting, very interesting. That's going to catch a lot of people's attention.

And, you know, clearly, in my tagline for this podcast, I say that magic is real. I'm not anti-magic at all. I'm looking for it and working with it all the time. But it's a slippery slope, and we need to bring in critical thinking and scientific thinking, as well, when it comes to actually dispensing knowledge — like this person is planning to do in their book — and to treating people or making medicine that people are going to use.

So what what this elder herbalist read on this younger herbalist's description of what their book is going to be really worried her because this person is purely looking at kind of, you know, esoteric,

magical, mythical, symbolic connections between plants and body systems, and probably other things, too, like elements and planets. And you know, I can imagine all sorts of mythic threads that tie things together and that tie plans together in a lot of people's consciousness that you could write a book about. But this person does not have the knowledge grounded in real study of how the herbs work in the body.

So what this elder herbalist saw was that this person is tying, like, this specific herb to this specific body system purely because its magical associations. Like they're both associated with the moon or whatever, when you actually really need to be careful using this herb for any issues related to that body system because there are contraindications.

So I've just really been thinking about that post and thinking about how herbalism has just exploded in the collective consciousness in the last few years, and I'm so glad it has. I think about all the, again, elder herbalists who have been working towards this for decades and decades, trying to empower the common folk, like you and me, to bring home herbalism back into their lives and to be able to treat themselves and their loved ones with plants, and how easily that can tip into this sort of magical thinking that lacks the check of rational thinking as well, and just that we have to be really careful.

[0:10:18]

Amber: You know, there's so many good books, so many good resources, to really ground your knowledge of herbs in the body, you know. If I had to, I love knowing... I love using both, like physical, grounded, rational herbalism and herbal thinking in my life, and the more magical, symbolic, meaningful connections of herbs in my life. But if I had to choose only one — which would never happen, but if I had to — I would much rather be taking, like, the rational scientific approach because these chemical constituents in these plants are real.

They really have an effect on the physical body, and you have to have some knowledge of what you're doing before you take them internally or prescribe them internally for other people. So that's just really something to think about as you explore your own plant path, and as you take in other people's content. Just, you know, make sure that whatever you're taking in, be it the herbs themselves or any information or knowledge that's grounded in actual wisdom about how the plant works in the body.

Another aspect of this “herbalism is vast” that I think about a lot is I think that people who are new to herbalism, or have no experience whatsoever, again, think that at some point, you know everything and you're totally done. In fact, I was just a few days ago talking to a woman who was sort of in that mindset, you know. She's about to take some classes at an institution, and she's like, “Oh, but I'm not going to do anything. I'm not going to make medicine or practice in any way until I know everything.” And through the course of our conversation, I was able to kind of impart to her what I'm saying now, like, “You'll never get there. You're never going to know anything.”

And it's like what Kami McBride said in Episode 20 of this podcast. Like, we get so caught up in, “Well, when do I know enough? Do I know enough now? When will I know enough?” And actually most of us feel like we never know enough. And it's really, that's not a solid line. That word “enough,” you know, it's going to be different for everyone.

And I really encourage people to practice, to do it, to go for it, to listen to your heart, but also really engage your mind on the herbal path.

[0:12:52]

Amber: So a lot of people ask me like really specific health questions like about things I know nothing about. How would I even know that? Just because I'm an herbalist, and I know some things about using plants to heal the body does not mean that I know this really specific question, about this really specific disease that you're asking about.

I just think that from the outside it can seem like, "Well once you study herbalism, you know exactly which plant to use for which ailment." And this goes back to what we talked about an episode, I think, 17 with Sajah Popham. You know, most herbalists who have been studying and doing it for a long time, don't really use that framework of "This herb for that ailment." The body and each plant, and each system is so unique and specific, that this one size fits all, this for that, approach really doesn't work.

And no herbalist knows everything. People also asked me about specific plants, like, "Exactly how would I prepare this plant? And then when would I take it?" And I'm like, "I don't know. I don't know that plant at all. There are thousands of medicinal plants. That's one that I happen to have no knowledge of, or minimal knowledge of, and I'm not going to pretend like I do or make my best guess."

So, yeah, I'm worried that what I'm saying will be discouraging to people, but I don't want it to be discouraging at all. As I often say, herbalism is your ancestral right as a human. Humans have always worked with plants, and this is something that is in your bones, and something that you don't need anyone's permission to do, but you have to proceed with caution, and you have to think critically and check yourself.

And, you know, there's a lot of talk about intuition and herbalism. And I'm all for that, too. But you got to check your intuition with experience and with facts and with science as well, or you could take something that could really hurt you, prescribe something to someone that could hurt them, harvest a plant that's endangered and that should absolutely never be picked, no matter how much you want it or how much of a connection you feel with it.

So you know, this is actually something that I love about herbalism is that it's not cut and dry. There's not one specific path. There, literally, an infinite number of things to know and of ways you can explore and engage with plants and build those relationships. And I love that it's constantly sharpening my critical thinking tools, as well, as constantly sharpening my instincts and my intuition. I love walking the plant path, and I started this podcast to encourage other people to do the same from a grounded and intelligent and respectful place.

[0:15:51]

Amber: So from there, let me tell you a little bit about Maia:

First, I want to say that there were two or three like major drop-offs in audio during our conversation through Skype. You know, sometimes that happens with Skype, and I went back and listened, and although we do miss like a good few seconds, 10 seconds maybe even, in some of these, you can tell what she says. Like the thread of the story is not disrupted. So I chose to not try

to, like, call her back and play her the audio and try to figure out exactly what word she said because you can figure out what it is, and that will take a lot of time and just be tedious for me to like interject in between. So it's there, but just so you know, there's some drop offs, but she comes back. Maia comes back.

So Maia total spent a life-changing year apprenticed to a traditional medicine woman in Ireland. She mentors spiritual wellness seekers, practitioners, and teachers through her online program, The Medicine Keepers Collective, and is the founder and owner of Herbiary, a natural product store with locations in Asheville, North Carolina and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Maia has taught botanical medicine at West Chester University and at the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research in the Peruvian jungle. She lectures at hospitals, universities, and herbal conferences, and runs her own deep magic retreats in the North Carolina mountains during the witchy twilight of autumn. She blogs to an international following at maiatoll.com, and lives in Asheville, North Carolina.

I guess I should add here — I think we talked about this at the end — that her new book *The Illustrated Herbiary*, which is just gorgeous, also contains oracle cards at the end. It's like an oracle card book, and there's a pouch in the back, and you pull the cards out, and they're just so beautiful.

And I just really enjoy engaging with oracle cards. It's just a fun... it's like both light-hearted and deeply meaningful way to sort of reflect your consciousness back out into the world or have your consciousness reflected at you from external physical objects. And I talked a little bit at the end about how my 12-year-old daughter and I had a lot of fun with these cards.

So, without further rambling, let's listen to this interview with Maia Toll.

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

[Interview Begins]

[0:18:28]

Amber: Hi Maia. Welcome to Medicine Stories.

Maia: Amber, I'm so thrilled to be here.

Amber: I'm really, I'm really happy to have you here. And I received your book in the mail the other day, *The Illustrated Herbiary*. It's so beautiful! I love how it's just — you know, what is this called? Like the sheen on the cover?

Maia: I... yeah, I don't know what it's called, technically. It's like a pearlescence put in there.

Amber: Yes.

Maia: Yeah. My publisher was— it was something that the art director was really excited about. I actually got an email that the art director personally had gone down to the printers to make sure that that pearlescence was exactly how she wanted it.

Amber: Oh my gosh, I love that. (Maia laughs)

I just have to say “pearlescent” is one of my favorite words from my vintage clothing selling days, You know, if there's pearlescent buttons on a dress, I was gonna mention that. But yeah, it's just a gorgeous book. It just feels so good. It's like, you know, a piece of a beautiful craftsmanship in your hands.

Maia: They did an amazing job. It's Storybooks, Story Publishing, I think technically. They do all Rosemary Gladstar's books. Rosemary was actually the person who hooked me up with them.

And their attention to detail has been incredible. Like, I think when I was envisioning the book, I was picturing lots of white space and kind of modern and green, and their interpretation was totally different.

It's like mystical and twilight and even just the end pages where they have that kind of twilight color with all those bronze line drawings of herbs and things. They're stunning! And not what I would have chosen at all. So that's, like, one of the benefits of working with a publisher because you have a team and everyone sees your words differently.

Amber: Right well and it also, like the whole the whole feel of the art, really, ties in beautifully with what you say here in the beginning about, you know, the bestiary as a collection of short descriptions about all sorts of animals, real and imaginary, birds, and even rocks, and how it's very fantastical, as well as grounded in reality.

And so this is an herbiary, and it's sort of modeled after that form of books. And so the art makes it look just like that, you know, very, again, like fantastical.

[0:20:51]

Maia: And that's exactly what we were going for because there are so many amazing, like, kind of factual, encyclopedic herbals out there, you know.

At this point, between Grandma Google and you know the bookshelf, you can find out anything you need to find out, factually, scientifically, about the herbs. But I think that sometimes we can step too far into our science mind and lose the sense of deep connection, and that's really where the magic is.

Amber: Yes, it's like what my first herb teacher, Kami McBride, said a couple episodes ago on this podcast about like, “When is it enough? When do we know enough?” And that she's really speaking to that oversaturation of, like, the logical mind and that kind of learning in herbalism; how it just, really, in the end actually, like clogs the channels and makes it harder to really learn.

And so this is reminding me of what you talked about in the intro to this book, which is the second song. Will you tell us about that?

Maia: Yeah, so I think that there are different levels at which we can learn anything and herbs, in particular.

The first is kind of the obvious level, right? Like what you're going to get from books, and what you're going to get when you do a Google search.

But then there's something that I call “the second song,” and that's the feel, the nuance, the subtlety, the magic of the herbs. And to me, like, once you get that second song, then you know what you're talking about. Right?

It's the difference between, like, knowing someone's name and being their friend.

Amber: Mm hmm. It's like embodied knowledge.

Maia: Yes, that's a great way to say it. Yeah.

[0:22:47]

Amber: So I want — you also in the intro I talk a little bit about your time in Ireland. I really would like to hear this whole story of how you ended up apprenticing to a medicine woman in Ireland and the dream that called you there.

Maia: So it's a long story, and I'll be brief, and you can kind of push me into more detail where you want it because we could be here for three weeks. No kidding. (both laugh)

But I, so I got interested in herbs when I, myself, got sick — which is, I think, the case for many people in the healing arts.

I was living in New York City, and I was working as a teacher, and I started to get extreme exhaustion. I walked about a mile and a half, which is not so much to walk to work every day. And by the time I got there, I could hardly keep my eyes open. Like, I just wanted to cry, I was so tired.

And on top of it, I started getting this weird rash that was kind of like creeping up my body's, starting at my ankles, and every week it crept up a little further. So I was going to my doctor, and she kept saying, “I can see you're sick. It's perfectly obvious that you're sick. And your blood work looks mostly normal. And when I, you know, prick your finger, your blood sugar's sometimes super low. And then when I do a diabetes test, you're fine.”

And she's like, “Nothing is, you know, nothing's lining up. Nothing's holding in the framework that I know to use to diagnose.” She said, “But I've been studying traditional Chinese medicine, and I'm new to it, and I don't know enough to help you. But I know enough to know that a system like that is going to work better for what you're dealing with.”

And so, this was — let's see, I'm 49, and I was 26 or 27 — so over 20 years ago, and the alternative community was not nearly as open as it is now.

Amber: Yeah, that's amazing that she was willing to even bring that concession.

Maia: Yes. Yeah, and she wouldn't give me any references. Like this was just like, "She's like, you're gonna have to go figure this out," and she kind of turned me loose in the wilds of Manhattan with very little direction other than "Western medicine isn't going to help us."

So I started going to homeopaths and herbalists and Ayurvedic practitioners, And Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners, searching for someone who would see this side of symptomology in a way that made sense to them.

[0:25:24]

Maia: And so, herbs were not **the** thing that healed me, but they captured my imagination. And over the next five years, every time I got sick, I would start with herbs. And I'd research and I figure out what to do.

And, you know, slowly over time, people started to know that I was accumulating some knowledge. And so I'd get phone calls like, "Hey, when you had the flu, you got better faster than anybody else. What did you do?" Or "I know you haven't had shingles, but like, can you do a little research because you seem to find good solutions." So slowly, I started to develop a repertoire of things that I knew how to handle.

So kind of hold that piece of the story, and then fast forward:

I had moved up the Hudson Valley to a lovely little town called Beacon and bought a very inexpensive, very old, Victorian house. And a few years later, a big museum from Manhattan decided to open, like a sculpture museum for all their sculptures in one of the factories on the river in my little town of Beacon.

So it went from being a sleepy, little, rundown town, to all of a sudden having this infusion of Manhattan money, and my house tripled in value. And I was doing a lot of shamanic work at the time and working with herbs, still, just in that same way exploring, and you know, up in the Hudson Valley, I met some more people who actually knew the herbs and were working with them. So I started to connect with other herbalists and people who were into Earth-centered medicine.

What was happening in my life at the time was everything was beginning to unravel. This was before I even consciously decided to put my house on the market. You know, I had some roommates, and one decided to move back to Manhattan, one decided to move in with her boyfriend. I had a couple different part-time teaching gigs, and they just started dissolving. I was like, "Wow, my life here is unwinding." And so I did some shamanic work around it, and it was really clear that it was time to move on.

So I put my house on the market. And I knew I was going to suddenly have more money than I'd ever been, as a teacher than I ever had in my life. And I started thinking about like, what comes next? And I knew nature abhors a vacuum, right? Like, if I didn't fill this space that was coming, something would fill it.

[0:28:06]

Maia: So I started brainstorming everything I'd ever really wanted to learn more about, because I figured I was gonna have some money, I could give myself a year off. I didn't have to kind of keep trucking along as a teacher.

So my list included all sorts of things from, you know, herbalism was on there, but so was pottery and weaving and swimming with dolphins, and, you know, all sorts of stuff was on that list. It was like the life bucket list. And I didn't quite know what to do from there.

But one night, I had a really vivid dream — and I don't know, do you ever have dreams where, like, the texture is totally different from your normal dreams?

Amber: Mm-hmm, just one.

Maia: Yeah. And it's like, you know, when you have those dreams, right? You know it's something different.

Amber: In my dream. I said, as the dream ended, I said, "I got the dream I wanted," and then I woke up.

Maia: Yes. Yeah!

So in my dream a woman came to me, and she kinda, like, she kind of came to me in the sky, you know, like she kind of like took over the sky. And she had very, very long black hair and a very, almost gender — like, I knew she was female, but she had a very gender-neutral look about her. And she said, "I'm going to take you to where you're going to be initiated."

And I joined her in the sky, and we kind of, like, zipped over the ocean, and this island emerged and it was covered with forests, but I knew it was Ireland. You know, despite that it was totally forested and Ireland no longer is; it used to be. It's, you know, it's all farmland now. And she said, "This is where you need to go for your initiation. I want you to go and study the birds."

And when I woke up, I thought, "Okay, I know for a fact that's Ireland. I know I have to go there." And I was like, "What does 'study the birds' mean?" (*Maia laughs*). So I added, like, you know, all kinds of bird-related things to my list of possibilities. And then I sat down, and this was actually before Google. I think I was using like AltaVista was the search engine. (*both laugh*), and I'm putting in "Ireland + pottery", "Ireland + weaving", "Ireland +herbs".

And you know how, like, a lot of times when you search, you get gazillions of answers?

Amber: Mm-hmm.

Maia: I was not getting gazillions of answers. I kept getting the same woman's name, over and over and over, again. And I checked and she had a two-month class forming, like three or four months in the future, so I signed up for it. And then when I went over, I — you know, in my own heart — I was like, "I'm gonna try to figure out how to stay here for a bit."

But I didn't really say anything to her 'til about six weeks into this course, then I started begging her to keep me (*both laugh*), and she agreed. And I moved in with her and I was her apprentice for almost a year.

Amber: That sounds like a dream.

(both laugh)

Maia: Literally, yeah. Yeah.

[0:31:45]

Amber: What did you do? What were your days like with her?

Maia: You know, truthfully, it's really easy to romanticize it. Like, I could make it sound like, "Oh my goodness, it was the yummiest, most amazing thing ever." But the truth is, my days were often very lonely.

We were on a small — they're called "studs" in Ireland, we would call it like a "farmette". But, you know, I think because they used to have the stud horses sometimes at the small farms, they're called studs. So it was you know, we're on a stud, an hour walk from the nearest town, and I didn't have a car.

Internet and all that connectivity was still really expensive. So I wasn't allowed to use her internet, and there were no international phones. I went, you know, into town and made the super expensive international phone call. So, I was really cut off from everything I had known before.

And she would spend a couple hours a day meditating and studying and enclosed in her room. So I wasn't even with her all the time. So it was a very, I'd say, the thing that was most shocking to my system was the loneliness, but that also over time, I think, was a learning tool because when you can't talk to people, you start talking to everything else.

And I really began to tune in to the messages from the plants and the trees and the rocks. And to have really magical experiences with the animals. I had a Native American flute that I really didn't know how to play, but I would kind of keep it with me as something to do, and sometimes the cows would gather around.

I remember once these two swans swam up the river and sat on the bank, listening for a little while, and then I guess I really wasn't doing a very good job because they came clamoring up the bank, like batting their wings, squawking at me (Amber laughs), and then I was like, "Okay, then." (both laugh)

But my experience of the world changed so much in that year because of the lack of daily human interaction. So there was, you know, a lot of time in the garden. A lot of times, I'd wake up in the morning and my teacher smoked, which I think is like it's a hoot because, you know, now we have kind of all these mental constructs and rules around what a healer is supposed to be, and she's certainly not supposed to smoke. But, you know, she'd wake up, and she'd have her coffee and her cigarette in the morning, and she'd be, like, kind of dragging a little bit, and she'd hand me a basket, and she'd be like, "Come back when this is filled with elderberries." (both laugh)

So there is a lot of time gathering, finding the places to gather — because if it wasn't in the garden, a lot of times I just had to kind of go out into the fields or along the river, and see where I could find things. So mornings were usually spent either in the garden or out gathering, and then afternoons were medicine making and seeing clients, and I would sit in with all her client work.

Amber: How did she learn?

Maia: So she had an Irish grandmother, but she grew up in the States, and she learned from Rosemary Gladstar, along with her Irish grandmother. So it's kind of interesting because she'd moved, you know, to Ireland, but that wasn't where she was originally from. Originally, she was from the States, and she had been a teacher at the California School of Herbalism. Mm hmm.

[0:35:40]

Amber: Okay, let's go back to your illness and like did you figure out a name? Did you get a diagnosis? How did you treat yourself? Did you get better?

Maia: You know, I never got a diagnosis. What finally ended up happening was — I think it was a homeopath decided that I had severe candida. And, you know, there was no testing. It was this person said, “You have severe candida,” and I honestly don't know that was true.

But because of that hypothesis, I went down to, like, probably what would be a very paleo diet. I was told for three months that all I could eat were grilled or baked fishes and meats and cooked, non-starchy vegetables, and that was it. No condiments. No — I mean, pretty much. If it wasn't one of those things. The answer was no.

And so after about a week, I started feeling much better. After two or three weeks, I was like, beyond back to my normal self. I was doing great.

And once three months were up, and I started putting things back in, it became really clear that I couldn't eat wheat. So this was back before, like, there was any widespread discussion of celiac. So people often say to me, “Do you have celiac?” And I'm like, I have no idea because, you know, to do the test, I would need to eat things that I know make me sick, and I'm not willing to do it. And the truth is, it makes no difference in my life. I'm not going to eat that stuff.

So, you know, in some ways, I'm not sure having a diagnosis is helpful. I had an amazing experience with a medical doctor in Philadelphia when I lived there.

She said to me, “You know, you have all the symptoms of fibromyalgia.” She said, “I could diagnose you right now. I could say to you, ‘You have fibromyalgia.’” She said, “I don't know that that's going to help you. Do you think it's going to help you to have that diagnosis?”

I thought about it, and I said, “You're right. I don't I don't think that's going to help me.”

And so she never officially diagnosed me with fibromyalgia, which has been fascinating because I think that sometimes once you get a diagnosis, you start identifying with the diagnosis, and you can kind of get stuck. But by not having those words, they... like, I chose to reject those words,

Amber: Right.

Maia: And I moved beyond that set of symptoms.

Amber: Yeah, interesting that that's so true. And then opposite of that is sometimes a diagnosis is just what someone needs to finally understand what's been happening to them, and, you know, to have a clear path forward. That sounds like a very wise choice. And of course the, you know, the overlap of, like, the gluten wreaking havoc on your body and fibromyalgia symptoms is certainly vast overlap.

[0:39:19]

Maia: Yes, absolutely. And I think that, you know, we all have weaknesses in certain areas of our physiology. And they come up in different ways, over and over again, throughout our lives. And we have to kind of fine tune our self-care.

Amber: Right. Yeah, my recent shingles experiences really refigured the way I view my own, you know, weak spots, and how I need to be caring for myself and what symptoms I need to be tuning into as soon as they start (*Amber laughs*) before they get out of control.

Maia: Yeah, you know, one of the things that I feel so strongly about with herbal medicine is, it's absolutely brilliant when you're at that level of in tune, because you'll catch things long before any test, or, you know, diagnostic will catch it. And if you can use the herbs at that stage, they're brilliant at helping you regain balance.

But if you're not tuning into yourself at that really deep level, then oftentimes, you're catching stuff, when it's, you know, much more difficult to treat, it's already progressed. And then you either have to start getting into more like medical levels of the herbs or just really working with the stronger herbs, or you have to kind of step into a different treatment protocol.

So, one of the things that I think is so important with herbs is that tuning into your own body, and then through that you learn the questions to ask somebody else to help them tune into their own body.

Amber: Mm hmm. Yeah, this reminds me of what Sean Donahue, he talked about when he was on this podcast and I'm forgetting the exact terminology he uses, but basically, yeah, using, taking in plants and cultivating that relationship with plants as a way of opening to the subtle realms and opening to, like, the subtle sensations running through your own body that are so easy for us to just completely blunt out and ignore as we like focus on survival and getting through the day.

Maia: Right. And there are their worlds within, you know. The subtle realms, a lot of them, I think, exist within us. To a cell in your liver, your mind is a God. You know, you have this little tiny cell, and it's part of this large system. Just in the same way we, as a human in our body, are part of the system of Mother Earth, and so we're always tuning in.

I think a lot of times we tune into our smallness, we tune into us, as, you know, "one little tiny human on this huge Earth". But what happens when you tune in and you realize, "Wow, like, my mind is kind of the goddess to billions of cells of my body?"

Amber: I love that imagery. That's, yeah, I mean, even — so when I was, like, at the height of shingles, which was in my head, I started meditating, just with the Calm app that my 11-year-old showed me, like, "Mom, have you tried this out? It's so cool!" And I can't... it's amazing.

I needed someone directing and guiding me, you know, and like a voice and a guided meditation to get me into that space, and it only takes 10 minutes. That's how long most of the meditations are, and I can't believe how different of a state of being I am in after 10 minutes of, like, consciously directing my thoughts and how hard that is to do in our daily lives and how many years and years I've avoided even trying to do it because it seems so hard.

And yeah, I feel very grateful for the whole experience for kind of, you know, opening me up to the importance of tending the goddess that is my mind (*Amber laughs*), so that it can more, you know, coherently direct the cells of my body.

Maia: Yeah, and thank goodness for 11-year-olds, right?

Amber: Yes! (both laugh)

[0:43:39]

Maia: You know, I think — correct me if I'm wrong — but I remember, was it was it with the shingles that we were chatting on Instagram, and I said to you, “It's so important to let other people sometimes direct your care when you're really sick?”

You know, it's one of those things that I just love to point out to people because one of the reasons that I think many of us get into herbal healing and things like that is because we want the self-sufficiency. Right? We want to know that we can take care of ourselves.

But when you're in pain, when you're, like, foggy from a flu, what I've noticed is we all tend to be kitchen sink herbalists. It's like, “Oh, these 30 things all are supposed to work for the flu, and I'm gonna take all of them!” You know, our discernment goes out the window.

(both laugh)

Amber: Oh my god. You should've seen my countertop when I was in the shingles. It was CRAZY! (*Maia laughs*) And at one point, I was like, “This is nuts,” exactly, “I need to like, you know, figure out some discernment here and get rid of, like, 75% of the medicines in front of me right now because I can't take all these.”

Maia: Yeah. Yeah, and the truth is, when push comes to shove, your liver has to process everything you take. And when it's already stressed out from being sick, it doesn't need to be processing all that stuff. So yeah, but it's hard.

I mean, like, I actually just recently had to say to my acupuncturist, “I cannot be the person making these decisions right now, you know, like, I'm gonna take 50 things if you let me.” And she's like, “Okay.” She's like, “Send me the list of what” — she literally said — “sends me the list of what's on your counter.”

Because that's what we do, right? We have this big pile of herbs and supplements and everything just piled up, trying to take it all every day.

Amber: Yeah. No, I had a note in my phone of everything I had to take every day, and I was like, “This is embarrassing. I literally don't ever want anyone to see this note and see how, like, insane I'm being right now.” (both laugh)

Maia: But it's exactly what we all do when we get sick. It's, and especially, I think, sometimes the sicker you are, the more panicky you get about what you take. You know what I mean? It's like, “Let me just research one more thing!” (Maia laughs)

Amber: Yeah. Totally. Yeah. And it was so relieving to me when you said that to me, because it just made perfect sense. And of course, as much as we get into that headspace, what we all really want, I think, is just to be totally taken care of, you know, and we just, we don't have that as adults, and so, we've got to jump into the role of our own caretaker, and it's exhausting.

And I really did end up bringing in, like, three new healers into my life through that experience, people in my community I can go see: an acupuncturist, an Ayurvedic practitioner, and a physical therapist who does amazing craniosacral work. And I've gotten so much from all of them in the way they can see me differently than I can see me.

Maia: Yes. Yeah, I think there's something — I call it “the healing relationship”. And I think it's a for real thing. It's like, you know, when you have two people come together, they create this third thing, which is their relationship.

And I think the healing relationship is a separate entity that can only be created in partnership. And I think, you know, it can be created in partnership with a plant or with a stone like that can be part of the medicine if you're going that deep. But it's easiest to create it with another human because our consciousness is similar. And, you know, this thing, this third thing, the healing relationship, does something different than we can do by ourselves.

[0:47:43]

Amber: That, you mentioning the stone: I was thinking when we were preparing for this interview, you mentioned your recent experience with morganite. And I was realizing that we haven't really talked about stone medicine on this podcast at all which is interesting because I'm sure many of my listeners have a relationship with the mineral kingdom, and I certainly do, too.

And mine was actually turned on by our mutual friend Asia Suler.

Maia: Yeah.

Amber: Yeah, was it when I was I pregnant? Maybe it was 2015. Anyway, you know, I took her class at Spirit Weavers, and it was really, like, a complete, like the doors just burst open, you know, for that sort of relationship, and I had never really connected with stone medicine before.

My sister really did, and I was like, “I just don't get it. Like they're rocks. Don't you want to like hang out with, you know, plants? Plants are alive and, you know, you can smell them?”

But yeah, Asia's class and then my pregnancy I had very, very deep experiences with labradorite during my pregnancy, and somehow it's never been brought up. So I really wanted to hear it. I

don't know morganite at all. The name's familiar, but I'd love to hear about this experience that you had.

Maia: Yeah, yeah. So morganite is a beryl, and so it's in the same family — just like plants have families, stones have families — and so it's in the same family as aquamarine and emerald.

Amber: And what did you call it? A what?

Maia: A “beryl”: B-E-R-Y-L.

Amber: Okay.

Maia: Yeah. So just like plants, different stones have things that they're particularly good at. And in Taoist medicine, the stones came first. Stone medicine is older, and it treats deeper issues. It's also interesting, like one of the things that I think is a good, like, bridge fact, kind of bridging the woowoo with the mundane. We all pretty much acknowledge at this point we need minerals, you know, that we need magnesium and calcium and these different minerals to help our body to function.

So if you think back to before we were encapsulating minerals and creating, you know, creating in factories, these little tablets and things the place that people got minerals was from the stones. So on a very fundamental level, the stones are providing the building blocks for our bodies, and there's that resonance there; they're resonating with those compounds within us.

So that's the kind of like quasi-science-y bridge fact.

Amber: Our minerals are deep inside us, you know, that's...

Maia: Yes.

Amber: Like the Taoists say, “That's some deep medicine.”

[0:51:01]

Maia: Yeah. Yeah, so I had a crazy experience with morganite. I'm prone to migraines, and I had a migraine that was just — it was just feeling odd. It was like, you know, migraines are always odd and extremely agitating and skin crawling and painful and all these other things, but this one felt a little different than my usual.

And I was laying in bed trying to get myself to relax, and I couldn't couldn't get my body to relax, you know. I have different ways that I talk myself through migraines and I work myself through migraines. I've had them for years so I, you know, have some systems worked out and sometimes I can actually use smoky quartz. It seems to just take the edge off the pain. So I thought, “You know what? I'm gonna go and get a couple pieces of smoky quartz and see if that helps.”

And so I went to my stones and reached for the smoky quartz — and this is back to that, like, you know, that deeper, subtle sense — and something in me said, “No.” And so I just started kind of rubbing my hand over my stones and morganite jumped out at me.

So I grabbed my morganite, and morganite's lovely. It's pink.

Amber: Yeah, I'm looking at it right now! I didn't know what it looked like. This is like one of my favorite colors. It's like dusty pink.

Maia: Yeah, yeah, it's a much softer pink than rose quartz.

So I grabbed a piece of morganite, and I got back in bed, and I'm laying in bed with the morganite, and it's in my right hand. And I'm thinking, like, I'm thinking, "I need to move this."

So I move the morganite from my right hand, which, you know, this is not the same for every single person, but for many women, we send out into the world with our right hand. Like our right hand is kind of, you know, how we manipulate the world around us, and our left hand is much more internal. It's much more, it's like the "yin" hand.

So I moved the stone to my left hand, and all of a sudden I feel this like skittering of energy down down my arm and into the stone. Like an internal spider, scurrying down into the stone. And I was like, "What the heck?" And I just put all my will into, "Whatever the heck you are, you stay right there in that stone." I ran outside, and I threw the stone on the ground.

Morganite can pull things from you, old energies. You know, I think sometimes we try to find words for things. I don't know what the heck that thing was. If you want to call it a ghost, a spirit, a parasite, a, you know, it was some energetic thing that I didn't need it in me anymore.

And it's just been interesting that stone's now been outside for three months.(l)

[0:54:39]

Maia: You know, you can let your stones discharge into the earth. Sunlight is helpful, but I've checked on that stone a couple times; I'm not picking it up yet.

I actually consulted with one of my teachers, Sarah Thomas, who was Asia's teacher as well. I had Sarah said, "Yeah, usually, you know, if you leave it outside long enough, it'll be fine." She said, "But sometimes you can never work with the stone again after something like that."

So I'm hoping that's not the case because I really, I really love that stone. But what was fascinating was after that, I came back inside, I got back in bed, and within 10 minutes the migraine broke.

Amber: Oh my gosh, wow.

Maia: Yeah, and it had been a bad one. It had been a very neurological, twitchy, anxious, painful kind of migraine, and it just broke.

Amber: Wow.

Maia: So I made a cup of tea and went on with my day. (Maia laughs)

Amber: That really — ooh, there's a hummingbird on my window — that's very inspiring to me to sort of check back in with my with my stones and tune in more to that subtle energy field that they're operating on

Maia: I think that once you find that place with, you know, they're — okay, back up.

There were initially three medicine kingdoms: animal, vegetable, mineral. And humans are animal, right? We forget that we are.

So I think that our consciousness is most similar to other humans and to animals. So in some ways, that's the easiest place to connect and to begin to feel in for most people, and then I think plants are next.

Stones, I find to be the hardest, but it's the same type of subtle feeling in. And after you find it, you don't lose that.

But the same consciousness you bring to sitting with a plant or trying to understand what the heck your dog is, you know, trying to convey to you, when you bring that to the stones, something different happens.

Amber: Yeah, it really makes sense to me that they came to me when I was pregnant. And like, you know, my defenses were down. I was just a totally open channel because the rest of the time I'm just a little too in my mind, a little too rational, and “Is this real?” And “Oh, come on.” And yeah (*Amber laughs*).

[0:57:30]

Maia: And I think that's that's one of the hardest pieces to get over. I mean, it took me years.

Even when I went to Ireland, I was so skeptical. My poor teacher (*both laugh*), I put her through the wringer more than once because I was raised East Coast, intellectual, I have a master's degree you know. Like if I couldn't research it, if my brain could comprehend it, it didn't exist.

And what's been interesting is working backwards, I mean, you have to know enough to research something, right? But working backwards kind of going, like, “I'm feeling this. What could it possibly be?”, changing the hypothesis, there's actually some science on a number of these different things that just seem totally “woo”. You know, you have to try to break it down to the sensations and like what could physically be occurring in the universe to allow this to happen. And if you research from that point of view, there's often interesting information out there.

I mean, it's sometimes it's in, like, quantum physics and stuff like that; like things that aren't easy to understand. But the world is not as linear as we're told that it is in school and high-level thinkers and scientists know that. It's those of us kind of like the “muggles” that think that time is linear, you know. The people with real understanding of the way the universe works, don't think time is linear at all.

Amber: Right. So yeah, not only does science actually support a lot of what we call “woo”, but also we know that science is a very limited tool of measurement.

Maia: Yeah.

Amber: And so, yeah, it's just, yeah, I think everyone working in herbalism, or in any sort of healing that's outside the western paradigm, you know, that we're probably always kind of coming up against like, "Could this be real? But my whole life I've been told it's not." And just, again, something that comes up for me in almost every episode of this podcast is working beyond the rational mind.

Maia: Yes, and I think as soon as you bring your body online, that becomes possible.

Amber: Yep, I'm definitely one of those people who's like, got the invisible line at the neck. You know, I'm just in my head all the time, and it's a constant, constant practice and reminder for me to stay in my body.

And I remember that when I was pregnant the stones were really helping me do that again. With my oldest, she was nine at the time, but she was super into it. We were just like, laying with stones on our body and we'd just play with them at home during that time, and it was so fun.

Maia: Oh it's fun. It's so important.

Amber: Oh my gosh, yeah. Yeah,, my little one, 22 months, just started, like, imaginative play, just in the last few weeks, and it's so fun! Like, the other day she was holding a basket and she reached her hand into it and pretended like she put something in her mouth, and she said, "Peas," because we've been picking peas out of the garden (Maia laughs). And so I reached my hand in and pretended to put something in my mouth, and she got the biggest smile on her face. You know, like, "Oh my god! You're doing this with me! There's not really peas in there!" you know. And I was like, aww, she's just just opening to that. And that's the rest of her life, if she's lucky, you know, she can maintain that sense of play.

[1:01:14]

Amber: I was just curious what your master's degree is in.

Maia: So I got my Master's degree from the Draper School. It's at NYU, and you create your own Master's program. So I came in with a bunch of credits in Architectural History, so the history of sacred space and gardens. And I wrote my Master's thesis on gardening in New York City, growing food in New York City, and just had an amazing experience traveling around, meeting people who were restoring these burned out urban lots, and creating these incredible garden spaces in the city.

Amber: That sounds so neat.

Maia: It was fun.

Amber: Wow. And that's neat, too, how it, you know, is in line with what you ended up doing with herbalism and plants.

Maia: It is, you know, I've been interested in how we create the sacred since, I mean, since I was tiny, you know. When I used to travel with my parents, I'd always want to find the oldest ruins and nose around and see how people created space.

And there is, for me, such a link between that and herbalism, and it's a little hard to articulate, but I think that, you know, one of our tools for crafting space is using nature to begin to create a human version of nature, if that makes any sense. It's kind of, you know, it's the concept of the garden, like, outside of the wilderness, is the garden and it's kind of like the human-created wilderness, which is sacred. And then and then we find our medicine there, whether it's simply from being in that space, or from growing specific plants.

So there's, there's this thread that's a little hard to articulate, but it's very alive within me, like I see it very clearly.

Amber: Yeah, I majored in Religious Studies, and it was somewhat of a similar thing. I just was always so interested in how humans make meaning, and like what this spiritual dimension of life is. And for, you know, over a decade, I framed it as like a waste of my time and money, that degree, because I didn't do anything with it, you know, I was in debt, and like, why did I do that? And now my work has kind of come back. And I'm like, oh, I'm following the same thread I was then. I'm doing the same thing.

Maia: Yeah.

[1:04:08]

Amber: I wanted to hear this story about how this swan sighting helped you make a really big decision in your life, and the myth, too, that ties in with this.

Maia: Yeah, yeah. So when I was in Ireland I had this break during the winter holidays. My teacher needed some downtime, and I'd sold my house so I went to visit my parents in a little town outside of Philadelphia.

And I was really kind of bored (Maia laughs). I didn't know anyone around there anymore. So I decided that I was gonna go on match.com, and, you know, date 'cause then at least I'd have people to hang out with in the evening.

So I went on match.com, and you know, started going on these little movie dates and dinner dates and just for fun; really not trying to make anything come of it. But, of course, I met the man that I'm still with today, and he got very upset when I told him I was going back to Ireland that I was, you know, in the middle of this course of study, and he broke up with me.

So, I was in Ireland with my teacher, and I was telling her about how I felt like, you know, even though he broke up with me, we weren't really broken up and that this was... this was it. This was the long term guy.

And I walked outside to feed the birds, just taking the stale bread out, it was, you know, nothing more intentional than that. When the bread got old, we took it to the birds. And I heard this crazy noise. It was like a wheezing, whirling noise. And I looked up and two Arctic swans flew over my head, and swans mate for life, so I definitely took that as a sign.

And then when I returned home from Ireland, this guy had gotten back together with one of his exes. And I, you know, I called him up and said, "Let's have dinner and at least, like, reestablish our friendship," because we hadn't left on good terms. He broke up with me, literally, on the way to the airport.

So we went out to dinner and at the end of dinner, he said, "I can't see you again, until I break up with the woman I'm dating." He said, "Because this is gonna go somewhere else really quickly."

So he broke up with the woman he was dating, and we immediately started talking about moving in together. And we were out for a walk, and there was a lot of snow. I remember like, the snow was so deep, it was almost waist high, so you're walking through snow tunnels.

And I said to him, you know, "We really need to go to a lawyer and get some papers drawn up, because, you know, we're gonna need power of attorney for each other and things like that, if we're going to own a house together."

And he threw up his hands and he said, "Maia, there is one document that resolves all these issues."

And I said, "What's that?"

And he said, "A marriage license." (*both laugh*)

[1:07:34]

Maia: I have never wanted to get married. First of all, I'm bisexual, and so I don't want to be defined by my relationship with a man, but besides, you know, beyond the sexuality, I don't want to be defined by my relationship with anyone. So you know, marriage has just has a lot of historical yuck that goes with it, and I was very uncomfortable with this whole marriage thing.

And so I told him the story of Caer who was an Irish maiden who turned into a swan, and Angus Magog, who was an Irish god, fell in love with her, and he wanted her to marry him. And she said, "You know, I will only marry you if you'll be a swan for six months of the year."

And actually, I told the story at our wedding because it teaches me, it taught me that and it teaches me over and over again, that we do have to change for each other, you know. I think that the modern feministic principle says, "I don't gotta change for nobody." But to be in partnership sometimes you have to step into the other person's world, and you have to see it through their eyes. And I needed to see what Andrew needed to step into this marriage, to be okay stepping into this marriage, and I needed him to see what I need, in order to be with him and stay with him.

And so this idea of transforming, you know, of changing yourself and being willing to change yourself, and you change back right? You know, Angus wasn't a swan all the time, but for half the year he was a swan and had to see the world through swan eyes. And I think that it's been such an important lesson from me over and over again.

Amber: That's beautiful. I love that story, your story of coming around to that and the story of Caer. Is that her name?

Maia: Yeah, it's Caer.

Amber: I am... I really thought I would never get married. Oh yeah, totally. That feminist thing where I'm like, "Fuck marriage," you know, "Fuck the patriarchy, like, you can just love each other and like, have a life or whatever."

And after having my baby, and I was talking to my tax lady, it was December, and I was like, "How's this gonna work? We're running a business together da-da-da-da." And she's like, "You know, it would just be really easy if you're married." And I was like, "Yeah, let's get married for tax purposes, please." (*Maia laughs*)

And Owen was like, "I'd love to!" And like we decided that morning, and we did it that afternoon at the courthouse, a bunch of our friends came, and it was perfect! And now I love having a husband, and I love being his wife, and it totally works. And it's funny to me how much I've gone the other way and fully embraced this institution that I thought was so bad.

Maia: I've got to say, I still, every anniversary I say, "So can we get a divorce now? Do it my way for a couple of years?" (*both laugh*)

[1:10:59]

Maia: But you know, one of the things I realized I had, like Andrew needed to do it the old fashioned way. He could not not get me a diamond ring. I mean, from the moment we decided that we were going to get married, he wouldn't let me tell anyone until he got me a ring. And I said, "Okay, but no diamonds."

So, you know, we're buying a house together. My mom's in a panic. We're buying a house together and have no legal ties to each other. And I'm like, Mom, "Just wait. It's gonna be okay. Just wait." And I'm like, "Dude, I can't tell my mom we're getting married, and she's in a panic. You've got to do something about this ring thing."

So he pulls out this folder. It was an inch thick. He was researching every stone under the sun trying to find one that, you know, was perfect for a ring. And I was like, "Oh my god, just give me a diamond. You obviously need to do this."

And so then, like, going to look for rings, I talked to a male jeweler. He said to me, "You've got to let him do this. This is a guy's rite of passage. Don't take this from him." (*Inaudible @ [1:12:09]*) ... was looking at it as, like, being shackled, and like, where did this diamond come from? And the diamond mines and all this stuff, and not realizing that like, since he was a little boy, the test of his manhood was pretty much buy a diamond ring for his fiancee.

And whether it's a good test or not, is like, that's not even it. You know what I mean? Like, that's a whole different debate.

Amber: Right.

Maia: He was raised that way. It was in his mind. It was his mythology, and I had to let him have that rite of passage. And it's actually really funny because I don't wear the ring. And we actually

agreed two anniversaries ago that it would be totally okay to get rid of the ring, but he had to do it at the time.

Amber: Yeah, totally. Get yourself a morganite ring and wear it on the left hand there, and you'll never have another migraine.

(both laugh)

Maia: Perfect! The best engagement present ever.

[1:13:24]

Amber: Yeah, the morning Owen and I decided to get married, and we're like "Okay, we've got an appointment at three this afternoon," I tore the house apart looking for my grandmother's wedding ring, and I never found it.

And so right before we left, I was like, "Well, I have this little opal," that my, I think my mom gave it to me. I'm not sure where I got it, but I'm pretty sure my mom gave it to me at one point. And she had died, you know, a year before and fit perfectly, and it has not left my hand since that day, not once. And it turned out my sister had my grandma's wedding ring. She found it like a year later, and it's a beautiful sparkly diamond you know? It's funny that I could have been wearing that this whole time, but I've been wearing this instead.

And actually, I almost got rid of this ring at Spirit Weavers that year that I met Asia, because there's a trade blanket thing. And I remember she came over, and she picked it up, and she was like, "This is an opal." And I was like, "Oh, it is?" *(Maia laughs)*

Like, I seriously thought it was fake, because it's so beautiful and shiny. And like I, literally, at that point, didn't even know that stones could be that magical, you know? So I kept it because Asia said that, and it ended up being my wedding ring. *(Amber laughs)*

Maia: I love that story. I love that story. Especially, you know, because I think that there are new myths being made right now by us, and, you know, we're stepping into this feminist thing we were handed from our mothers who came up in the 60s and the 70s. And they were trying to figure out how to deal with this.

I often, like feel badly for my mother, you know, she made it all the way up through high school, thinking, "I'm gonna be a wife and a mom, and that's gonna be good." And then she got into college and all of a sudden that wasn't good enough anymore.

Amber: Right.

Maia: And she was already on that trajectory.

Amber: Yeah, the confusing, myth changing, midlife myth changing.

Maia: Yeah, yeah. And I mean, she pretty much spent her whole life feeling like she could never be good enough because she was never able to kind of grasp the new myth, you know?

So I think we're creating new myths around marriage, and can you be against the patriarchy and still be in a committed, long-term, married relationship? And you know, we're creating that with our crazy opal rings, you know. These are the stories we're going to pass down to the next generation.

Amber: Exactly. That's what I was gonna say, I just picture my daughters knowing that story and remembering it — and Opal is actually Nixie's middle name, the little one.

Maia: Oh, I love that.

Amber: Yeah, okay, I think we need to wrap up. This has just been amazing. I'm so glad we finally connected, Maia. Thank you so much for all these little gems of wisdom and a lot to really like. sink my teeth into and think about

Maia: Thank you for making this time. I've been a fan so it's really great for me to get to connect with you.

[1:16:36]

Amber: Yeah, Oh, I know what I was gonna say. What were just talking about is, like Milla Prince always hashtags “#embodythedichotomy”. *(both laugh)*

Maia: Yes!

Amber: And I want to tell you, too, that when we received your book the other day and there's 36 Oracle cards in the back. And so my oldest, Mycelia, and I got right into it, and she pulled Violet right away, and that's her middle name.

Maia: Oh my goodness!

Amber: Yeah, and it was just, we ended up playing three cards and we just both felt like our cards were perfect. And my first two were Tulsi and Rose. And we remembered that we have that Tulsi Rose Tea, you know that like Organic India brand? And she loves that tea. We're like, “We haven't made that tea in so long!”

And so we made that tea, and it just really, you know, your words for Tulsi is “You are sacred,” and I really needed that message that day because I'm deep in the midst of this illness that my youngest has right now. And I just — it really gave me the pause and the break that I needed.

And I just really love your writing in this book and the illustrations are gorgeous, too. Who's the illustrator?

Maia: It's Kate O'Hara.

Amber: Oh my gosh!

Maia: Yeah. Y'all give her an Instagram follow because she's got something special going on.

Amber: Yes, for sure. I just opened to the page of California poppy with the owl.

Maia: The owl, that's one of my favorites. I love red clover. Like that heart? Yummy.

Amber: Yeah. Okay, I'm going to look that one up.

Maia: I think red clover, apple, and California poppy are some of my faves in terms of illustration,

Amber: I can't wait to just really dive in and like look at everything and read everything because what I was gonna say, too— oh, yeah, yeah, this part. That's at the beginning of the book, too, like one of the first couple pages right? This heart? — is I just love so you give like a little description kind of about the, you know, the plants and it's maybe mythic, energetic properties. And then there's the next page is a ritual and the next page is reflection.

And they're, they're so like, digestible and simple, and I mean that in the best way, you know. It's not like some complex thing where you're like, "Okay, so I'm going to place my morganite facing a South, while chanting..." you know. It's just very easy and straightforward. You can just do it while you sit there and read it almost. And I just found them very easy to follow through with, and like reflection questions, meditation writing, also illuminating.

Maia: Thank you.

Amber: Yes, thank you! I just I love this book. And I really love — I want to say, too, that I think it really will appeal to younger people. Like my 11 year old was just like, "What?" And usually she's like, "Mom's herb stuff, eyeroll," you know, but she was like, "Ooh, this? Let's pull cards, let's pull cards!" And she never wants to do that. So. Yeah. Okay.

Tell people where they can find you, where they can find the book.

Maia: Yes, absolutely. So you can find the book, hopefully everywhere. It's called *The Illustrated Herbiary*, and all the major you know, online vendors have it. And I'm actually finding — just because my friends keep walking into their local, independent bookstores and asking for it, kind of like "tee hee" to see if they have it that it's on order at a lot of bookstores. It comes out August 7. So depending, you know, on when we air, and you know that.

Amber: It'll, this will be out after then. Yeah. After

Maia: Yeah. Okay. So this will be out after that, and you'll be able to just get a copy of the book. And Amber, you and I should talk because we might be able to put something special in the show notes for everybody.

Amber: Okay. Yeah. Yes, sounds good.

Maia: Yeah, we can work that out. Yeah, so it's available pretty much everywhere and you can find me at maiatoll.com. And you can find my store which is actually bricks and mortar store in Philadelphia and in Asheville, which is also called Herbiary. And that's just that herbiary.com, or you know, come see us if you're if you're in Asheville or Philadelphia.

Amber: Oh, neat. I didn't know you had that. Yeah. Okay, Maia, thank you. I'm so glad that we got to speak today.

Maia: Thank you so much. This was fabulous, Amber.

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

[Closing]

[1:21:26]

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 my blog, handmade herbal medicines, past podcast episodes, and a lot more at MythicMedicine.love.

While you're there, I invite you to click the purple banner to take my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Plant Familiar?](#)" It's a fun and lighthearted quiz, but the results are really in depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with the medicine you are in need of.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at Patreon.com/MedicineStories. There's some killer rewards there: exclusive content, access to online courses, free beautiful downloadable e-books, coupon codes, giveaways, and just amazing gifts provided by past guests of the podcasts. All of that stuff is at the two dollar a month level.

For a little more, you can access my herbal e-book or my small online course, and that's all there as a thank you, a HUGE thank you from me and from my guests for listening, for supporting this work. I love figuring out what I can gift to people on Patreon. It's so fun. And I love that Patreon makes it so that you can contribute for such a small amount each month.

I'm a crazy busy and overwhelmed mom and adding this project into my life has been a questionable move for sure, but I love doing it, and I love the feedback I get from you all. And I just pray that Patreon allows me the financial wiggle room to keep on doing it while giving back to everyone who is listening.

If you're unable to do that, or if you'd like to support further, I would love it if you would subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. And if you would review the podcasts on iTunes, too, it really helps getting it into other ears. It means so much to me when I read those reviews. It's, like, the highlight of my week when I check them and see new ones.

People are amazing. You guys are wonderful. Thank you so much.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her song "Wild Eyes." It's one of my favorite songs of all time.

Thank you and I look forward to next time!

