



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 36 with Rebecca Altman

Magic Makes us Human & Plants Keep Us Rooted

January 14, 2019

[0:00:00]

(Excerpt from today's show by Rebecca Altman)

No one was going to tell me that I belonged. No one was going to tell me that I deserved it. And no one was going to confirm to me that it was real; that I just sort of had to take that the step in on my own.

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

[0:00:18]

Amber: Hello friends! And welcome to the Medicine Stories podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth through interviews with herbalists, story keepers, ancestral listeners, consciousness explorers, earth dreamers, and other wise folk with the guiding principles that story is medicine, magic is real, and healing is open-ended and endless.

I am your host, Amber Magnolia Hill. This is Episode 36, and my guest today is herbalist, Rebecca Altman. I'm really excited to share this interview with you, but gotta say a few things first, and one of those is that I didn't plan to be on this month-long hiatus that just happened, and I apologize for the absence of the show. Many of you tell me that you wait for it and love when it comes out, and I -- it's very much my intention to have it out at least every two weeks as I've talked about many times before. But I had an unexpected family emergency to deal with, actually, just got through a really heavy week where my sister and I had to run down to the Bakersfield area to help our severely alcoholic father get out of a problem that he had created. I've talked about him and his addiction many times on the show and talked about my Bakersfield-kin on Episode 29 quite a bit.

So yeah, back in October he let a handyman who I guess did some work for him? I don't know if they had a previous relationship, or he just knocked on the door one day, but he ended up giving my dad this sob story about how he had been kicked out by his wife and had nowhere to live. So my dad let him move in because my dad is a really kind and empathetic person. A lot of people hear the word "alcoholic" and immediately associate that with an abusive personality, but he's not like that at all. And so, you know, as you might expect over time the situation just got pretty weird and the man was putting up, like, padlocks on rooms to keep my dad out of rooms in his own house.

So this house, before my dad lived in it, my grandparents lived in it. And before they lived in it, my great-grandmother lived in it. She died when I was 5, and she had the house built in 1950. So it's always been our family home; it's the ancestral homeplace that my sister and I grew up going to.

And it just felt like desecration, you know? Like, this stranger came in, and he started letting other people crash there, and we think he was quite possibly dealing (or doing - both) drugs, and he was stealing money from our dad. So it was just a bad situation and seemed to be getting worse and didn't know what to do about it. We were talking with his two friends down there, and they were trying to intervene, and my dad would ask this guy to leave, and he would go back and say, "no, it's okay. You can stay. I know you have nowhere to go."

So finally we got some really good advice which was to go down there and file an elder abuse restraining order for financial abuse because we had documentation that this guy was taking my dad's card when he was out of it, and my dad had given him the PIN so he could get groceries back at the beginning, and he was just pulling HUNDREDS -- it ended up being thousands -- of dollars, writing himself checks, writing his friends checks. Really weird situation. The judge granted the order. We spied from our neighbor's backyard as the cops escorted this guy out. Then we went over there and spent some hours with our dad and got all the locks changed and canceled the bank card.

It's just such a weird situation, and so sad going back to this home that was so full of love and joy and goodness when we were growing up and is now just weird, just weird energy. And dad is such a mess. It's so hard to help him. We've tried so many times, and we've given up trying so many times. And, you know, we both didn't want to go down there and take care of something else, another problem he had created, but it really needed to be done.

And I left Nixie for two nights; the first time we've ever been apart for that long, the first nights we've ever been a part in her two years and four months of life, and it was fine. She was fine, and I was fine. So that was nice to know that we're okay now being apart. And so lucky and grateful that I weaned her last month kind of spontaneously. I wouldn't have been able to leave her if she was still nursing, and I definitely didn't want to bring her with me.

So then we drove back, and then the next day we had to drive to Reno. So Bakersfield is six-hour drive, and then Reno is a two-hour drive from where I live to participate in a deposition related to our mom's death in a car accident three years ago. So that was heavy, you know, having lawyers ask us questions about what we understand about the accident, and then, basically, we had to prove how much we loved our mom, which was very easy to do because we loved her very much.

It was just a **heavy** week between those two things, you know? (*Amber laughs*) And, of course, we were both on our periods and just trying to get through it, trying to take care of our people in two very different ways. It's a trip, you know, how what happens in people's lives, what time, as Joanna Newsom sings in the song *Anecdotes*, what time can do to people and to families. And I really feel like an adult right now. I adulted hard last week, and it was hard. But now it's over, and it's okay, and I'm very happy to be back talking to you, sharing this interview.

[0:06:44]

Amber: I also want to let you know about an event coming up. So Episode 26's guest, Daniel Foor, it was one of the best interviews I've done. I think it's one of the most downloaded it. I loved it. I love Daniel's work, I love his book *Ancestral Medicine*, website Ancestralmedicine.org. Back in December, I went an Ancestral Lineage healing intensive here in Nevada City. I was actually working with this line, the Hill line, the pure paternal father's father's father's father's father's line. Going back in time to when things got broken and what went wrong and why these men became such a long, long line of alcoholics. And just working with that, you know, figuring out what happened and try to bring healing to the unwell dead and to my father as well, if at all possible (which I don't know if it is).

Anyway, it was an extremely powerful, beautiful experience that I had over those three days. I could never even put into words what it meant to connect with this ancient, well ancestor of that lineage and to learn from him. I'm still in communication with him every day and will be, hopefully, for the rest of my life. I just think that ancestral healing work is probably the most powerful work that a person can do, and that is **so needed** right now at this time on the planet, so needed by every single person. And so there's another one coming up for people who are near the Bay Area -- or, actually, at the one last month, people had flown in from all over the country to be at it. And they're happening all over the country, and the world, actually, this year, in 2019. So, again, you can check out ancestralmedicine.org and any of Daniel's interviews or books there are so many different ways to bring this work into your life.

But for me, being in that room for three days with people working on this was just amazing, so I'm doing it again, which is kinda crazy, but I'm so excited. My husband, Owen, is going to do it with me in Berkeley on February 8, 9, and 10th. The 8th is my birthday. I think I'm going to be working with my mother line this time, my mother's mother's mother's mother's mother's people and really connecting with the spirit of my mother. And I'm just so excited, and I wanted to mention that in case anyone is able to come if there are still tickets available.

One of the facilitators is Pavini Moray. And Pavini has a podcast called "Bespoken Bones," which, if you follow me on Instagram, you already know how much I love it. And if you love this podcast, you will love that podcast. *Bespoken Bones*. Check it out.

And finally, one last thing is I want to talk about the two new medicines we have in our shop, Mythic Medicinals at mythicmedicine.love. We have a Lion's Mane Elixir, which is a triple-extraction and a Hawthorn Berry Oxymel. These are two of my very favorite medicines, and it was so fun bringing them into being with Owen over the fall.

So the Hawthorn Berry Oxymel: first of all, it tastes **so good**. That is what brought me into making it is someone had given me one that they had made last year, and I was like, "Umm," (*Amber laughs*) "This is the best thing I've ever tasted. I want it all the time. I've got to make one next year." So we did, and oxymel is apple cider vinegar and honey. So it's hawthorn berries in those two mediums, and then, of course, the berries are then strained out. And it's a medicine that's heart-nourishing, digestion-supporting, and anti-oxidant rich. And I formulated it really to fortify your tender, yet resilient, human body and spirit.

I really think of hawthorn -- it just carries this incredible medicine, as do all of the rose family plants, of this teaching of softness and strength and the intersection of those two, and that sort of

porous boundary between us and the rest of the world. Hawthorn helps me find the sweet spot that I want to be in that boundary space. So I think it helps to keep you soft and vulnerable in that good way, you know, where you're open to experience and you're willing to share yourself with the right people. But also, the thorn, right, keep the boundaries up, have an intuitive sense of what to let in, and what to keep out; who to let in and who to keep out. So I really think of it as a deeply nourishing and fortifying medicine in that way. And there's a TON of science around hawthorn berries and flowers effect on the heart. So that's there, too, that real physical medicine, but I really, when I take this and when I formulated it, I'm thinking about the energetic and the emotional medicine that it carries.

Then the Lion's Mane Elixir. So, Lion's Mane is a beautiful mushroom. If you've never seen it Google image it now. It's so, so beautiful. And we grew the lion's mane at home (so fun, our first time doing that). And then it's triple extracted, so there are three different mediums through which we pulled out the mushroom medicine. Mushrooms have, tend to have a huge spectrum of medicine; lots of different chemical constituents. So if you kind of want that full-spectrum, you need to pull it out using different solvents because they all pull different things out. So this was made using alcohol (vodka), hot water, and cold water.

So this powerful mushroom supports cerebral and cognitive functioning, helping to optimize focus and memory. As a nerve tonic, it promotes gut health because the gut is rich in nerve endings, as well as benefiting the liver and immune system. And it's adaptogenic effects help to regulate the body's stress response. Again, there's a ton of science out there around Lion's Mane. I started learning a lot about it when my brother-in-law suffered a traumatic brain injury last summer and so many of the suggestions are lion's mane, because it actually has, umm, this neurogenesis property that is VERY rare. I don't remember reading about any other substance from the natural world doing that. It helps neurons to grow again and regenerate, make new connections, which is absolutely amazing.

So those are the, again, now available in the shop: mythicmedicine.love.

[0:13:47]

Amber: And speaking of herbs, one of my favorite herbalists and one the most amazing medicine-makers that I know of, Rebecca Altman, is my guest today.

We talk about how

- How the journey through grief, depression, and getting on and then getting off of 5 different pharmaceuticals at once led Rebecca to herbalism
- Meeting the spirit of a place/seeing your home with new eyes
- Sexy desert plants: creosote (also known as chaparral/larrea) & ocotillo
- Where there is no word for magic because it's just a normal part of life & why believing in magic makes us human
- The West's missing rites of initiation & why we have such a hard time adulting
- Realizing that no one else is going to tell you that you belong, that you have the gift, that you are magical. It's just something at some point you decide to step into your own power.
- The humoral approach to herbalism & healing: why knowing your personal balance of temperaments (sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic) can help you to know yourself better
- The debilitating cultural preference/lie embedded in The Hero's Journey

- The virtues of working **inefficiently**. I love this part of the conversation. I really, really needed this wisdom from Rebecca.
- A practice to get you rooted and step you back inside yourself: reconnecting to what we cut off in order to get things done quicker & better
- Root medicine: shatavari & ashwagandha

As part of this episode, Rebecca has created a beautiful, 19-page PDF all about root medicine for patreon Supporters of this podcast. So that's at Patreon.com/MedicineStories for supporters at the two-dollar a month level, 19 pages of deep-rooted medicine. Within it, you'll find writings about roots: the importance of finding roots and standing your own ground, whatever that looks like for you. There are descriptions of six different medicinal roots: kava, spikenard (or aralia), devil's club, mullein root, ashwagandha, and shatavari.

We talk about those last two a lot in this episode, too. And recipes to start using roots in a more playful way: chai, a bath, infused ghee, and a body oil, to broaden the reach of how you use roots and root medicine in your life. Rebecca, truly, is, like, a gifted formulator. She's prolific and gifted, always coming out with new medicines. Just reading about them blows my mind, so these are the recipes of a REAL witch (*Amber laughs*) a real Scottish witch.

Rebecca is a writer and herbalist, originally from Scotland, living in the mountains of Southern California. She makes herbal formulas, which she sells at her webshop [Kings Road Apothecary](#), and more recently has started a year-long course called [The Wonder Sessions](#), in which she teaches people to connect more deeply to the hidden world around us.

So without further ado, let's dive into this interview with Rebecca Altman:

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

[0:17:15]

Amber: Hello Rebecca! Welcome to Medicine Stories.

Rebecca: Yeah, thank you for having me.

Amber: Yeah. I think -- I was just thinking about it -- I think we've been connected online for, like, a decade or something.

Rebecca: Yeah, it's been a really long time!

Amber: Yeah, since... through Kiva, probably. Kiva Rose and sort of the community she gathered around herself back in the late 2000's blogging about herbalism.

Rebecca: Yes, and then the traditions conference, but you only went for the first time...

Amber: -- When we met in 2017? The Good Medicine Confluence?

Rebecca: Yes! But yeah, through the same community for a long time.

Amber: Yeah, and it was lovely to meet you, but I don't think I've thanked you, you know, I was kind of not alone there -- I had my baby and my good friend, Kat -- but you were very welcoming to me as someone with a longstanding relationship with that conference, and I was grateful for it.

Rebecca: Oh thank you. And you're so welcome. It was just such a pleasure to finally meet you after kind of dancing around each other online for so long.

Amber: And then we have a mutual friend as well, my very dear friend, Jen, who lives here in Nevada city and who is probably my closest friend, and her daughter is my 12 year old's good friend. And I remember somehow you got brought up years ago, and she was like, "I actually know Rebecca from living at Palm Desert." And I was like, "What?! You do?"

Rebecca: (*Rebecca laughs*) Yes, it's so strange. The store that her sister used to own had a cafe in it where I used to work, then my closest friend in the world lived at Jen's house for a while. Like, it's so funny; there's so many connections there.

Amber: Wow. Yeah, that's Harvest Health Food Store in Palm Desert.

Rebecca: Yes! (*Rebecca laughs*)

[0:19:13]

Amber: Okay, so my first question -- t's a big question and I don't think you're going to answer it in a few minutes or anything; I think it's going to take us a while to get through all of it, but knowing some of your story and having read your newsletters for years, I'm seeing this bigger pattern, this bigger story emerge here -- so I would like to ask you about this experience you had when you were 18 and how it brought you into the world of depression and that led you into pharmaceutical use and how that messed you up for a long time, and then what brought you out of that and onto the plant path.

And then after that, I was thinking -- sorry to lay this huge thing out in front of you, and I'll guide you as we go -- but if we could talk about your understanding of depression and how you work to help people through that now.

Rebecca: I would love to talk about all of this.

So, let's see. When I was 18, my step-sister committed suicide, and I was, at the time, I had -- I'm from Scotland, and I moved to California with my family when I was 16 -- and I had gone back to Scotland to go university. And there's a funny thing that happens when you get used to the Southern California sunlight, and then move to somewhere that rains maybe 300 days a year, where I was just miserable in a way just because it was so rainy all the time anyway. And I missed, you know, I had some close friends here in California, and I missed them.

So I was kind of, like, not doing that well in the first place at university. And then I got a phone call one day and my stepsister had committed suicide, and I dropped out of university, moved home, and I, basically I sunk into a really deep depression. In part due to I think the grieving process because as you know, most people know losing a family member is devastating, and in part due to being a bit lost in life, and you know there's so many questions when somebody you're close to takes their own life because there's always questions.

So I was really, really depressed, and I went to my doctor for a check-up, and I kind of mentioned that I wasn't doing so well, and they sent me to a psychiatrist who spent maybe 15 minutes with me and said, "Ah yes. I know what the problem is here. You're bipolar!"

And I remember at the time I was actually, like, that was really confusing and upsetting to me in a way, because I just thought I was quirky (*Rebecca laughs*). Like, it was really sort of difficult for me to hear that all of these things that I had just thought made me naturally quirky were all of a sudden considered a "disorder." But at the same time, I was in so much emotional pain, so when this man said, "Yes. You have this disorder. This is what's happening, and there are medications that you can take that will take your pain away." I was like, "Yeah, give me the drugs, man!"

And so I ended up, like, long story short -- I mean, it's a long story. It's not short, but, try and shorten a long story -- I ended up, over the course of time, on five different medications, and it got to the point where I didn't know who I was, I didn't know where I was. I was SO emotionally volatile like I couldn't trust my own reactions to things.

And I remember one time I was at UCSB one time studying Book Arts and I would go to their printmaking studio at night, and be there all night 'cause I could be there on my own and play music and I remember one time I just crawled under one of the big tables there and just started sobbing. And I was like, "I feel SO lost, and I've no idea what's going on." And morning must've come around because my teacher, who was the head of the art department there, came in and, like, he kind of looked at me, and I could see in his eyes, like, there's something wrong.

And then a few weeks later my mom called me, and she was like, "Look. I think you should move home." She handled everything. She actually dropped me out of school and moved me back into their house and took me to a different psychiatrist and I just remembered saying, my mom saying, to the psychiatrist, "I don't know what's going on, but I want to see what's underneath all of these medications, because this isn't my daughter."

[0:24:30]

Rebecca: It's funny looking back because I have been through similar things with clients and the psychiatrist, basically, like, gave me a plan, was just like, "So you just need to taper off all your medications and stop taking your medications, and that's it." And so I was like, "Alright."

Amber: So you also, you wanted to get off, too.

Rebecca: I wanted to get off. I had, I was just such a wreck. I was also terrified to get off because it had been four years at that time, and I didn't know and genuinely thought at this point I was crazy.

And so the psychiatrist just gave me a plan and then sent me home to taper myself off five different medications. And then a few weeks later my parents, I have a little sister who's 16 years younger than me, moved to Orange County. Thankfully, they hadn't yet -- they couldn't sell their house where I was staying, so I managed. I basically was staying in this house on my own and started tapering myself off medications. And this was, like, pre-Facebook, which is probably good, because there probably would be (*Rebecca laughs*) my mental state would've been documented for all to see for eternity. But there were some online forums where people talked about the withdrawal effects, which is the only reason that I knew that the things that were happening in my

body were normal because if I thought I was crazy before, that is nothing compared to the effects of withdrawing from five different pharmaceuticals at the same time. And basically, I've had so many clients since then who have tried to withdraw and haven't been able to. And I understand completely because I think the only reason I could was -- I was so, like, I had this confluence of amazing privileges that allowed me to do it in a very safe way.

But it is an actual living hell because you cannot trust anything that your brain is coming up with. Your emotions change all the time; your thoughts are like coming up with things that aren't even controllable, and it was awful. And that took about 6 months to taper off fully, and then probably another 2 years until I felt like I was myself again.

[0:27:00]

Rebecca: But in the process of this withdrawal, I had a friend who was a yoga teacher, and she was like, "You should start doing yoga." So I got a job cleaning a yoga studio in exchange for classes and so I would go and do yoga two times a day.

And one time I walked into the class and a man was sitting there and he looked up at me, and he says, "Hmm. Do you want a job?"

And I said, "Well, what do you do?"

And he said, "Oh I'm an herbalist."

And I was like, "Sure."

It was this man who had a health food store, and he sold herbs, and he'd studied Chinese medicine in London, and he taught about herbs and took me under his wing. And he, you know, he taught me about nutrition and blood sugar levels, and maybe for someone with as much as energy as me, living on sugar and caffeine wasn't a good thing. (*Rebecca laughs*)

And he taught me about things like liver-chi stagnation and repressed emotions, and, like, there was so many things that he taught me about that toward the end of my working for him, I was like, "Wow. Maybe I'm not actually bipolar, maybe I was just treating myself in ways that weren't good for me; that were causing me to have extreme emotional reactions."

Amber: Like the food you were eating or like your lifestyle?

Rebecca: The food I was eating. I basically lived off of sugar and sweet caffeine-y drinks

Amber: Of course, your psychiatrist didn't ask about your diet.

Rebecca: Uh-huh. Of course not! But that was irrelevant. Completely "irrelevant."

Yeah, it's funny. Looking back -- that, like, now working in this field -- it is so obvious that I think in our society we're not taught that the things that we do can have an impact on our mood. We're sort of taught that it's an arbitrary thing that happens to us in a way and not that your thought process, though, the things you eat, your exercise patterns, the pace you live at, your connections,

your friendships, all these different things contribute to how you feel, which, in some ways is so obvious, but it wasn't at the time.

And I think so many of us are taught from such an early age that these things are arbitrary and that we can, we can't do anything about how we feel, but we can take something that will change, like, stop us feeling bad, basically. Yeah, in a way it's so, so incredibly disempowering that we're taught we have no control over our feelings.

Yeah, so in the process of that, I started hiking. And this was in Palm Desert. And there's a hiking trail there that's a really popular hiking trail that I think the entire population of Palm Desert does. So I started doing that every day, sometimes twice a day, and in the process of just spending so much time outside this place -- I moved to Palm Desert from Scotland, and Scotland is very green and lush, and Palm Desert (especially in the summers) is sort of brown and hilly (*Rebecca laughs*). And there were many times after moving there that I would look at those mountains and think, "Oh GOD. it's so dead here." And it was so fascinating to me, starting to hike and starting to see these mountains close up and realizing, "Oh my goodness. This isn't dead. This place is really alive."

And then -- how woo-woo can I get with you?

Amber: Quite.

Rebecca: (*Rebecca laughs*) Okay! Good.

Yeah, one day I was out hiking, and I sort of met the spirit of the mountain. Or, at least, it felt like the spirit of the mountain. Granted, keep in mind, after being told that I was insane for years, this was very scary (*Rebecca laughs*). But it's interesting how there are experiences that you feel so viscerally that you absolutely can't doubt that they're real. I started meeting these spirits out there and feeling it, and feeling this feeling of being held. So everytime I started to get volatile, due to the withdrawal process, or due to maybe being a volatile person in general, I would just head straight for the mountain. And I would go, and there was a spot about a mile and a half up where I would just curl into this kind of alcove in the mountain, and I would just lie there until I felt better. And in many ways, I felt like the desert saved my life. It was spending time out there that I started realizing that I'm not really that important, which is a really good feeling. (*Rebecca laughs*)

And yeah, that's how I got into herbs, and that's how I got into plants and nature and it was sort of like a calling. Like, it got to a point where I couldn't really steer away from it because it felt like such an integral part of who I was.

Amber: And to think, what if that had been your prescription when you were 18.

Rebecca: Right? I have to say, I'm so grateful to have gone through that because I don't know if I would value the kind of hard-earned lessons as much if I hadn't felt boredom, and had to kind of claw myself out of this place. I don't I know if I would trust my own feelings and direction as much. So I am grateful for the experience, but it was hell, and I wouldn't wish it on anyone else.

[0:34:02]

Amber: It's interesting, too, hearing you talk about how you perceived the desert as brown and lifeless because now I think of you as such a desert person. You post so much about your adventures out there, and you work with the herbs. And I never had much of a connection with

desert landscapes, and then I've been down there now with Jen twice. And in March in both times. So I was introduced to blooming creosote.

Rebecca: Oh my gosh!

Amber: We took a hike. It might have been the trail you were talking about. It was a well-traveled trail. And, you know, she introduced me to that plant, and I had some with me in my car for a long time after that, and the smell! My gosh!

Rebecca: It smells **incredible**.

Amber: It's so special. And then someone sent me an infused body oil with it, so I have that scent captured.

Rebecca: OH wow.

Amber: Yeah, it's amazing. And the ocotillo, also.

Rebecca: Oh my goodness!

Amber: These are like, kind of -- you know, they're not the herbs that people in the mainstream know about, but they're for sure they're kind of superstars in the herbal world. They're like sexy herbs.

Rebecca: (*Rebecca laughs*) They're totally sexy herbs!

Amber: They're so special.

Rebecca: Especially creosote - it's just everywhere out here. But it is -- yeah, they're totally...

I was watching a British gardening show last week, and the host was saying something about "exotic plants, like agave" and I was like, "Hahaha" (*Rebecca laughs*). It's just funny.

But that's interesting I think. A lot of bio-regional herbs are very sexy in the herb world. I just -- I notice that the Pacific Northwest Herbs that I can't get here are, like, they're sexy to me. If someone, you know, I have a client in the Pacific Northwest. And whenever she's hiking, she sends me photos of Devil's Club, and I'm like, "Agh! Wow! So cool."

Yeah, I think maybe that's a very human thing to think it's exotic, what we don't have next to us.

[0:36:23]

Amber: Right. And I also had a somewhat similar experience. I grew up in South Lake Tahoe and then actually went through pretty major anxiety and depression at the same age. And I'm wondering, now, if that's pretty common for, like, the late teens - early twenties. It's just a hard transition into grown-up years.

We're not taught to be grown-ups. When I look back and I'm like, I can't believe I left my home at 18 and moved far away and thought I could handle my shit. I didn't know anything.

Rebecca: But we are NOT taught how to be grown-ups. And we don't have any rites of initiation.

Amber: Yeah.

Rebecca: Which is really interesting. Have you read any of Malidoma Somé's books?

Amber: I'm familiar with his work, and I've heard him on podcasts. And I've just this week being like, I need to dive deeper.

Rebecca: He is amazing, and I had the privilege of meeting him a few months ago, and his books really changed my life in so many ways. And in part, because the way he talks about magic and ritual and the fact that -- for people who aren't familiar with him, he's an African elder who's had a fascinating life. His book, I think it's called *Of Water and Spirit*, describes his early life growing up in Burkina Faso and being sent away to a Jesuit school -- and how he, over the course of his life, come to realize people in the West need to learn about indigenous culture. And he talks about magic and ritual in a way -- I think he says there is no word for magic where he grew up because it's such an integral part of life. That it's just normal.

People talk about, like, who we would call faeries, they exist and they're real is not just like here, where people say, "Oh are you away with the faeries?" as if to say, "Are you crazy?" No, the spirit world is a very real part of life. And for so many cultures around the world, this is very real. And yet for us here in the West, it is not talked about, we don't have a language for it, it's seen as woo-woo or crazy or out there, and, you know, everyone meets everything you say with, "oh, but you can't prove that. Where's the scientific studies about that?" And it's like, how can you prove that which cannot be proven because it doesn't exist in the world of logic?

So anyway, his books -- I had a point. I don't remember.

Amber: Yeah, initiation.

Rebecca: Oh yeah, so he talks about the initiations that they go through in his culture when children are becoming adults, and how important it is for a person to learn who they are in this way. And it's something that we don't have. And so most of us, when we're coming adults, don't know our place in the world. And I don't mean that in the British way of, like, "Know your place," but in the sense of knowing who you are, and where you stand, and where you belong, and what you're here for.

Amber: Yeah, I'm familiar with Malidoma's work through his emphasis on the ancestors... which is, the most foundational piece of knowing who you are.

And it's interesting what you bring up with "How do I know it's real?" because I just, last weekend, did a three-day intensive ancestral lineage healing with people who have worked, and have been trained under Dr. Daniel Foor, who was on Episode 26 of the podcast. And it was **so** profound. And I had the most amazing journeys and encounters with this ancestral spirit guide from my pure paternal lineage. It was like a movie unfolding before me everytime I journeyed and met this man and learned from him.

But what came up for so many people during the workshop was this “Well, yeah, I just had this experience, but is it real? Is it real? Is it real?”

And mine was just so big during the workshop that I just didn’t question it. But then in the days since I have. Was that real? Did I just make it up? And it’s just such a -- we’re so -- we don’t realize, like, this Western, logical, materialistic culture is just the water we swim in. And we take it for granted that it’s the only truth that you can only, the only real things are the thing you can see and prove.

And so, you know, it’s interesting to watch so many people during the intensive wrestle with that, and then to watch myself do it. And one thing that I kind of came to is, even if I’m making it up (which, I don’t think I am, and no traditional cultures think they’re making it up when they’re talking with their ancestors or the spirits of the land or the plants), but even if I am, I’m at least engaging in a **deeply** ancestral human practice because people have always done this. They have **always** felt sensed, communicated with the spirits of place or of their ancestors or all number of animate beings.

[0:42:10]

Rebecca: Yeah. I think the conclusion I came to was this. I studied with a group of shamans based in Louisville for about 10 years. And for 10 years in my training, I kept avoiding for someone to tell me that I belonged there because I’ve never felt like a person who was deeply connected. Like, I’ve never seen spirit. I’ve never had prophetic dreams. I’ve never had any of the things that sort of we think make somebody more connected to the spirit world in a way.

So I kept waiting for somebody to tell me that I belonged there or that I was somehow (*Rebecca laughs*) special or...

Amber: -- Yeah, you’ve got the GIFT.

Rebecca: (*Rebecca laughs*) It was like, these were like, I mean so many of the stories that we hear, as well, like, Harry Potter, “You’re a wizard, Harry!” I was like waiting for “You’re a wizard, Harry!”

(*both laugh*)

Amber: You know, I gotta say, I was just thinking of that, how the foundation of that book, the starting point of that book just immediately captures everyone’s attention, because we can ALL relate with being an orphan child, and then being told, “Actually you DO belong to these super magical people over here. And now let’s go initiate you.”

Rebecca: Yes! And I wanted that so badly, and in the same way as I wanted someone to come along and put their hand on my shoulder and say, “Yes, this is real.”

And it occurred to me -- and honestly, it was about 10 years later or 10 years into it -- that no one was going to tell me that I belonged. No one was going to tell me that I deserved it. And no one was going to confirm to me that it was real. That I sort of had to take the step in on my own.

And it was very, very scary because in doing that, you’re sort of you’re risking your own sanity, which, given my history, I think is my greatest fear. And your sanity, your credibility, there’s so

many things there that are on the line. And then one day I realized, "I don't want to live in a world where everything is cynical and where none of this exists. And if this makes me crazy, then I would rather be crazy and feel content and complete and happy and like I have a place in the world. And like I have invisible friends in the trees and the rocks and the mountains. And I'm okay with that.

Amber: Right.

Rebecca: But what I don't want is to live in a world where I don't trust anything. That, to me, is more scary than losing my mind. So, yeah.

Amber: Mhmm. Even if it is untrue (which, we'll never know. We'll never know), it's worth it. (*Amber laughs*).

It's worth it; living your life believing in it.

Rebecca: Yes.

Amber: You're happier and more connected and more rooted.

Rebecca: Yes.

Amber: And more human. More human.

[0:45:42]

Amber: So (*Amber laughs*) I want to finish the thought I was having earlier, which kind of goes back to what we were previously speaking about, which is I grew up in South Lake Tahoe. And years after I finished college, five or six years later, is when I started studying herbalism. At the time, I lived where I do now in the Grass Valley/Nevada City area, and I was just falling in LOVE with the plants here. And was like, "They're so amazing! And too bad all we had in Tahoe was pine trees. It was so lame and boring."

And then over time, I'd go back in the summers, and I'd be like, "Oh wait a minute. Oh here's *Artemisia douglasiana*. Here's mugwort. Oh here's *Artemisia tridentata*. Sagebrush grows here, too. Oh, there's yarrow! Oh, there's coyote mint!" Like, you know, just -- and all this, and it's like, sorry. Sorry, there's HUNDREDS of beautiful medicinal plants here that I had just not seen before because I hadn't been deeply attuned to the place.

Rebecca: Isn't that funny?

Amber: It is funny. And then the desert being the archetypal barren landscape, which it's not in any way.

Rebecca: It's not at all! It's funny to me, when people say, "Oh, it's a desert."

"What do you mean? Rich in life? Biodiverse? Really beautiful when you look up close?"

They're like, "Uh, that's not what I meant."

(both laugh)

Amber: There are extremely special creatures and plants in there because they've evolved in such extreme conditions.

Rebecca: Yes. And really, there's something about when storms roll through the desert, there's something so insanely powerful about this sort of meeting of elements; a kind of confluence of things that are complete opposite to each other.

(Sound of shuffling, as mic/headphones drop in the background)

-- Oops, sorry. Sorry, I dropped the microphone, or dropped my earpiece--

Yeah, these complete opposites and then the rain comes, and it's the most insanely powerful thing, and it's so beautiful.

Amber: Mmm. Sounds amazing.

[0:47:44]

Amber: So, okay. This is another question that kind of ties in two big things:

So, okay. One thing that I sometimes look at on this podcast is mythic archetypes that really call to us. And when I asked you about this before we talked, you went on a wonderful rant...*(Rebecca laughs)* ... About this idea of the hero's journey. And I agree with you. And all that you have to say about that.

So I'm going to ask you to rant for us *(Amber laughs)* on the hero's journey.

And at the end, you tied it into the four humors approach to herbalism. And I wanted to talk to you about that, too, because this is an ancestral idea that many people are -- have turned away from. It's like, "Oh, we discredited that a long time ago. We're past that." And I honestly don't entirely understand it. And I want to because of the way that you and Jim McDonald use it is clearly useful.

And so, yeah. Okay. That's... Go.

(Amber laughs)

Rebecca: Okay. Let's see. I'll start with the humors.

I learned about the four humors through Jim McDonald, who learned about the four humors from Christopher Headley, who learned about the four humors from Galen, though, not directly, because that would be like a stretch of time.

Amber: And because Galen is an ancient Greek physician...

Rebecca: *(Rebecca laughs)* Yeah. Yeah, I think there's about a few thousand years spanning that.

It's a constitutional system, basically, that Jim teaches and Jim and I teach together. And the, one of the main aspects of it is this idea of the humoral temperaments, which is the kind of expression of the four humors in our personalities. And we all contain all four of these humors that express in our temperaments. So we're all four temperaments in various combinations, and they will express in different areas of our lives in different ways. But these four temperaments are sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, and melancholic. And they correspond roughly to the elements of air, fire, water, and earth. And I'll give you a very, very quick overview of each of them, just so we have some kind of context for this.

[0:50:38]

Rebecca: The air element, which expresses in the sanguine temperament, is quick-moving, all over the place (literally), and it expresses in our personalities in being quick-moving and all over the place. So if you meet someone who has a large expression of the sanguine temperament, they are outgoing, gregarious, they tend to have lots of quick ideas, lots of energy. They tend to love people and love being around people, and whoever they're with in the moment is their closest friend in the world. They love revelry; they love parties; they love dancing and drinking and experimentation. And these are the people who are like, "Sure. I'll try anything once!" They are SUCH fun to be around, and normally, the most likable, initially, of all the temperaments because they are so kind of extroverted and interested in other people.

The second one is the fire element, which expresses in the choleric temperament. The choleric temperament is everyone. I mean, everyone is going to be familiar with all of these, but the choleric temperament we are all the most familiar with because we live in a society that was created by choleric and is run by choleric. So choleric are efficient, on-time, productive, driven, focused, fast. And, if you think about it, this is sort of the epitome of what we say as "a good person in society." Like, choleric make direct eye contact and have a strong handshake, and they're the types of people that other choleric meet, and go, "Well, they seem like a stand-up person."

Choleric -- because choleric tend to be the people who say, "Oh I see what needs to be done here. Let's get this in order. Let's make this more efficient," they are the ones who sort of created the structure for our society and tend to be the ones who rise into positions of authority more quickly because they're the ones who'll say, "I'll take care of this. Nobody's getting anything done here so I'm going to step in."

And because choleric run the society (and one of the, say, less positive traits of a choleric person) is that tend to be, they tend to find it very difficult to see outside of their own worldview. So, you know, I'll tell you about phlegmatic in a minute, and phlegmatic are the opposite, and phlegmatic are water. And phlegmatic tend to be very empathetic and find it very easy to step into other people's emotions and lives and can really sort of get a feeling for how someone else feels.

Choleric are, like -- in order to move forward as quickly as they do, they sort of are naturally cut-off to their connections to the world. So choleric don't really see other types of personalities outside their own because that's how they are. That's how they see what's a "good" personality. And so all of the other temperaments, who are natural, it's a natural way for other people to be other ways in the world, choleric don't really see that. They see that as "Well, you just need to be more efficient. Like, why aren't you getting this done fast enough?"

[0:54:21]

Rebecca: It's like, everytime a choleric gives a phlegmatic person advice, it's like, "Why don't you just write a list?!" I'm guilty of that, myself. It's... (*Rebecca laughs*).

So we live in a choleric society, basically. And people who are choleric, living in a choleric society -- my friend Rosalee de la Forêt she came up with this term: she calls it "choleric privilege" (*Amber laughs*) -- where if you are a choleric and live in a choleric society, you have immense privilege because you are the way society wants people to be.

[0:54:54]

Rebecca: Phlegmatics are water. And they tend to be empathetic. They live for connections with other people. To have, like, a three-hour conversation with a friend where you make like deep eye contact and really feel like you're getting to know another person is, like, the phlegmatic DREAM. Phlegmatics love to move at their own pace, which is usually very slowly. Like, they really want to feel things, and if you push a phlegmatic too fast, it really, really flusters them because it's like they need to be able to kind of feel into a situation. And phlegmatics are feelers. Like, they cook by feel. They meet people and determine if they like them based on their feelings and they sort of, they're the sort of people who say, "I feel this. I feel that." It is a personality trait, or phlegmatic personalities are most commonly associated with being female, but it's not actually exclusive to people with female reproductive organs. It's just that in our society we have kind of classified, "Well, women are supposed to be like this. And men are supposed to be like choleric." But, you know, as you probably all know, there are plenty of men who are able to be empathetic and plenty of women who are very focused and driven. And we all contain all of these. And I think it's yet another one of the things that is messed up about our society; that we try and tell people what gender they should be and how they should act based on that.

But umm... where did I go?

Oh, the last one is the melancholic, which is earth. And melancholics are quiet observers. These are the people who are, you know, least likely to be chatterboxes to strangers. They tend to be kind of taciturn and stoic and like to really observe a situation for a long time before jumping in -- No, they don't jump in. They will, like, tactfully step in when it is deemed okay to do so. And melancholics do not phone you back. I say that for the benefit of my mother, who, like, despairs that my melancholic brother doesn't call her very often. They'll, like, see a missed call, and be like, "Oh, that's so nice that that person called me," but they won't call back because it's like, I don't know.

The melancholics don't really... they'll have a few people in their life who they're very close to who won't even see them as introverted because they'll be so kind of goofy and open around them. But then for the rest of the people, they are very, like -- I call it the "stonewall" -- they don't emote, which isn't to say they don't feel because they feel SO much, but they keep it to themselves. It's like they don't **need** to share.

[0:58:07]

Rebecca: I'm sure everyone knows melancholics. And I am sort of on a crusade in life to help melancholics to be more understood because I feel like if people could understand that they do like people, are happy to be there, they just don't want to talk a lot, it would do so much for melancholics, because they're really, really misunderstood. And people think they're antisocial, and

people think they don't like them. And it's like, no, they just want to be left alone. And, you know, I think the greatest gift you can give a melancholic is to just let them be.

So anyway, these are the four temperaments.

And I mentioned that we live in a choleric society, and one of the things that arises from this choleric society is that we live with choleric myths, and one of those myths is the hero's journey. And we have all been raised with these stories; whether it's Odysseus, or it's Luke Skywalker, or, I can't think of any others right now.

Amber: There's just SO many.

Rebecca: It's like this lone person who is special somehow and changes the course of humanity with their own humble "Frodo."

Amber: Mhmm. I'm literally just picturing Frodo. *(both laugh)*

Rebecca: Yeah! And so we're sort of raised to believe that I, the individual, I'm on this journey where I can be the hero and the hero of my own myth. And in some ways, this is very important because all four of these temperaments are very important. And without this choleric myth in society and in ourselves, we don't move forward. We don't have progress for better or for worse. We don't get anything done. We don't have organization or efficiency.

But that choleric, without any of the other temperaments, and without seeing the beautiful benefits of all these other temperaments, is just out of control. And I think this is what's happened in society because choleric don't necessarily see the other temperaments as, well, they don't see them as kind of valid expressions of life in themselves. It's like, "Well, you're deficient in choleric? We could fix you by giving you a to-do list!"

Because these other temperaments aren't necessarily seen as valid or important, we also -- we don't hear the phlegmatic myths. We don't hear, you know, the stories of the person who changed the world by having a deep conversation with somebody who felt lost and broken. We don't hear about the court jester, who livened the spirits of everyone with their sanguine temperament and sent everyone home feeling so much better about their lives and how that changed the course of the world. We don't hear about the melancholic hero, who, you know, when the sanguine king wanted to set out on a completely un-thought out plan, the melancholic stepped in and said, "Yes, but have you thought about this and this and this, and how this could go wrong?" and changed the course of the future by, like, by quietly observing and few well-placed sentences.

We don't hear these stories, and we don't value them. And therefore, in ourselves, these aspects in ourselves are also not seen as important.

[1:02:13]

Rebecca: An example of this:

I was talking to my very, very choleric husband about this choleric society, and he was like, "Yeah, but like what would you have? A phlegmatic society?"

And I said, “Well, I think it would really interesting to try a phlegmatic society. I think it would drive all of us crazy because we’d all be crying and connected all the time.” (*Amber laughs*)

And he was like, “Well, yeah, we **need** a choleric society ‘cause otherwise we would be inefficient.”

And I was like, “But... if not for you having the worldview of a choleric society, you would not see being efficient as the most important thing.” And the look on his face, he was just like, “Oh. Wait a minute. Efficiency is only important because I’m a choleric, and I live in a choleric society.”

I was like, “Yeah! Sometimes it’s really nice to do something inefficiently.”

And then all of a sudden, the way he sees I work (which is very inefficient), it was like, “Oh. Wait. You don’t need to do things the most fast, efficient, and productively possible?” I’m like, “NO! How about you enjoy it?”

(*both laugh*)

There are so many different ways that you can move through life. And I think it’s beautiful for us to get to experience that and enjoy it in each other and respect it in each other. And if we had more myths about this, I think it would change society.

Amber: That makes me think that we only do myth in a pretty specific formula in this culture. It’s the stories that are going to make a really good movie, Lord of the Rings, or Harry Potter, or Star Wars. But sometimes if you go really deep into old folklore books, or, you know, you’ll read a story and it makes no sense, and it doesn’t resolve in the way you’re used to, and nothing heroic happened, they’re hard to digest. I have to sit with them and be like, “What is really happening here because this isn’t the formula I’m used to?”

Rebecca: Totally.

Amber: But there’s wisdom there.

Man, just thinking about this choleric framework, because that sounds the most like me of the four that you talked about, but I also feel like a lot of it is forced upon me because I run a business. I do this podcast, and I have a two-year-old. And so I **HAVE** to be efficient with, like, the two or three hours a day I have to try and do all that stuff. And then I, really, almost always end up feeling pretty crazy at the end of those few hours because I’m like, “Eh! Eh! Eh!” (*Amber does crazy panicked voice*)

And I **just** recently changed the way I do packaging and shipping. I used to like, lay out all the bottles, then get all the boxes, in -- what’s that called? -- a production line. And now I do it one package at a time, which means I’m moving much more often, and I’m not standing still in one place, doing a repetitive motion over and over. Now I take, open the box, get the medicine, wrap it up, put it in, write the name, print the thing out, get... you know? It means I’m moving more often, and I’m enjoying it so much more because I got myself out that super-efficiency mindset.

[1:05:36]

Rebecca: That’s really nice.

I mean, Adam Smith would, you know, had a heart attack, he wrote *The Wealth of Nations*...

Amber: -- Right. Yeah --

Rebecca: ... and he came up with the production line.

Amber: -- Henry Ford, yeah -- (*Amber laughs*)

Rebecca: Yeah! Totally. (*Rebecca laughs*)

But yeah, see, there's -- it's really interesting to undo these of ideas of like, "Wait, what happens if I don't do things in this choleric, efficient way?" -- and there's something really interesting I've noticed in myself:

The more I try and step outside of doing that -- not to be rebellious, but because I think it's really important to learn our own rhythms and learn where are, our midpoints, or the crossover of, like, enjoying our work and finding pleasure in it, and finding nourishment in it, and still being able to move forward -- there's a place in the middle there where you can still feel your body and still be able to process and still be working. And I think we, in society, we're all so trained to want to move as fast as possible that we cut ourselves off in order to do that.

And I think that there's also, I think this really represents what's happening in the world right now, especially in California with the drought situations. Like, I see this, I see the phlegmatic as this nourishing yin aspect of our lives and our personalities where we are kind of fed. In the same way, if you have a really beautiful, deep conversation with someone that's close to you and nourishes you, or you get a beautiful hug from someone, it's nourishing. And then we cut all of this off in order to get things done as quickly as possible and efficiently as possible. And I think this is why there's so much inefficiency in our culture, and in the West. This may be getting a bit woo-woo again, but I think the drought is a direct reflection of our need to move as quickly as possible. So...

Amber: That's not woo-woo-ey. You know, it's the result of human actions and humans and greed. Yeah, the efficiency mindset and extractive mindset, which can so go hand in hand.

Rebecca: Yeah, you're right.

[1:08:09]

Amber: You're beautifully transitioning into what I wanted to talk about next which is this:

So you send out **incredible** newsletters. And we'll give people the opportunity to sign up at the end. But, like, I mean, they're like books. First of all, if you put them all together, I'm sure you'd have a book. But it's very, very deeply woven plant medicine information.

Rebecca: Thank you.

Amber: Yes, yeah. They're so good. I'm always like, everyone needs to be reading what I'm reading right now. And you recently did one on "Deep Roots for Stressful Times."

And it's talking a lot about what we're talking about now: the fires, the drought, exhaustion, and stress, and listening to our bodies. And how do you work with root medicine in these times?

Rebecca: (Rebecca pauses) Phew. Thinking... to organize.

Amber: Yeah. Yeah.

Rebecca: It totally ties in with the choleric thing (*Rebecca laughs*).

Amber: Yeah!

Rebecca: (Rebecca pauses again)

I think it would be easier for me to show you with an exercise. Do you mind?

Amber: No, please.

Rebecca: Okay.

So if you can, close your eyes (and everyone listening: if you're not driving, please do the same. If you're driving please keep your eyes open. This is very important).

And start to take a few deep breaths.

And as you breathe, start to feel the breath moving into your body on the inhale and leaving your body on the exhale.

Now start to scan your body where you might be holding tension: your forehead, your jaw, your shoulders, your belly, your pelvic floor, your chest.

And now just choose one of those areas and pick that area.

And as you keep breathing, start to tense it more, and tense it more.

And you're going to keep tensing it until you can't tense it anymore.

And you should notice as you keep tensing that it's going to start to contort your body a little, or maybe a lot. And when you're tensing so hard that you're almost tensing with it. Take a deep inhale and then drop it all.

And breathe.

And move to that area where you were tensing, and move it around a little bit.

Now feel for the earth underneath you.

Feel its solidness underneath you. Feel its nurturing nature underneath you.

And feel where the earth is pressing against your body. It might be physically, where you can feel your body touching the earth, or it might be energetically that you can feel the earth pressing against your energy.

And wherever it is that the earth is touching you, breathe to that place and soften it. And try not to overthink this. Just let the earth in.

Let it let that nurturing, nourishing, solid, stable energy into your body.

And just keep breathing and allow it to feed you. In a way, it's like you're taking a step back into yourself and allowing it to happen; that you're doing the opposite of actively drawing it in, and just allowing it to do what it naturally does.

And whenever you're ready, open your eyes.

Does the world look different? *(Rebecca laughs)*

Amber: Mmm. Softer.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Amber: And I feel deeply reminded of what nourishes me.

Rebecca: Yeah.

Amber: And it's right there.

Rebecca: It's right there.

Amber: It's so easy to ignore it when I'm in my "choleric mindset."

(Rebecca laughs)

Rebecca: I think this is what we cut off to get things done better, quicker, more efficiently.

And this is, I think, our natural state of being. Where you can still, you know, move around the world like this and get things done -- and, granted, I'm often very spacy like this. I **need** a list. *(Rebecca laughs)* -- but what I try and do is move through the world, and work, and drive, and handle all the things I need to handle from this place, so I'm no longer burning through resources in order to achieve things.

And this, to me, is sort of the essence of what root medicine is. Like, remaining rooted while still moving about the world.

[1:16:00]

Amber: And do you work with actual roots, too?

Rebecca: (*Rebecca laughs*) Yes! I love working with roots. Yes, I love working with roots, and, you know, it's funny: I mentioned the bioregional stuff earlier, and I really like working with bioregionals in this regard. One of my favorites is actually Devil's Club 'cause I feel like it really ties in so deeply into that old earth energy.

Amber: It's not a plant I know. It's in the Pacific Northwest. I know it's very powerful and special and beautiful. It's like it's one of those, you see a photo of it and you're like, "Oooo! Hello!"

Rebecca: I'm very lucky. I have a friend up there who sent me some -- and you know what? I'm going to change that, because I think it's a bit unfair in a way to talk about something as like a bit "plant elitist" isn't it? To be like, "Well this one thing that not many people can get, but I have a friend who sends me some."

(*both laugh*)

Sorry about that. Umm... let's see. Oh my goodness: shatavari. There we go.

Shatavari is, sort of, epitomizes to me that sort of soft, deep, nourishing, yin, slow, earthy, moist energy. I'm really trying to get used to saying the word "moist."

Amber: Oh, are you one of those people who hates it?

Rebecca: Ah. Yup. Jim McDonald, everytime we're teaching, he loves throwing around "moists" in there all the time, (*Amber laughs*) and giving me looks and trying to get used to it so I'm giving people any inclination to mess with me. (*Rebecca laughs*).

But shatavari I think sort of epitomizes that. Like, it really, it helps people to build back up their deep, root, nourished energy, but at the same time, it doesn't give people an energy boost. It just builds back up your reserves, and over time it really serves to soften, yeah, soften our bodies, but also soften the way we interact with the world.

Amber: Yeah, that's what I hear you and see you post a lot. My impression is that you drink it every day in tea.

Rebecca: Yeah. Every day in tea.

Thomas Easley got me doing that, actually, because I was having some gallbladder issues and talking to him about it, and he's like, "Yeah, well, you're really, really dry. I mean, do you drink infusions?"

And I was like, "Well, yeah, you know, I teach about them. I tell other people to." (*both laugh*)

"Right, but do you take them, yourself?"

And I was like, "Well, you know, like, consistency isn't really my strongpoint."

And he gets this look on his face, and he goes, "Okay. I challenge you. I challenge you to do a 14-day shatavari infusion."

Like, I can be very choleric, and was like, “What? A CHALLENGE? Oh Yeah?! I’ll show you! I’m gonna be, like, the biggest infusion drinker in the world. I’m gonna be the **moistest** person you ever meet!” *(both laugh)*

And he was like, “My work here is done.”

So, yeah, I did the 14-day shatavari infusion challenge that he made up on the spot and carried on, and I’ve been drinking it every day for a couple of years now. It -- I think in many ways-- it changed my life ‘cause I didn’t really consider myself to be a soft person at all, and it’s over the course of the time I’ve been drinking it (obviously, lots of other things have happened), but I feel like shatavari in many ways has taught me how to soften and let the world in and let other people in and let connections in.

Yeah. I’m very, very fond of that plant. It’s the first plant I send out. I teach a course on connecting to the hidden world and spirit world and connecting to the earth and connecting to ourselves, and shatavari is the first plant that I send out for that ‘cause I think it teaches so much about letting things in.

Amber: We will talk about that. I want to hear about that, and I’m very intrigued now, and of course, I’m going to challenge myself to this 14-day infusion. *(both laugh)*

Rebecca: Yeah, this would be amazing if more people did this 14 -- Thomas Easley’s 14-day infusion challenge.

(both laugh)

[1:21:02]

Amber: You also mention ashwagandha in here. And this is another sexy, buzzy herb, and not one I have much experience with. Although, we grew it this year and just harvested it, and I think we’re going to tincture it.

How do you work with it, and what’s your understanding of ashwagandha?

Rebecca: I love it in tincture, and I love it in powder.

Actually, I think the traditional way, when I was in India I was talking to an Ayurvedic herbalist who told me to simmer ashwagandha root in milk and drink it that way. But I really, I enjoy the powder stirred in. I actually mix the powder with cocoa and will drink that at night; it’s really nice.

I think ashwagandha, to me, tastes and smells like chocolate. Now, to some people -- there’s an herbalist here in Southern California called Julie James, and she is an amazing, amazing herbalist and teacher, and she is very vocal about how much she dislikes the smell of ashwagandha. And the first time we talked about it, I was like, “What?! But it smells like chocolate!” *(Amber laughs)*

And she was like, “Uhh, it smells like **horse** urine.”

And that was the first time I learned that some people don't like it. I think it's sort of like the cilantro thing; some people, you know, love it, and some people hate it.

Amber: I have to say, we dried the roots in the room I sleep in because we have a big drying mat in there, and everytime I stepped into that room, I was like "Ahh. This is such a heavenly sleep scent here."

Rebecca: Isn't it? Was it chocolatey to you?

Amber: I didn't think that, but sweet. Like, for sure, sweet.

Rebecca: Yeah. I love it. (*Rebecca laughs*)

I feel like ashwagandha, it sort of rebalances the fluctuations of the nervous system. That's kind of how I see it anyway, sort of. Regulating the tendencies that we have to sort of have like great bursts of energy and then collapsing. And ashwagandha sort of provides this steady baseline where you have more sustained energy overall.

And I think one of the ways it does that is by -- it deepens your sleep which is just such a wonderful thing. Whenever I've taken ashwagandha regularly, I've, I sleep so deeply and so well and wake up feeling so rested. And I think that's maybe one of the ways that it helps with our energy levels so well 'cause we're actually getting the rest and nourishment that we need.

It's almost like it puts -- we, in society, tend to have our activity and rest. Like, folders in the wrong pockets or something, because we rest and we're wired, and we try and get stuff done when we're tired -- and ashwagandha helps put everything back where it's supposed to be so we can rest with all of ourselves and be active with all of ourselves.

Amber: Ugh. That's beautiful; very helpful metaphor there, and thank you.

Rebecca: You're welcome.

Amber: Yes. Rest, please!

Rebecca: (*Rebecca laughs*) I think we all need it.

[1:24:22]

Amber: Yeah, I think roots can be overlooked (*Amber laughs*), literally.

We see the leaves. We see the flowers; those are just what we literally evolved to capture our attention. And to get into the roots it takes another step as far as, you know, if you're harvesting yourself, it's harder work. It's a very different process.

And that it's going to take longer, usually, to process that into medicine as well, but even you're not growing or making your own medicine, just having the energetic eye to look at the roots and come into relationship with them and see how getting more rooted in your life can change things.

Rebecca: Yes.

Amber: Into the darkness. Into the soil.

Rebecca: Oh, it's beautiful.

[1:25:19]

Amber: Okay, Rebecca. Let's -- you have a lot of things. You have a lot of offerings.

I was gonna ask, like, which temperament do you most associate yourself with?

Rebecca: I mostly choleric and phlegmatic. And it's funny because we want to be choleric in work, and phlegmatic when it comes to interpersonal connections. I think these -- in terms of how it would be nice if these temperaments manifested in the world -- if we all worked in a choleric fashion that would be great, but I'm very phlegmatic when I work. And I'm very choleric when it comes to other people.

I'm the friend that's like, "Oh sorry that happened. But you know what you need to do..." (*Rebecca laughs*) which I hear is very annoying (*both laugh*). And when it comes to work, I'm like, "Oh what do I **feel** like doing next?"

But I try to switch them around, and it's very stressful. So it's, yeah. Mostly choleric-phlegmatic, which is a very kind of feeling-oriented, and need to do things at my own pace in my own way, but then also really focused. And it turns out that I actually -- like, I don't see myself as getting very much done, but it turns out that I actually do. According to other people, when I'm like, "Oh my God. I'm so slow," and people are like, "Are you? What?"

(*both laugh*)

Amber: Yeah! That's what I was going to say. What was it? Sanguine was the first one? The air element? That I picture you flitting from here to there, creating constantly.

Rebecca: I have a lot of sanguine. I have a LOT of sanguine as well.

Amber: Yeah, it's just like every new Facebook post (which, you're one of the best Facebook posters out there).

Rebecca: Oh thank you!

Amber: Yeah, it's just like every post I'm gonna read thoroughly because it's going to be smart, funny, entertaining, well-written, helpful, funny. (*Amber laughs*)

Rebecca: Well, thank you!

Amber: Yeah, but you just produce a LOT, Rebecca! Your writings, your medicines, your projects, your teaching, it's really a lot.

Rebecca: It's a lot.

Amber: Yeah.

Rebecca: I'm starting to realize this. After I've started to kind of tell the voice in my brain, "You're not doing enough." I've started to tell it to shut up, which is really, really handy.

I highly recommend that to everyone. Just, like, be like, "You know. I am enough, and I'm doing enough. Thanks for your input, brain, but, like, go away." And it's a really nice feeling.

Amber: Yeah. And it's also nice for me to hear, though, it kind of sounds like you experience it in a more phlegmatic way; you're not stressed and frazzled at the end of creating something new.

Rebecca: No. I used to be. I used to be, and it's in learning to shut that voice up, I've learned to really just trust kind of my feelings to take me where they go, basically.

And it's interesting. I think I've actually become in some ways -- I hate to use this as a marker for success -- but I've come more productive since just starting to do things in my own time, in my own way, but I'm sort of loathe to couch in those terms, because I think it's a marker of choleric society to be like, "Well, this is only beneficial because I'm more productive." Like, I also feel better in my bones; I feel much more like myself, and I'm so much more content existing in the world in this way, which, is another way of looking at it.

But, a side effect is I'm more productive.

Amber: Well, I am inspired to try and get there myself.

Rebecca: I hope you can. It feels really wonderful. *(Rebecca laughs)*

Amber: Yeah, I'm gonna ask shatavari and ashwagandha to help me.

Rebecca: Yeah, you should do the challenge. Do, like the 14-day shatavari-ashwagandha infusion challenge.

Amber: Yes.

[1:29:44]

Amber: So tell us about your many projects. How can people sign up for your newsletter, The Wonder Sessions, your medicines, everything?

Rebecca: This is where I'm about to be embarrassed because I just said that I don't get much done.

I have an online shop where I make and sell products, and that is called Kings Road Apothecary. ON there, there is a little tab called, that says "Weekly Missive" and that is where you can sign up for my newsletter. And it is called the "Care of Weekly Herbal Brilliance" (or something like that). I don't have humility issues.

(both laugh)

Let's see. So that is one of the things that I do.

The other thing that I do, that I started this year, is a course called *The Wonder Sessions*. And this was sort of, it's something that I actually wanted to start doing about four years ago. It was one day when I was sitting under a tree and --once again, this is me getting a bit out there -- but the tree told me, it's like, "You have to teach them the old ways."

And I was like, "I have no idea what you're talking about, man."

I'm not (as far as I feel like) -- I'm like a lot of people here in the US where I'm sort of culturally cut off from whatever old ways there are. So I didn't really know what they were talking about, but I, you know, I spent so much time out here communicating with the trees and the rocks and the spirits in the land that I'm working with. And the message just got stronger and stronger and stronger. So one day I was just like, "Okay. I have no idea what it is that you're asking me to teach, but I'm gonna trust you, and I'm gonna do this." And so, I started this course, and it's called *The Wonder Sessions*, and I am so infinitely grateful to the people who signed up for my first year because I was, like, "You're my first group for this course where I'm gonna teach you how to connect to all these things." And I had an outline in my head of what I was doing, but it was sort of a leap of faith for all of us. And it has just been one of the more beautiful and humbling and incredible experiences of my life.

So that is the course that I'm teaching. It's mostly, like, we have online groups, where we talk, and a weekly chat, where we discuss this stuff, but the bulk of it is a series of books I've been writing that come in the mail. And I sort of, like, I wanted it to look like a delivery from Hogwarts. (*Rebecca laughs*) So it's like a brown paper package, wrapped in string, with a wax seal and it has the book and writings on plants and exercise and recipes. But the book is basically a course leading people into how they can perceive the hidden world and connect more deeply with it. And it's sort of like a course in self-healing at the same time 'cause we're sort of healing the wounds inflicted on us by the society that make us unable to see these things and unable to trust ourselves. So it's... yes, it's quite intense. And it's been sort of life-changing for all of us.

Amber: Sounds like a remembering.

Rebecca: Yes. That's exactly what it is. Thank you. I'm gonna put that on the website. (*both laugh*)

So that's the other thing I do.

And then recently I just last week signed a lease on a shop space up here in Idyllwild, so I'm moving my workshop up here into the mountains, and I'm going to have a little retail store.

Amber: Oh wow!

Rebecca: I know! I'm so excited. That is going to be called *Wonder Botanica*, and it is like this little green-style cottage up here, nestled in the mountains in Idyllwild, California. And much like *The Wonder Sessions*, I don't really know what it's going to look like, but it's one of those things that life sort of handed to me in the same way. And so I'm like, "Okay. I'm doing what you tell me, even though I've no idea what I'm doing."

So this is here.

Amber: Wow. It's amazing.

Rebecca: So, next time you come to the desert, you should come up and visit.

Amber: Yeah. Yeah, I'd love to! We want to go back to Palm Springs at some point. We had a lot of fun there.

Rebecca: Yes!

Amber: Okay, so thank you. Thank you, Rebecca. Really nice to have a deep drop in with you, and I really look forward to releasing this conversation. I think people are really going to love what you have to say and benefit from your hard-earned life wisdom.

Rebecca: Thank you **so** much for having me. It's been such a pleasure and a joy to talk to you and to get to know you better.

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

[1:35:35]

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, and past podcast episodes, and a lot more at MythicMedicine.com.

While you're there, I invite you to click the purple banner across the top of the page 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 so much, and I look forward to next time!