



## Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 37 with Janelle Hardy

Ancestral Legacies, Lost Cultures, &  
Personal Mythmaking

January 22, 2019

[0:00:00]

*(Excerpt from today's show by Janelle Hardy)*

*I think it's really important to consider the devastating impact of rootlessness, of trauma, of abuse, and what happens when people kind of embody the great adventure and mythological dream of being this wild wanderer, and just finding a better home somewhere. In doing that, leaving behind everyone and everything including culture, language, friends, family...*

[0:00:29]

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

**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.

Today is Episode 37. I'm your host, Amber Magnolia Hill, and I'm interviewing Janelle Hardy.

Janelle has a podcast called the [Personal Mythmakers Podcast](#) that I'll think you'll probably like. And I was interviewed on it the day before I interviewed her for this show, and we're releasing them at the same time. So if you're listening to this show, then that one's out as well, and I think you might like it; not just my interview, but so many good ones.

Janelle asks the same four questions of each guest, and we talk about those four questions in this interview so I'm not gonna say them here, but it's pretty deep, pretty juicy, pretty personal, and just, yeah, really revelatory and beautiful conversations that come out of those four questions.

So I'll have a link to that in the show notes, of course. Or you can look for the Personal Mythmakers Podcast, which until now was called The Wild Elixir Podcast, so there might be some name confusion or you'll need to look for one or the other, but I know at least in iTunes and the Apple Podcast app it's "Personal Mythmakers" now.

- Janelle and I talk a lot about names: making peace with our names, the legacy of patriarchal naming, changing names -- like, you know, when people change their names and then a lot of times people change their names back.
- Prehistoric kinship ties, and pondering how our most ancient ancestors chose names
- We talk about the spectral visitations from the grandfather who died before Janelle was born that she saw as a kid
- Rootlessness, and what is lost when people set out on their own to live that hero's journey that Rebecca Altman talked about in the last episode, and they leave their land and people behind. You know, we lose so much and that overarching cultural narrative has dominated for so long, and it has led to so much loss.
- We talk about language as a gateway to the ancestors
- How our ancestors live in us, even when we can't claim their culture as our own
- I talk about megalithic monuments and the transition from hunting and gathering to farming in Europe and this idea of ancestral memory and how our ancestors remembered such vast amounts of information. This is based on the book [The Memory Code](#) by Lynne Kelly, and I will definitely have a link to that in the show notes, as well. It's fascinating.
- We talk about knowing whose land you're living on.
- The ancient tales we're drawn to
- And diving deep into embodiment and creativity
- The profound inner and outer journey of Personal Mythmaking
- And then we get into navigating the world as a Highly Sensitive Person and empathy. Janelle said, "I need a lot of self-care to be connected to my deep self," and I feel that, too. I know a lot of my listeners do, too. It's come up on a few interviews already in the past
- And Janelle educates me on biodynamic craniosacral therapy (which I thought sounded amazing), somatic experiencing, and other coping mechanisms/self-care for the sensitive
- I really loved her perspective on chronic trauma responses and nervous system stuckness
- Then we close it out talking about the more ephemeral cultural transmissions: textiles, fiber arts, music, dance, cooking, etc.

The Patreon gifts this month, there are two of them. The first is a PDF from Janelle called *Self Care and Energy Hygiene for Empaths, Introverts, Highly Sensitive People (HSPs), and Psychic/Intuitives*. It's a three-page guided intended to make you feel less overwhelmed and more grounded and resilient with three steps:

- Step One: Know your traits, strengths, and challenges.
- Step Two: Daily actions to wring out the psychic sponge
- Step Three: Get support in your healing
- Plus, more resources

So that's at the two-dollar level for people who support this show. For each episode there's some sort of offering, usually from my guest, sometimes from me, to complement what was talked about on the show. And I try, I work really hard to make it valuable. For your two bucks, it's so helpful; it makes the podcast happen.

And then, the second offering is free from Janelle. It's an online workshop called Outline Your Memoir. So you can find the link to that, as well, for free; you don't have to be a supporter on

Patreon, as well as download that PDF if you are a supporter at [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](https://Patreon.com/MedicineStories). Yeah, I want to write my memoir! I want to write books. It looks really good. It's like a live online workshop, so you sign up for a time, a pre-determined time, and you'll meet Janelle and everyone else there online, and outline it.

[0:06:33]

**Amber:** I really appreciate talking about ancestral languages. It's something I'm thinking more and more about lately. You know, I did Spanish in high school and just didn't really like it. It was hard, you know. It was hard. Middle school and high school, so four years of it. It's actually amazing how much I remember, but I guess I just never really felt in resonance with it even though, of course, everyone around me is telling me it's so important to know it. And I guess I am glad I have the basics, although, I don't know if I've ever actually **used** it, not enough to converse with anyone).

But lately, I've started to learn French, which I've talked about before. My maternal grandmother, Mime, who's still living at 97, spoke French as a child, and her parents were French-Canadian. I've had a lot of fun tracing those lines back to France. And it's... it's just, you know, it's an important thing to do as we age. I'm gonna be 38 in a couple of weeks; I know I'm not old, but I'm definitely aging and feeling it, and learning a language is such a neat and meaningful way for me, as an ancestral language, to keep my mind sharp, and to keep growing and try new things, and try out things I never thought I'd do. So I really enjoyed that.

And I've also been learning more about Manx, which is the language from the Isle of Man. I don't know if I'm actually going to learn that language. The Celtic-Gaelic languages feel much harder for me than French. I actually know quite a bit of Latin root words. I took **one** quarter of Latin in college 'cause I'm crazy. I just enjoyed the root words so much that I thought I might enjoy that, but I didn't really. And with my background in Spanish, and then, you know, having this language be so close to me in time, I kind of understand French on a level that I definitely don't understand these Celtic-Gaelic languages as a total outsider to them still. But I've been learning about Manx, which almost died out in the last century, and there's a big revival now, as is happening with so many languages around the world. I just think it's just really neat to watch ancestral languages be salvaged, you know. These languages that are holding on for dear life, to see people come in and recognize the importance of them, and start learning them, start teaching them, I just think it's really -- it gives me hope for humanity. And just wanted to share that little bit about what I've been doing, and my experience with that to encourage anyone... there's... it's such a powerful way to connect with your ancestry.

As I have said many times before, some wisdom that came down to me from Martin Prechtel through a friend is if you want to get to know your ancestors, look below the level of empire. Don't read the history books. Don't read about the men and the kings and the wars (I mean, that's there, too). But really, you want to look at the folk culture, and a lot of things that we think of as being in the women's sphere: cooking, fairy tales, songs, herbal remedies, dances, folk culture. And language is a big part of that.

Different languages completely change the way the speaker thinks about the world and perceives the world. I was listening to Lyla June, who is gonna be on the show soon, speaking to Ayana Young on the [For the Wild Podcast](#) -- I'll link to that, too -- and she was talking about her language. She's of Diné descent through her mother line and how there aren't curse words, and there aren't insults. And if you're speaking that language then there's a sense of the sacred all

around you; all around the people having the conversation. That's so not English, you know, and to think what it would be like speaking a language like that? So it's just an important way to get rooted into an ancestral line if that interests you and to keep your brain sharp.

[0:11:00]

**Amber:** I also wanted to give a little book recommendation here.

Janelle talks about the First Nations Peoples of Canada and America, as well, and, you know, all the issues that we're having such good conversations about right now: cultural appropriation, colonization, and genocide, and, again, knowing whose land you're on. I've been reading this book called [Ancient Spirit Rising](#) by Pegi Eyers. I don't have it in front of me right now, but it's really about all those things I just named. And I think a lot of people... it's about reclaiming for white folks our Indigenous European knowledge so that we can stop looking **so much** to the Indigenous knowledge of people from the Americas. And it's very -- she's a good critical thinker. She quotes a **LOT of different people**. It's almost, like, just a compilation of thoughts coming from Native American, First Nation communities, just as much as it's her thoughts.

I think, especially, for people who might be confused about these issues, you know, might feel like "What exactly are people talking about here?" and "What's right?" and "What's wrong?", it's just a good book. It's pretty dense; it's thick, but it's worth it. And as an almost 100% European-ancestored person, it's just something that I've talked a lot about on this show is reminding people that they have Indigenous wisdom in their lines as well. We don't have to go back very far at all in time, a few thousand years, to find our ancestors who were of the land, which is what indigenous means. Again, that's *Ancient Spirit Rising* by Pegi Eyers.

[0:12:49]

**Amber:** And umm... Janelle has a little cough in this podcast, so I just wanted to tell you that; she only coughs a couple of times.

But speaking of coughs, I just... an article showed up on Facebook yesterday about studies about elderberries. And so, I was reading it, and it just, it's a pretty short article, but it talks about a few different studies including one from 2004 and one from 2009 that both showed that elderberry can cut the duration of the flu in **half**, and in many cases eliminated symptoms within 48 hours. And a more recent study from 2016 shows that elderberry just as well on colds, which makes sense because colds and flus are both viral infections, and elderberry has a specific effect **against** viruses. It's true anti-viral. The 2004 study, which was published in the Journal of International Medical Research, showed that when elderberry extract is used within 48 hours of the onset of the Influenza A or B virus it shortens the duration of flu symptoms by an average of **four days**.

I've certainly found this to be the case for myself and my customers, who have bought our Extra Potent Elderberry Elixir. I just hear from people all the time, telling me how much quicker they got better, or how they started to feel a cold or flu coming on and just started hittin' the bottle, and it didn't come. So you can find our medicine if you would like, or I actually have a video I shot last year. I think it's almost an hour-long, and that's on my blog. It's called [An Herbalist's Perspective on Cold and Flu](#), and I just talk a lot about everything I've learned in my years as an herbalist and learning from other teachers about the cold and flu, including myths that people tend to believe about cold and flu such as:

- Ways people tend to misuse three really common cold and flu herbs: ginger, echinacea, and citrus, those all have really **specific** uses, and ways they are most active and potent, and we kind of use them wrong in general.
- I also talk about the nature of viral life forms and how plants are more effective at treating infectious diseases than technological medicine, which is failing on a massive scale, like, increasing antibiotic resistance, the high failure rates of the flu vaccine, etc, and meanwhile, plants have been evolving antimicrobial compounds for millennia to fight off the same infections that affect humans.
- Why you should always stay home when you're sick because you're basically a weaponized human when you have a viral infection
- And other ways to prevent the spread of viral infections
- What you should eat when you're sick
- Why you should never ever (almost never, like, 99% of the time) suppress a fever because fevers have important infection-fighting purposes, and suppressing them is counter-productive to getting better
- How antibiotics do not treat viral infections and will not treat a cold or flu, but that won't stop the doctor from writing you a prescription because they know that's what you want
- The difference between immune-boosting compounds and anti-viral or antibacterial compounds 'cause they're different but we tend to sort of conflate them, confuse them, and it's just helpful to know the difference
- Why we crave sugar at the onset of illness
- And the three things I always have on hand in case someone in my family gets sick
- And why taking medicine at the very beginning of an illness is vital

So you can find that and our extra potent elderberry elixir at my website [MythicMedicine.love](https://MythicMedicine.love). That video is at the blog and the medicine is in the shop.

So, thanks for listening. I hope you love this interview; I really loved it. This is the kind of stuff I want to be talking about here, and let's get into it now.

Here I am talking to Janelle Hardy:

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

**[0:17:04]**

**Amber:** Hi Janelle! Welcome to Medicine Stories.

**Janelle:** Hi Amber! I'm so happy to be here having -- about to have this conversation with you.

**Amber:** Yeah, we had a really nice conversation yesterday when I was on your podcast, so this will be my first time doing this kind of two-way interview thing, and it will be, I think it will be fun for people to listen to both of them.

And, umm... I wanted to start out by asking you how you feel about your name. What is your relationship with your name?

*(Janelle laughs)*

You had mentioned your last name and how you thought about changing it to your --

**Janelle:** -- Oh, right! Okay.

**Amber:** ... Mom's maiden name, and I thought that was really cool. I liked what you had to say about that.

**Janelle:** So my last name, you mean?

**Amber:** Yeah, unless you have anything to say about your first name or other names.

**Janelle:** I have a funny story about my first name, too, but I'll start with my last name.

So, what's really interesting to note is that my parents did not give me or my siblings middle names, and they had a very specific reason for it. They were quite young when they had me; I'm the first of four. They were 18 and 21, and they decided they wouldn't give us middle names because then we would be able to choose our own middle name. So that was always a really exciting thrill growing up; this daydreaming of "Ooohh, what's my middle name going to be?"  
*(Janelle laughs)*

And I had friends growing up that the name they went by turned out to be their middle name which I found really intriguing. So they weren't called by their first name but by their more secret, special middle name, and I didn't have that. So I went through a phase of reading fantasy, sci-fi books, liked the super-romantic girly names, for sure, but I eventually settled on -- and I never made it legal because, of course, that costs money and takes paperwork -- but I eventually settled on my mom's maiden name, McKinnon, because I didn't really like the idea of just being a Hardy, and I never liked this cultural construction of patriarchy, basically, of the woman changing her last name when she gets married, almost being erased in a sense, and the man not being expected to change anything at all. And I also didn't like the way it felt to me of not honoring the mother line.

So I settled on that, and I thought, "Oh I want to be Janelle McKinnon Hardy." And, of course, digging a little deeper, I realized McKinnon was actually my mother's father's last name, which was his father's last name, which was **his** father's last name, which was **his** father's last name. And so, by only following the male name, all the female lines are totally erased! So that's the complicated feeling of my last name, of Hardy.

And I kept my last name, and I gave my daughter my last name, and I most likely will not be changing it. But I think often how this would even be possible to honor all ancestral lines because the branches get so thick and tangled, and not very far back along those lines that it's simply not possible to have a 1000 hyphenated names *(Janelle laughs)*.

So, umm... yeah. Those are some of my initial thoughts about it.

**Amber:** That's so true, you know. If you follow your father line back, say, seven generations, they're all going to have the same last name. If you follow your mother line, you're going to get seven different last names *(Amber laughs)*. And then, yeah, if you're hopping genders it's ... yeah, it's gets so complex.

**Janelle:** And then all the other lines, all the father lines, then all the other lines get missed out, too, right? It's complex. We come from such complex roots.

**Amber:** We do.

And when people feel maybe shame or just not in resonance with their ancestors, I always remind them you're focusing on one line, or maybe even one or two people and their bad behavior. You come from **so** many people it's easy to forget, and I think I've said this a thousand times on this show -- every generation you go back, you double the amount of ancestors you have, so it's literally an exponential growth for many, many generations, and it's so rich.

[0:22:09]

**Amber:** So, like, what got you -- first of all, that's really cool that your parents did that. I've never heard of that. I've never heard of anyone doing that. Did your siblings enjoy the process of getting to come up with their own middle names, and did everyone settle on one, or did they change overtime? Did anyone make it legal?

**Janelle:** No one made it legal. We haven't talked about it in a long time, but I remember as a kid scheming and dreaming with my siblings "What will yours be?" It was an exciting idea. That was a gift my parents gave by not giving middle names was the sense of possibility to claim one for ourselves.

**Amber:** That's so cool! I just love it. It makes me think of my middle name, which is Marie, and I use Magnolia, as any listener would probably know, and I talk about why in the very first episode of this podcast; the short little ten-minute intro. I talked about where Magnolia came from and why I use it. And growing up, Marie just seemed like the most boring middle name in the world, and, like, five of my good friends had that middle name, too. I just felt like it was the standard that moms may have chosen for their daughters or something.

But, then I've realized, especially, actually just in the last few years, that that was my mom's middle name; it was the first name of my grandmother, great-great-grandmother, and great-great-great-grandmother because they're all French. And then going back to in that family tree as it branches into different places it's just, like, all the women are named Marie.

*(Amber laughs)*

And I think maybe most women were, especially people who were associated with the Catholic church for thousands of years. And so, when my first daughter was born twelve years ago I was, like, "Hell no am I giving her this middle name. She's getting something special and different and unique and meaningful." And then when my littlest was born two years ago, I was, like, "Oh she's getting Marie. I need to make that a part of this lineage."

[0:24:29]

**Janelle:** Mhmm. So you brought up "especially unique names," and that's sort of the story of my first name.

So, Janelle. I grew up knowing no other Janelles, and my three other siblings also didn't have anyone in their classes or community with their names; their names are Titus, Tess, and Lymend

(?), and my parents have great stories about how they found their names from big works of literature. And my name, when I asked my mom, "Well how did you find my name? What's my story?" (*Janelle laughs*) She said -- she was in high school when she was pregnant with me -- and she said, "Oh, I was reading a magazine a couple weeks before you were born, and I saw the name, and I just really liked it."

"What magazine was it, Mom?"

"I don't remember."

(*both laugh*)

But the funny thing is, I became very attached to not having to share my name, and now I'm just encountering Janelles **EVERYWHERE**. And I have to admit, I have a hard time interacting with other Janelles and accepting that they have **my** name. (*both laugh*)

Except for Janelle Monae, because she's so amazing. I'm alright with sharing my name with Janelle Monae, but anyone else I get a little grumpy around, and it's not their fault. (*Janelle laughs*)

**Amber:** Dude, I understand. I have **always** felt that way.

I remember when I first -- in elementary school there was another Amber, a year younger than me, and I was like, "What. The. Fuck." I just really didn't like it, and I still kind of feel the same way. I mean, every now, and then there's one I like, but mostly I'm like, "No. Why? Come on."

(*Janelle laughs*)

**Janelle:** I know. Oh, it's so egotistical, but there it is.

**Amber:** (*Amber laughs*) Well, so, for me, that made me from a very young age want to give my kids **totally** unique names. And I wonder, now there's this trend the last 10-20 years of parents naming their kids ridiculous things. (*Amber laughs*) You can find some very funny lists online of the things that kids get named nowadays. But I wonder if it is people in our generation being like, "Mmm kay. We're all sharing the same names here. Why don't we try something different?"

[0:26:50]

**Janelle:** Yeah. Yeah, I mean, the one thing that bothers me, or is becoming more of an issue, is more around cultural appropriation and especially white people naming their kids very cultural names from unrelated cultures. And I feel like that's a small bit of unfairness to the child, actually.

And when I was pregnant I had some names 'cause I lived in Russia and Japan for a while, and I had -- I thought I was having a boy, but which it didn't happen -- but I had a Russian name and a Japanese name. And I'm really glad I didn't end up doing that because what I've noticed with kids that are named in that way is that there's always a double-take, and then people say, "Why? Why are you named that way?"

"Oh because my mom visited that country and really liked it, but I've never been, and I don't know anyone from that culture."



Moreso when they're very classically traditional names, it's a tough one. So I nearly fell into that, and I'm glad I didn't. But I've noticed, also, people changing their names back from names they've changed to, and writing about that online which I also appreciate of writing about how meaningful the name was, and then realizing it's not their name to take after all. These are adults renaming themselves, and they name themselves back to something more specific to their own lineage and/or back to their given names. Yeah.

[0:28:43]

**Amber:** Yeah, that's one of the reasons that I sometimes ask about names on this show -- it's one of the main thematic elements that I've held in mind since the beginning -- is because how personally meaningful names are to us. Even when they're not meaningful, then that's meaningful, but it's not meaningful.

And then I've noticed the same thing; like, people who change their names very often change it back.

**Janelle:** Oh that's interesting.

**Amber:** Yeah, I actually did that when I was 25. I was working at a natural health food store, and there were two other Ambers, and it just felt too small. So I started going by Magnolia, which was something my dad had always called me growing up and when I was in the womb, he called me Magnolia. And I went by that for a while.

And then I birthed my first child and named her Mycelia and, just, there's something about that; that I was just like, "Okay, she has her name now, and I actually want to go back to **my** name now. I'm Amber." And that's when I got really comfortable with Amber. And even if other people have it, it's such a meaningful name for me.

And then I started using Magnolia as the second name because there are a lot of Amber Hills online already, like, a lot. But now I'm really at a point where I'm like I don't know if I want to be using Magnolia anymore; it's kind of a mouthful. It's a lot to type out in my freaking email address everytime I'm filling in something online. For a year now, at least, I've been wondering if I should drop that middle name or not; go back to myself.

**Janelle:** Oh, drop Magnolia?

**Amber:** Yeah.

**Janelle:** Oh, I like it. (*Janelle laughs*)

**Amber:** Yeah, I like it, too.

**Janelle:** ...But it's your name. It's your name, so.

**Amber:** It all flows, and I like the way it flows.

**Janelle:** It flows really beautifully, yeah.

[0:30:36]

**Amber:** And I wonder, you know, if we could just like shoot back to pre-history and be a fly on the wall during the paleolithic, pre-agriculture, pre-settled village life, pre-writing and record-keeping, I wonder if names were being repeated within lineages and within clans, or if people were just doing totally unique names for each person because that's just kind of, like, each person's unique so why wouldn't you?

Like I wonder what the deepest human impulse towards naming is when you sort of remove writing and larger culture from it.

**Janelle:** Mhmm and access to all the information we can now just grab off the internet by thinking the question, right? -- (*Janelle coughs*) Excuse me. --

I wonder, too. It could go either way. These little cultural groups would have been between 50-200 people usually maximum with maybe larger gatherings a couple times a year, so yeah. That's a curious one.

**Amber:** And yeah, were those people fighting over, you know, "We're gonna name him after MY clan."

"No, we're gonna name him after **MY** clan!" (*Amber laughs*) like people do today?

**Janelle:** Yeah, well, pre-literacy, especially kinship, has always been the organizing factor of cultures, and one of the ways that kinship is organized is through naming, right? Naming to indicate who you belong to, right? And we still do that with our surnames. Our surnames indicate that our culture prioritizing the male line's, the male's father's line, not just the male line, but the father's father's father's line, and that's reflected in how we do our surnames in North America and English-speaking countries for sure.

And even though we think we're beyond that sometimes, or that we've improved or evolved, it's still how we organize the way we understand things, so that would be absolutely no different in an oral tradition and culture, but it would also be the story keepers of the groups and the lineage keepers who have all that knowledge and memorized.

But one of the easiest ways to know how to sort people and how to know who you can partner up within smaller communities was a really big deal, right? That you're not getting partnered with a relative or the too-close-degree of a relative is by being able to sort through naming and clan systems.

[0:33:34]

**Amber:** Have you read *The Memory Code* by Lynne Kelley?

**Janelle:** Uh nope.

**Amber:** It is **UNBELIEVABLE**. I'm reading it right now, and I read so many books a year, and I would say that this is the most important book I've read this year or last year -- we're just a few days into

2019 right now -- in the last year. I'm going to ask her to be on the show, and I think she'll say yes. It seems like she does podcasts.

But it's about how ancient humans memorized such large amounts of information using memory devices. Like, she basically figured out Stonehenge is a memory device.

**Janelle:** Oh, interesting.

**Amber:** It's so-- and Easter Island and so many, like, worldwide, the Nasca lines, these handheld devices from Africa called *lukasas*, and all sorts of stuff. It's just pan-global; these archaeological artifacts that we've found -- some monoliths, and, again, some handheld -- were memory devices, ways to code memory, because there was a lot to know to survive purely off the earth for thousands and thousands of generations, and that knowledge had to be handed down in very specific ways and to only a few initiates.

One thing that has really struck me from this book is that we think of hunter-gatherer cultures as being egalitarian; materially, everything is shared. But her point is knowledge was absolutely not egalitarian. There's very much a hierarchy of who had what knowledge because you can't mess this stuff up or your clan doesn't survive.

So anyway, I was just thinking that when you were talking because one of the things she really talks about is the memorization of kinship, ties, and of the ancestors, and who is related to who, and how we are related to those people or those people for that reason, for non-intermarriage of relatives. And it's so fascinating. She does do a **big** emphasis on the monolithic structures of the British Isles, and I know that you have ancestry in that area, too, so. I wanted to ask you about that.

[0:35:51]

**Amber:** What has your understanding -- how has your understanding of your ancestry unfolded in your life? Was it part of your childhood or something you discovered later, and how do you engage with that?

**Janelle:** That's such a big question. (*Janelle laughs*)

**Amber:** It is a big question. You can go any way you want with it. (*Amber laughs*)

**Janelle:** Okay, umm. I didn't grow up with a lot of understanding about who and where I came from. My parents met in the far North of Canada in Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. For context, for non-Canadian listeners, that's above British Columbia and beside Alaska.

And they met because their parents came up to the Yukon. So my mom's parents were from Eastern Canada, so I did know that my mother's father, who was unfortunately named Columbus McKinnon came from Cape Breton in Nova Scotia. Cape Breton, the island of Cape Breton is very known as a stronghold of Scottish-Celtic culture, so my understanding of mom's dad was that he played fiddle by ear, which was very common with people of Scottish descent, and that Gaelic was his first language. Those were the things I knew.

He died when my mom was twelve, so I never knew him, except that he would show up as the spirit and play the fiddle to me. And so I didn't know that he died before I was born because all I knew

was that fairly regularly he would come and play the fiddle, what I thought was to everyone, but I believe he would just show up to me.

**Amber:** Was this, like, in waking life?

**Janelle:** As a kid, yeah, not in my dreams. I vividly remember this, and I grew up in the house that he built that my mom grew up in, which was a shack. So, just to not get romantic, my mother's father was a terrible alcoholic, and I don't think he was much of a provider or a healthy father, but he showed up in this kind way as a spirit to me. So I just thought that he came and visited fairly regularly until he stopped coming, and she started quizzing me about what was he wearing, where was he in the house, what was he doing, and I described all those things, and that's what he would do when he was a little more functional and sober.

So my mom's mom grew up in Quebec and Ontario, and she ended up in Dawson City in the Yukon at the same time as my grandfather. They met, had their first baby, and then moved to Whitehorse in the Yukon and had the rest of their kids. So they -- I mean, I'm kind of taking my time telling this story because I think it's really important to consider the devastating impact of rootlessness, of trauma, of abuse, and what happens when people kind of embody the great adventurer and the mythological dream of being this wild wanderer, and just finding a better home somewhere, and in doing that, leaving behind everyone and everything, including culture, language, friends, family. Not that (from what I heard) their family was all that great.

Sometimes there's reasons for leaving, but the leaving and the running from, the avoiding, translates to a lack of passing down of cultural knowledge, of stories, of identity. And so, this is what happened. They showed up, and they had a bunch of kids, isolated from anyone else that might be healthy or functional enough to have guided and nurtured and protected and taught my mom and her siblings where they came from and who and what they were.

My father lived in BC and Alberta until he was around seven or eight years old. My grandparents had split up. My other grandfather was also an alcoholic, and my grandma at one point tried to make it work and took her five children and ran up to the Yukon where my grandfather was, and, of course, it didn't work the way he was promising her, but women in those days were really stuck, right? They couldn't -- they weren't educated, and how would it be possible to feed five children by yourself if you're just making minimum wage? It's very difficult. And also, it's very difficult if your husband is an alcoholic who doesn't really work, so, and, the other big difficulty was it was such a stigma and taboo to divorce or leave that man, right? And this isn't that long ago. These are my grandmas in the 1960s and 1970s.

So they also landed in the Yukon, which is an amazing place; I love where I come from. But they also landed up there with no extended family, no friends, no support, and living in poverty. And so, again, this kind of erasure of what a community offers -- because parents in a nuclear family cannot actually raise children to know who and what they are -- that's a community effort that's required.

So all that to say, I grew up with a lot of questions because my parents didn't have a lot of answers, but there were a few little snippets that really helped, and one was knowing that Grandpa Columbus was of Scottish blood via Cape Breton, that he actually had a mother tongue that was

different than English, that music was something that flowed like water in his family (even though he didn't pass that down to his children, and thus, his grandchildren).

[0:42:16]

**Janelle:** Grandma Julia, my mom's mom - there were more questions. All I knew was she had a **wonderful** sister in the prairies who was very different than her, and the other thing I knew that has been a life long curiosity for me -- and definitely at least one of my siblings, maybe more -- is little whispers, (which I didn't even hear about until I was a teenager), little whispers that we had First Nations ancestry.

And this is a tricky one to talk about because a lot of people have this kind of oral history story in their family, and many times it's not true. And even when it is true it can be problematic because although I have many different ancestries, I cannot say, I can't say, "I'm First Nations." I don't even know which First Nations culture from eastern Canada that ancestor, or those ancestors would be from because we don't that much; we just had the whispers about it.

And I also can't say I'm Scottish, because I'm not, but I have Scottish ancestry. I can't say I'm Welsh, although I have Welsh ancestry. I can't say I'm Acadian or any of the other distant roots that my ancestors come from because that's not culturally what I am. But I **can** say that those are my ancestors. Those are the cultures that they came from. Those are my roots, but I've been raised outside of that.

And so, with this First Nations ancestry, the deep, the deeply compelling search for identity for me is the absence of acknowledgement, the shame that comes with whispers and secrets, the questions about why are there whispers and secrets, leading me into the rabbit hole of, well, how on earth was Canada formed that it was considered shameful? OH, because it's a colonial power that stole land from the indigenous peoples here, and often, it was safer to marry white, to pass as white, until, essentially, you become white and deny your heritage because of racism and racist shame.

Other alternatives, you know, I've just thought about a lot of this. How is that we likely have distant First Nations ancestors, but it's only whispered about and no one knows a lot? Likely one or more of those ancestors was in the residential school and had their language and culture stripped from them aggressively and violently by the government and the church or possibly... you know, there's so many possibilities. But the truth of it is that the stories have been only passed down as whispers, and something to wonder about rather than, in contrast, the deep pride that my mom's family takes in having Scottish blood; where it's talked about loudly in really overly mythologized terms.

Those all raise so many questions, right? Why so much pride about this one side? And why all the whispers about this other line of ancestors and has actually really shaped most of my life to try and understand how it is that colonialism is so destructive, how it is that this idea of "whiteness" and superiority is so damaging, and on the other hand, I'm very careful not to claim that I'm First Nations, because I'm not. I appear white; I am basically white, and it is a deep insult to my friends who are First Nations or are mixed-race First Nations and actually live the reality of appearing that way and living in a racist system in Canada.

[0:46:32]

**Janelle:** So. So that was a bit of a tangent, but the way I approach my ancestral research is to be really careful not to claim something that I'm not, but to also be proud to claim what I come from and **who** I come from, and to make space to grieve all of the ways that there's so much loss. I do believe -- I don't think I have much English ancestry or any, but I could be wrong. I haven't had the time and energy to really do the research -- but every single ancestral line that I have does not come out of the English language, and yet that's the only language I speak fluently.

There's so much cultural loss when we lose language. Language and grammatical structures shape how we think and how we interact, and language **holds** culture; it holds structures of understanding about ourselves in relation to other people in the natural world, and it shapes how we make art, how we do everything.

I was fortunate to be an exchange student in Japan for a year, and it was a full immersion. And right around the six-month point, finally, the language started clicking enough that I could communicate enough and be close to fluent, and I was absolutely blown away that my ability to think and understand different concepts opened up. It simply was not possible without that language to understand certain concepts within that language. And so, I think, yeah. I have a lot of sadness that some things haven't been passed down.

So then (*Janelle laughs*) ... that's just my mom's side.

**[0:48:41]**

**Janelle:** Then on my dad's side there was a couple little gifts.

I don't actually know much about the Hardys because what also comes along with addiction and trauma -- both of my grandfathers were soldiers in the war, and I'm quite certain a lot of the alcoholism came from that -- and when alcohol or addictions show up, other abusive behaviors show up as well. And so my parents were very focused on keeping us away from the drinking as children, and I'm fortunate they didn't become alcoholics or addicts themselves.

But I don't know much about my father's father's line because of that.

And then my mother's ... no, my father's mother's line, my grandma, she's 96. She's still alive, is quite amazing and healthy. Her -- she comes from a long line of Welsh immigrants to the states, who -- I believe her mom came to Canada, but there was about 200 years of Welsh communities -- who were very proudly Welsh in the northern states somewhere before they came from Wales. And my dad really loved his grandma with the Welsh roots, and she was very into gardening. So that was the impression I got of that line was this tenderhearted grandma of my dad's, who he hung out with her in the garden.

And then my grandma's dad was an immigrant to Canada from the Orkney Islands and apparently a really wonderful man.

So, that's what I know!

(*Janelle laughs*)

[0:50:25]

**Amber:** In the book, in *The Memory Code* there's a whole chapter on the monuments in Orkney. Do you know what it's called? I can't think of the name.

**Janelle:** Oh... I forget them.

**Amber:** It was discovered somewhat recently in time, and she says that they think that Orkney might have been the first megalithic monument and memory space in **ALL** of the British Isles. And that all of the other ones, including Stonehenge and Newgrange and the better-known ones, were sort of modeled after that one.

**Janelle:** So, I would love to go to the Orkney Islands someday because it's, from what I've researched, just the weirdest, most interesting, kind of strange, little island, collection-of-islands-hub north of Scotland with all these different cultural mishmashes.

And I did read a little bit about those monuments. They're, I believe, from the Neolithic, over 6000 years old. And what's really cool about the Neolithic time period -- I was taking a course with Sylvia Linstead called [Witchlines](#), and her premise with the research she's done is that prior to the Indo-European kind of invasion-migration into Europe, these Neolithic communities were exceptionally egalitarian and woman-honoring. And I'm so intrigued by the amazing cultural production and imagining a world where it's not a patriarchy and culture of domination, but a culture of cultures scattered across Europe of cooperation and honoring.

Yeah, so I know that ties in somehow with those monuments.

**Amber:** Mhmm... yeah.

Well, Lynne's idea about the monuments in the British Isles, especially the timing, the archaeological proof of the timing is that they were built during the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic during the transition from hunter-gathering to farming. And so, hunter-gatherer peoples, like, some people might be familiar with the songlines of Australian Aboriginals, it's the same thing that **all over** the world people were doing as they were hunting and gathering, as they embedded their memories into the landscapes.

So as they walked the landscape over and over throughout the years in their little migrations, they -- "Oh that tree. That's our fifth ancestor. Let me tell you about his life and what we learned from him," or whatever they were. And so when people settled, they were like, well, we don't have this vast landscape that we're walking anymore. We need to encode our memories locally.

And so, that's what the big stones did, or the, you know, there were a lot of timber structures as well. And again, smaller handheld devices. It was specifically that transition between hunting and gathering, and farming that made -- that forced -- this idea of figuring out a local memory space to keep their traditions alive.

And then as farming took hold, society became less materially egalitarian, and people took on their specialized roles. And then people became, you know, Kings or elevated in some way, and other people became lesser. And the knowledge wasn't needed anymore; they didn't need to know

those things that they need to know before: how to live off the land in a hunter-gatherer way, or how to... why they needed to know how they're related to people and who their ancestors were.

So all of that just fell away and the use of those monuments fell away as well.

**[0:54:06]**

**Amber:** So I want to ask you about your podcast because I think it's so special and interesting. And I'm thinking maybe you can just share the four questions you ask -- and this is going to tie back into the First Nations peoples and why that's an important focus for you -- and how you came up with this idea of "I'm just going to ask the same four questions to every guest" (*Janelle laughs*) and why those four questions were what you wanted to ask.

**Janelle:** Okay.

So, my podcast, I've been doing it for two and a half years. It's called the Wild Elixir Podcast, although, depending on when this interview goes public, I am probably going to change the name to the Personal Mythmakers Podcast. The reason I created it, well, it's purely selfish, pure self-interest, and I think that's the actually the best way to create a podcast (*Janelle laughs*) because you get into having these conversations over and over and over again.

But I love podcasts, number one, and then, number two, I'm often a bit isolated. I am a single mother in the sense of being a completely solo parent. I don't co-parent; the other parent's not involved at all. And that's very labor-intensive, so that's a bit isolating. She's 16 now. It's not quite as isolating as it was when she was younger. I'm also self-employed, and I enjoy quiet and solitude. And so that can all combine sometimes to mean that I get more isolated than I actually want to be.

In the small town that I was living, I just wasn't getting the opportunity to have the kind of really deep conversations about the subjects that I was interested in in the way that I wanted. And I actually really miss University for that. I loved being surrounded by kindred spirits and being able to just be a total nerd and go deep right away, and not have to kind of ease the way into the conversation of depth.

So, I was kind of casting about - how do I build community? How do I have conversations that are going to lift my spirit? And knowing that I was probably going to be moving away from that town, how can I do this in a way that's sustainable, so I don't just build a community in a town that I'm going to be leaving in a year and half?

So I decided I was just going to start a podcast. I had no idea how or why, but I'm good at figuring things out and umm... so I thought, "What am I always fascinated by?" I'm always fascinated by creativity because I'm a creative person, and the work that I do is with people; it's about creativity. I'm always fascinated about people's bodies, embodiment, and people's relationship with their bodies, more specifically, women. And I have a background in hands-on healing work with structural integration, so I've had a lot of experience witnessing people's struggles in their body and also my own. So I thought, I just want to have real conversations with women about how they feel in their bodies.

And then my other question was -- well, I grew up loving fairytales. I would absorb myself in fairytales and mythology, and I'd read Clarissa Pinkola Estes' *Running with the Wolves* two times



by the time I'd decided to start my podcast. And I thought, "Wow. This is why." I knew there was something more to these stories collected by Christian men and kind of sanitized, you know? Like, there's a reason they've lasted so long, and there's more depth than you see on the surface. And so it's like, "Ooohhh, I just want to talk about Fairy Tales!" (*Janelle laughs*) "... And I bet people do, too."

So I actually started with those three questions in my first season --

**Amber:** -- And the questions are... what is your favorite ancient tale?

**Janelle:** Yep.

**Amber:** What is your relationship to your body? --

**Janelle:** -- And what is your relationship to creativity? (*Amber and Janelle talking over each other*)

**Amber:** ... I know this because you asked me these questions.

**Janelle:** Yes, exactly. So those three subjects turned into the three questions. And then I thought, I bet people would like to hear the conversations. So if I make it a podcast, it's like I'm offering a service. And if I make it a podcast total strangers I approach are much more likely to be willing to have a conversation with me.

(*both laugh*)

Which is so true! It's amazing.

[0:59:03]

**Janelle:** And then in the process of figuring it out, as I started and going along, I had actually wanted -- my kind of fourth curiosity at the beginning was around language and hoping that if I were interviewing a wide enough range of women that they would have other languages or mother tongues and I could get them to say something in that language. And that wasn't really working, and then I thought, but something no one talks about is actual place and space and also whose land are we **really** on? You know?

And especially in colonized countries, it's not our land. Most of the time it was stolen, or it was an agreement that was actually broken by the government, where the two nations actually came to agreements, and then the government murdered and trampled and stole. It's really appalling how colonial countries got established, and that doesn't really get acknowledge.

I grew up in the north of Canada, really understanding these things because I think the Yukon is a little ahead in curriculum in that we had a grounding in some of this history -- I wouldn't say it's perfect but -- So then I thought -- and I also -- I want to hear about where people are. So I added the fourth question which is "Whose traditional territory are you on?" which in Canada, generally, you would say First Nations or Indigenous Peoples. In the states I think, usually, it's Native American?

Correct me if I'm wrong, Amber.

**Amber:** Mhmm.

**Janelle:** And then my other interest was that of getting people to name the specific cultures that they're on 'cause there's this strange belief in one monolithic culture in all of the Americas which is so absolutely not true. That's like saying all of Europe speaks the same language and has the same cultural traditions. It's just not true, right? There's such an exceptional diversity of language and cultural ways of life within the world of First Nations people.

SO I added that question because number one, I'm interested. Number two: it's a way to gently educate and spark some thought, and it adds to the richness of what I'm learning about the people that I'm interviewing as well.

One of the fun things was actually interviewing a woman from Croatia (*Janelle laughs*), and she really dug in. I think she went over a thousand years back to find who were the actual, the more indigenous people to her homelands which were different than her ancestral heritage. And I thought, "This is fun!"

This is really fascinating, right? And it's true; nothing's ever static.

So those are the four questions, and the reason I ask the four identical questions is because the diversity of responses is exceptional. It's the framework of a structure actually opens up the conversation, whereas an open-ended conversation can sometimes kind of flounder or fall flat. And people get really excited to have those four questions asked of them. And often, people that I've interviewed that are on podcasts a fair bit give feedback that it's such a breath of fresh air to not be asked the same old questions.

And then people who listen in take the time to give me feedback to tell me that they really love being able to hear these very deep, honest conversations.

So yeah.

[1:03:28]

**Amber:** I think it's brilliant. I was definitely like, YES, you know, when you wrote me and explained it to me, then loved listening to the different interviews that you've done.

I mean, yeah, they're just super juicy questions, and they're going to elicit really interesting answers. It's like, really personal, like "what is your relationship with your body?" but that's obviously something that dominates every moment of everyone's waking day, no matter how conscious we are of it. So to hear it from someone else it's just really vulnerable and really personal, and I love it.

**Janelle:** I just want to add one thing.

**Amber:** Yeah.

**Janelle:** It was originally a podcast with interviews of women, but I since expanded it to be women and non-binary people, which is important, too. My wording was not inclusive enough, and although I love men and their perspectives, the podcast is not about men and their perspectives.

*(Amber laughs)*

But I did need to change the wording to make sure that my non-binary guests and friends felt the space was available to them, too.

**Amber:** Yeah. Good. Umm. And I... what is your...

Well, let's focus a little bit on the second question, on your favorite ancient tale. So you mentioned *Women Who Run with the Wolves* which we talked about yesterday a little bit, too, when I told my version of the selkie tale, which, by the way, after hearing more about your ancestry and your interests, I'm, like, so aligns with my version of the selkie tale.

*(Amber laughs)*

It's funny how I didn't realize how much overlap in interests there would be between us, and then how that specific story came through me when I was preparing for your podcast.

**[1:05:24]**

**Amber:** Well, okay. I don't really have a specific question in here, but you mention an interest in Jungian psychology that maybe you would have gone more deeply into Jungian Studies if you had time or if you could do it again, maybe.

And then I want to hear about your course you do, The Personal Mythmaking, and why it's important for people to engage in theirs.

What does that mean? What does "personal mythmaking" mean and how do you guide people in that process?

**Janelle:** Oh it's so fun and amazing.

So my course is called *The Art of Personal Mythmaking* and it's a five-month transformational memoir-writing course. And so it's designed -- this was actually an accident in offering the course. My intention was ALL about personal transformation and healing, from the perspective of connection with body, creativity, and using cultural heritage, which is fairy tales, ancient tales. The amazing thing that happened when I started teaching it was that we were generating enough material for people to have the rough draft of their memoir written within that timeframe, which is massive.

So "personal mythmaking" is my take on working with your life story and finding ways to reframe the troublesome stories, kind of bump yourself out of the groove of the thought loops that you can get stuck in. That I can get stuck in.

I'll just use a quick example for myself:

I have a tedious thought loop that no one likes me, and it spins through my head all the time. Especially when I'm engaging with people in communities, if I tune in, there that little statement is humming away: "They don't like you. They don't like you. They just want to get away from you. There's something repellent about you. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah..." I've done enough personal work on myself to understand that this isn't true, but it's still there. So ways that are really helpful to shift that narrative and **that** mythology that I have is to actually write stories about my own life, and get my head out of the way, and let the stories bubble up. And the richness in that just blows my mind.

So, so my agenda's kind of multi-layered; it always is. What I love supporting people with is finding the exceptional beauty in their life; discovering that even the tough, difficult stories in their life are also worthy of attention and reframing, but not in the mental-intellectual way of reframing.

I think that we've all been socialized and educated so intensely to analyze and overthink things and not allow the emotional feeling and the body-held experience to have its say as well. But that grip of the thinking can be so powerful that it's hard to escape. And so, I use a lot of body-based prompts and creative unblocking prompts to make sense for the stories that contradict the personal, the uncomfortable, or troublesome personal mythologies to actually come up. And through that process, we actually rewrite our personal myths into something that's tremendously beautiful.

So. I hope I've described that well.

**Amber:** Well it sounds amazing. I just couldn't believe any more strongly in the power of personal writing, especially through, like, a mythic lens. It's a focus of this podcast, as well, is to just get into a mythic mindedness when we think about our own unfolding selves and our ancestors and what we're drawn to.

And speaking is one thing, but writing is just so powerful.

**Janelle:** It really is. And I think what I'll add to my description is we've all been really socialized through self-help ideas and a certain way of understanding human development and growth, and, again, I think this comes from this great forgetting of the colonial mindset; that something better is always around the corner, and we don't need to pay attention or honor where we come from and who we come from.

And what happens is a lot of blame and shame gets laid on us as individual by ourselves that we've got challenges and troubles and problems that we can't seem to shift no matter how much we try. And therefore, it's our own damn fault.

When we expand our understanding of ourselves as little beings coming out of ancestral lines, and coming out of cultures that we've been cut off from, coming out of languages we've been cut off from, coming out of stories that we've been cut off from, when we can start to turn around and face that and start to mend and repair those breaks, what we get access to is the *incredible* cultural heritage of community, family, and culture. And this is why I think ancient stories are so important because they carry those lessons and stories that are medicine for us. And we're able to actually take a greater context and perspective and then look at whatever beliefs it is that we think we're solely responsible for and go:

*Oh. I didn't get the aunties and uncles and mentorship and stories -- good stories -- of my family history to be a source of strength. I didn't get the pride of true identity and belonging that would make me resilient enough to move through these challenges. And my culture is saying I'm the one with the issues, and I need to fix it all by myself. But actually, it's a symptom of an unhealthy culture. And if I can connect with my ancestral heritage, and if I can connect with these stories that are 6000 years old (Janelle laughs), and I can start to heal and mend those breaks, everything else starts to fall into place.*

It takes the onus off of us to be the ultimate savior of ourselves, right? All alone, the lone wolf -- what's that mythology? The single cowboy on a horse roaming around needing no one, right? Give me a break!

**[1:13:10]**

**Amber:** Yeah. I was gonna say this earlier, but the podcast that is going to come out before this one hasn't come out at the time of this recording, but I'm going to release it next week with Rebecca Altman. She really breaks down the problems with the Hero's Journey. You know, this mythic archetype that just **dominates** our society and how...

**Janelle:** -- Oh, I'm excited --

**Amber:** ... Yeah (*both laugh*).

You keep saying things that keep reminding me of what she said about that. What you're saying also reminds me of what Daniel Foor said when he was on Episode 26 of this podcast that he's come to see that no problem is an individual problem; they're all cultural, ancestral. We're so embedded in these larger things that in the West we've been taught not to see and not to perceive. And so, we take it all on ourselves; we blame ourselves for our problems.

**Janelle:** Yeah, I **so** fully agree with this wisdom.

**[1:14:13]**

**Amber:** So for the Patreon supporters of this show, you're going to be giving out a PDF about being a "Highly Sensitive Person" and I thought we could talk a little bit.

Like, what I really like to ask people about -- fellow empaths, fellow HSPs -- is how you came to realize that your nervous system interacts with and processes the world different than other peoples, and how you've come to learn to care for yourself within that framework?

**Janelle:** (*Janelle laughs*) In the hard way (*Amber laughs*): first internalizing, talking about personal mythologies and cultural dysfunction, internalizing that idea that there's something wrong with me because I'm sensitive and that's not valued in our culture.

**Amber:** I'd say, too, within the framework of the Highly Sensitive Person (all capitalized) through Dr. Elaine Aron's framework of this, she says that about 25 or 20% of any population, including animals, are HSP. So that means that 80% of the population is not, and doesn't quite understand.

**Janelle:** Yep. And I'm also left-handed (*Janelle laughs*), so I have a lot of experience in like, "Uh, oh geez... this is... everything is backwards for me. Let me try to flip it, and make it functional for my system."

So, well, if I take the left-handedness analogy, what's interesting is my dad was lefthanded, my daughter's also lefthanded, and my dad was really fierce about educating me as a kid that the world is made of tools made for right-handed people, and ways of writing, and doing things that are oriented around a right-handed perspective, and I didn't have to follow that, including doing checkmarks the left-handed way which everyone calls "the wrong way."

So I did have an experience of someone seeing a certain trait in me and nurturing that because my dad also had the same experience. But when it comes to high sensitivity and being an empath -- and actually, I have an excellent article about being sick of people like me on my blog that sensitive folks and empaths might like. I'll send you the link, Amber.

**Amber:** Okay.

**Janelle:** Umm. No one growing up, that wasn't a thing. No one understood that high sensitivity's actually a thing. Everyone understood it as oversensitivity and being too sensitive.

**Amber:** -- Yeah, so can I clarify right now for anyone that doesn't mean that you cry a lot. ALthough, a lot of HSPs do cry a lot. It literally means that your nervous system is more sensitive to sensory stimuli coming at you from the world --

**Janelle:** Yep. Yep. That's a good clarification. It's important.

And then, as an empath, as well, being really tuned into people's emotional lives and inner lives without them verbalizing it, it can be very crazy-making. So I had no clue about these things growing up, because no one around me knew. I just always felt like I was overwhelmed, and I was constantly being told I was too sensitive when I was noticing things and bringing them up.

**Amber:** Like, your ghost grandpa fiddling for you?

**Janelle:** (*Janelle laughs*) Well, luckily, my mom didn't actually say I was too sensitive about that, she believed it. But in other ways, often what I found, I was noticing what's beneath the surface that everyone else was invested in denying. And so it was never welcome. My observations were not welcome because it was kind of popping the bubble (*Janelle laughs*).

So I really learned how to isolate myself and deal with overwhelm by isolating myself, which, I think is a classic strategy. And it wasn't until I started my own hero journey and became bodyworker and just started leading a LOT and getting into -- my dad had gotten into meditation a few years before he died, and I believe took his Buddhist vows with Thich Nhat Hanh. So I was always reading his books when I was at my parents home. And the combination of just learning more about energetic systems and chakras and meditation and Buddhism and all of these unseen forces and fields started, I started to learn on my own that "Oh, I'm actually not -- there's not something wrong with me. I'm just highly sensitive person."

And understanding about being an empath came much later, just in the last five years. So I just never heard much about it. I knew I could feel and be tuned into a lot of things, but no one else I knew really talked about it, so I didn't -- it just was something I didn't talk about.

Having said that, the biggest blessing has been learning what being an empath and Highly Sensitive Person means 'cause now I can take care of myself, and I don't have to think there's something wrong with me! I can think of it as a gift, instead, right?

**[1:19:51]**

**Amber:** Yeah. Everyone I've talked to who has come across those concepts, who is those things -- they're separate things, being an empath and an HSP. I think you defined it really well, but often overlap and present in the same person) -- for myself, and everyone I've talked to, it's been completely lifechanging to suddenly have that framework and be like, "That's me! I'm OKAY!" (*Amber laughs*) This is normal. This is genetic. I was born like this. This is a gift. I can take care of myself."

**Janelle:** And there's times when I don't think it's a gift, you know. When I really want to be social and out having fun with whoever, and I can feel my system is starting to short-circuit. (*Janelle laughs*)

If I push myself, I'm not going to have fun. I really want to go out and go dancing and have fun, but I know I can feel the subtle signs now of when I have to shut things down and retreat. But that's very different from overwhelm and self-isolating all the time. You know sometimes I get a little grumpy, like, "UGH. I wish I could just be a little more extroverted and able to handle all the things I'm feeling." (*Janelle laughs*)

**Amber:** Yeah, 'cause it takes a lot of time, for me at least, if I'm going to be social, if I'm going to be out in any -- even just running errands, I have to recover afterward. And then that takes time out of my day, you know? I'm like, "I HAVE to take a bath - an epsom salts and body oil to feel grounded again."

It's just... you just kind of have to plan your life differently.

**Janelle:** Yes, exactly. And, I mean, sometimes I'm my own worst enemy. I know that getting regular exercise and meditating just ten minutes a day will keep me steadier and more able to be out in the world. But I don't. (*Janelle coughs*)

I don't usually do that until I start feeling bad.

**Amber:** Mhmm. Yeah.

**[1:21:54]**

**Amber:** You mention, too, doing like getting craniosacral and bodywork. And you said, "I need a lot of self-care to be connected to my deep self." For me that was so normalizing, too, because I've always needed a lot of bodywork, you know? When I'm **SO** broke, I'm like, I don't care! I'm spending my last 60 bucks on this bodywork because I absolutely need it.

**Janelle:** Mhmm. And I would add to that - it's really important to find a bodyworker who is tuned in and able to be present. I think that for everyone, but especially for highly sensitive empaths; it's so important to make a good decision about your bodyworker.

And if possible, I **highly** recommend somatic experiencing, people trained in somatic experiencing, which is nervous system healing for trauma, and also biodynamic craniosacral therapy.

**Amber:** Yeah! I wanted to ask you, what is that?

**Janelle:** Yeah, so it's very different from the regular craniosacral therapy and it's... it's hard to describe, but it's brilliant. It's tuned into the idea of the practitioner being a very present "battery pack" to support the body's innate healing ability to self-heal. It's very gentle and subtle, and it's particularly oriented around healing the nervous system.

And so what I've noticed in my clients, as well as myself, and actually, I integrate a lot of this into my Personal Mythmaking Course, nervous system calming and settling, trauma-informed embodiment prompts, because a lot of HSPs and empaths are attracted to my work, but also because when you're highly sensitive, when your nervous system is already -- what's the right word? -- on alert, tuned in a little more intensely to what's going on, it takes less stimuli to send the nervous system into a trauma response that gets stuck.

And so when I say trauma, there's the big, big traumas everyone knows about (sexual abuse and car accidents and stuff like that), but there's also the smaller traumas that can tip your nervous system over the edge if it's already stressed; like a very sharp noise when you're not ready for it, or a small fall or tumble, or being tackled by your child when you're so immersed in something else that you're just startled beyond belief, these small things can also pitch the nervous system into a trauma reaction.

And then what really happens a lot for Highly Sensitive People, especially when you grow up not knowing that you're highly sensitive, many Highly Sensitive People learn how to override their nervous system response and shut themselves down and numb themselves in order to function. And what that does is it puts you often into a freeze-state so the trauma response doesn't get a chance to discharge, so it just holds on and keeps building.

So for all of these reasons, bodywork and healing work that starts to support the nervous system in releasing trauma, releasing that overcharged feeling -- and I often I feel it as an internal vibration that is not in sync with the rest of me, and I start to get more overreactive and irritability as it starts to build, or just start to shut down to try and cope and retreats -- none of these are normal conditions in situations. It means that your nervous system is stuck. So that's why I really recommend somatic experiencing and biodynamic craniosacral therapy.

And if you can find someone that does both, well, then you're just the most blessed person in the world. I just found a practitioner in town who's trained in both of those modalities, and it's helping SO much. And the really neat thing about committing to doing a process like that when you're a really sensitive person is what you start to learn is that parts of yourself that you think are due to high sensitivity are actually not; they're just chronic trauma responses that can actually change. And then you can get, as you release those layers, you get to discover, "Oh! My high sensitive is



actually nuanced, and is actually pleasurable and enjoyable because I'm not stuck in these coping strategies that I thought were also about my high sensitivity."

**Amber:** Wow! That is a really useful framing for me. Thank you. Thank you so much.

[1:27:07]

**Amber:** Okay, so we're gonna close, but I just, I had written this thing down that you had written to me and it's not even a question, but I just want to read this sentence that you wrote because I love this idea so much.

We were talking about ancestral connections and you said, "I'd like to explore more about fiber arts, adornments, and symbolism in clothing from all of these lineages, and create my own mythological regalia."

*(Janelle laughs)*

I just like -- that idea just sends me over the moon thinking about how amazing of a project that would be; how beautiful that would be!

**Janelle:** *(Janelle laughs)* Yeah! Oh, I forgot I wrote that down. *(Amber laughs)*

So one of the things that gets really forgotten, because we're such a text-based culture -- I know Darla Antoine is on talking about food and culture -- is textiles and fiber arts, and music and dance, and the more ephemeral cultural transmissions, including patterning.

And patterning, actually having symbolism and language in it -- in knitting, in weaving, in textile arts, but also dance moves and musical phrasing -- there's so much richness to culture that we actually lose when we only focus on what can be written down.

And so my idea about the regalia is it's quite amazing to look at historic photos of traditional, cultural garb, and the ornateness, and the incredible care that's put into what often gets called craft or "women's work" but actually is cultural storytelling and transmission. And that's why I want to find a way to weave all of these different ancestral threads into some sort of regalia for myself.

**Amber:** Love it. I love clothing. *(Janelle laughs)*

And just really like the idea of this. And again, just bringing up the idea of this for me what Dr. Lynne Kelly writes about, writes about symbols in this book which is that they were often also a memory code, especially, you know, symbols that don't clearly represent anything in the real world, but are totally -- what's that word? -- have no direct correlation that's clear to anyone that looks at it.

Abstract. That they had specific meaning within that culture, and that they were also memory devices. And I'm sure that that was. you know, it was also included in pottery in ancient times, and I'm sure it was also included in clothing, basketry, and all these fibers that disintegrate over time and that we don't have access to anymore.

**Janelle:** Yeah.

**Amber:** Okay, well thank you for putting that beautiful idea in my mind. (*Janelle laughs*) Yeah, so just tell people where they can find you, your podcast, and how they can sign up to take your Personal Mythmaking writing course.

**Janelle:** Yeah, so you can find everything I do on my personal website. It's [janellehardy.com](http://janellehardy.com). My Personal Mythmaking Course I offer twice a year: once in the beginning of February, and once at the end of August. Those are the starting dates.

I also offer a free "Outline your Memoir" workshop. It's a two-hour workshop which gives you a really good taste of my style of teaching and is a great way to get a feel for my work, and then step into Personal Mythmaking or get a feel for my work and get started on your own personal mythmaking. And we use fairy tales in that workshop.

I also offer a writing retreat. I've got one coming up in October; an in-person five-night writing retreat which will be on my website. And my podcast is also my website, and I would love to have you listen in. And thank you, Amber, for your invitation to share my work.

**Amber:** Yeah, thank you so much for interviewing me yesterday. On your podcast, it was so fun, and thank you for getting deeper with me today.

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

**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](http://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](https://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!