



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 60 with Charles Eisenstein

The Boundaries of the Unthinkable are Wavering

December 10, 2019

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(Excerpt from today's show by Charles)

*I think that if we want a living earth, and we want to fulfill our destiny, which, in the old story was conquest and domination, **and in the new story is service and participation. Service to all life on earth. Participation in the universe's coming more and more alive, then we're going to have to come from a place of love.***

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

[Intro]

[0:00:24]

Amber: Hello friends! Welcome to the Medicine Stories podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth.

I am your host, Amber Magnolia Hill, and this is Episode 60, always a moment to pause and celebrate and feel good when I hit these every ten episodes mark, and just really appreciate all that it takes to put this podcast together and appreciate my audience so very much for being here, for allowing the show to continue growing and finding new ears and amazing new guests, like today's Charles Eisenstein

I'm so excited to share this interview with you. Hopefully, you've already heard of Charles. If not, you're about to get your mind blown. It's a really wide-ranging conversation, as I tend to do, very similar to Episode 57 with Dr. Kelly Brogan where these people are such brilliant original thinkers, who have put so much out there, that I've got to go where my curiosity leads me in the interview. Hopefully, you consider this podcast and these interviews as entry points into the person's work, and whatever calls to you, you can go deeper into. It's my goal to pique your own curiosity and to encourage you to spend some time — that might otherwise be spent watching TV or scrolling

Instagram — reading a book or listening to another podcast that goes deeper into ideas that fascinate you and things that really call to your soul and your inner being.

So I'm just, as I say to him, **SO** grateful for Charles and his work. I had been so confused in the last year or so over the climate change debate and what both sides were saying so vehemently and strongly. I've also been really confused over food and food choices. I've talked about that on this show before, that I didn't even realize I had food confusion until I started this podcast and started talking about these things with various guests.

[0:02:55]

Amber: So we don't get into the food at all in this interview, but Charles has this wonderful book called *The Yoga of Eating* that I've seen around forever. I'm pretty sure it was on the shelf in 2005 when I worked at the co-op in Sacramento which is what really got me started on the path I'm on, but never picked it up and read it until this last month. Absolutely life-changing and beautiful, and since then he's written some really profound works like *Sacred Economics* and *The Ascent of Humanity*, and *The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible*, and this recent book, *Climate: A New Story*, which, we spend about the first half of the conversation talking about before we range off really into a diversity of other topics.

So just this is a person who can hold so much information in their mind at once and make sense of it, and come up with new ways of seeing things, new ways of doing things, and then articulate that really well, both in his books and in his many other podcast interviews. I mean, I listened to so many of them in preparation for this interview, and I have many of them not yet listened to and going to listen to because I just, like, every moment I spend taking in Charles' work is a benefit to me. So, it's a lot of information, but don't be overwhelmed. From now on, Charles Eisenstein is one of your lifelong teachers. At least that's how I'm approaching it, and this is just the beginning. I have so much more to learn.

And, you know, it's not didactic, he's not like, "This is how it is." It's like, "Here's some ideas to explore." It's just... it's wonderful, and everything feels in resonance. Everything feels in resonance

[0:04:49]

Amber: So before we get into it, I want to tell you quickly that I have recorded an outro for this episode, so after the interview that will be there. It's just me talking. It's just me expanding on some of the things we touched on in this interview that I've always wanted to go deeper into, and now I have the opportunity to do them since they got brought up. I'm not saying Charles agrees with everything I'm saying by any means, but some of what I'm talking about has been informed by his work for sure.

So in the outro I talk about:

- Human hubris and the unforeseen consequences of thinking we can outsmart the vital life force, which is nature or evolution)
- I talk about how challenges to the immune system both initiate children into their next level of unfolding and help prevent later chronic disease, and we look at that from both a scientific perspective and the perspective of ancestral wisdom and knowing.
- The polarization in the vaccine conversation, cognitive dissonance and confirmation bias, and exploring what it would take for me to change my mind on the issue

- And then briefly, a short exploration of and some resources for learning more about the harmful consequences of praise, rewards, and punishments when it comes to raising kids

So again, just things that got briefly mentioned in the interview that I want to go more into and provide some more resources for.

[0:06:16]

Amber: So this episode's Patreon offering is going to be a giveaway. I just love doing the giveaways when I have an author on, and, you know, just giving people an opportunity to get a book in their hands that they might not otherwise be able to or take the time to acquire. So, Charles has these wonderful books that I've already named, and the way I'm going to do this is you can go to Patreon.com/medicinstories to enter, and it will be open to everyone, not just patrons of the podcast, but if you choose to become a patron, there are all sorts of rewards and goodies for you that you can read about; content provided by most of my past guests (and by myself) all in line with the things we talk about on this show, the best of them at the two-dollar-a-month level (or most of them at the two-dollar-a-month level).

So you can enter there, and whoever wins will be able to choose the book that they want, and I'll put a link to Charles' books so you can learn more about them and decide which one you would like. So check that out there, and I am so excited to share this interview with Charles now.

[0:07:31]

Amber: I went to his website to grab the bio, which I don't always do bios, not everyone wants their bio read, it's just kind of a funny thing, but his About page is somewhat long and written in the first person, which I appreciate so much (*Amber laughs*). These pretending-to-be-third-person bios that are actually written by the person themselves are just so silly to me. So I love this About page. You can find it at CharlesEisenstein.org.

The [About](#) link is at the bottom of the page, I noticed, but you can check out his essays, videos, other interviews, his own podcast, his online courses, events, books, there's a donate option. There's so much good stuff at CharlesEisenstein.org. I've been spending a ton of time there lately. I really recommend the essays too. There's just so much to get into. I hope you benefit from Charles's work as much as I have, and I'm basically 100% that you will.

So without further ado, let's dive into this interview with Charles Eisenstein.

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

[Interview Begins]

[0:08:43]

Amber: Hi Charles! Welcome to Medicine Stories.

Charles: Hello Amber, I'm happy to be here.

Amber: I'm so happy to have you here. It's really fun just getting to do this podcast. I get so immersed in people's work, and then to get to speak to them, it's just very... something I'm very grateful for.

So I kind of want to start big with kind of a wide lens because you talk about such a diverse array of subjects from fully reframing the climate conversation to laying out a pathway to a whole new economic system, to guiding people to their own inner knowing when it comes to their food choices, and just so much more, but there seems to be this underlying theme of just examining and questioning the cultural mythologies that have been handed down to us.

In fact, I heard you say once somewhere that you had a lifelong resistance to the program that was handed to you. So, like, what is that program or those programs, and how has this lifelong resistance guided you on your path?

Were you a misfit child?

Charles: You know, I think, actually, every child is a misfit child. Nobody — maybe I'm projecting my own experience — but I think on some level everybody feels that they're a misfit; that they don't quite fit into the categories and boxes and life maps that are offered to us. One reason is simply because these categories and boxes and life maps have been developed through an industrial age that required standardization of — like a factory. You have standardized parts, standardized components, standardized products. Therefore, you need standardized job descriptions and standardized people to perform them, and we are not standardized people.

Every one of us a unique human being. So to fit into those requires some kind of violence and some kind of discomfort, and so I think part of it is that.

And part of it is — here I am, intellectualizing the whole thing when you're asking a more personal question but anyway. — Part of it also is the story that we have lived in is less and less resonant. The story that tells us what a human being is, and what the glorious destiny of humanity is, and how to live on this earth that seemed so exciting 50 or 100 years ago, with the onward march of science and progress, the conquest of nature. That wasn't even a bad thing. People would be like, "YEAH! Conquest of nature!" 100 years ago, but that story still defines our institutions and tells us how to be.

We don't resonate with that anymore, and so that's another reason for our feeling of not fitting in, and then, of course, that gets pathologized. And the ways that we rebel against a conformity, you know, like becoming addicted or depressed, those are becoming medicalized and treated as diseases, even sometimes by herbalists. "Oh, here's something for your depression." Well, maybe you're supposed to be depressed, if you're in this life circumstance. Maybe your depression is your soul rebelling against it and wanting you to withdraw from it. Maybe there's actually a core of sanity underneath what's getting pathologized.

So anyway, yeah, I've been through my own journey of resisting the program in various ways, and it really helps me to identify what the program is and where it comes from. And that's what connects all the different things that you mentioned that I work with. It's — whether we're talking about food, diet, and politics, or environment, technology, medicine, education, like, any of these realms — the same transition from a story of separation to a story of interbeing is underway. And

so that's like the basic lens through which I understand seemingly disconnected, emergent phenomena.

[0:13:11]

Amber: You've said that we're kind of falling out of resonance with that old story, and do you think that truly everyone is falling out of resonance of that story? I mean, this is what I feel, and, you know, the more I do this podcast and talk to people, it just seems like everyone is waking up to something different and new.

But, like, Donald Trump, is he falling out of resonance with the old stories?

Charles: I think it is a global phenomenon.

There are still very many people that need to finish, need to complete the storyline of the story that they have been in. Collectively, we need to complete the storyline of separation, and so there are those who have generously volunteered to complete that; to live out the storylines of separation. Maybe Donald Trump is one of them, you know? Thank you, Donald Trump, for living out your life so I don't have to because the guy doesn't look that happy to me, you know?

So I think that on some soul level, he doesn't resonate with it either, but it's not done yet. So, I do believe that more and more people are becoming ready. They are reaching the end of a narrative arc, and that is scary because what's on the other side of that? What's in between the story that you are in and the story that you will someday become?

There's a process of breakdown. There's a process of confusion, bewilderment, not knowing, being lost, not knowing who you are, not knowing what to do, and that territory is frightening.

So the fear of that and the various bribes and threats that are offered to us to stay in the old story, they hold people there, but a lot of the bribes and threats are becoming less and less effective, too. Like the bribes: that if you study hard and get straight A's and go to college, and then you get your graduate degree and then you're going to get a job. A good job. But now, a lot of people, they obey that to the letter, and instead of a good job, they get \$100,000 in student loan debt and a marginal job, and you know, it's not the future that was promised us.

Amber: Well, even that the job is the final goal, like, 'cause everyone loves their job. That's what everyone wants: to wake up in the morning and go do.

[0:16:13]

Amber: So that reminds me of — I'm just going to quote you one more time:

The things I've been saying are no longer beyond the pale because the boundaries of the unthinkable are wavering.

What an exciting time to be alive. I've had a real palpable sense of probably since my teenage years, like, whoa shit's getting real, and I'm gonna be here on this earth for some transformative times.

But it is also, as you said, scary and unknown in this transitional phase. Something I appreciate so much about you is that you're not afraid to talk about love. We are not afraid to talk about love on this podcast.

What role do you see love playing in the transition?

Charles: The transition is love. Like, what else do you call it when the boundaries of yourself expand to include someone else, some other being? So I spoke of this during separation, the separate self, that identifies who you are as a separate individual. It could be conceived of as a soul encased in flesh and separate from the flesh. That's the religious conception of separation.

It could also be a psychological conception, which is that you are a consciousness, separate from the flesh, or that is, where you are just a meat machine, and consciousness is just the ephemera of your brain state, and you are programmed by your genes to maximize your self-interest. That's also separation.

So, what did I begin that sentence with? Oh, yeah. Love.

So to relax that and include somebody else as part of self, that's what love is. If you love somebody, then your happiness, your well-being, is inseparable from theirs. You're not separate anymore. It's just like your own liver or your own heart. You wouldn't be able to say, "Oh, I've got a serious liver disease, but I'm fine. That's just my liver." In the same way, you can't say, "Yeah, you know, my son is addicted, or my spouse is suicidal, but I'm fine. That's just them." Like, you can't say that.

Love expands us to include what had been outside, and I think that, well, I mean I look at the initiation that is being offered to us by the environmental crisis is that it's wanting to initiate us into recovering our love for life for biological life on earth, for all of life, and for all of the planet as a living being. So it's about love. It's about... that's why I like to say, "The revolution is love."

[0:19:36]

Amber: In your book, *Climate: A New Story*, you write that these fear-based tactics to get people to pay attention, to make changes don't work. They don't work. We've been doing them for how many decades now, and the environmental crises are getting worse and worse. You bring this perspective of love in and reconnecting people to the land and the trees and the birds, really, to the nature that is us. We are nature, and that it's bringing in this love piece and connection that will really motivate people to change.

Charles: Yeah, I don't think we can be scared into caring past a certain point. We can be scared enough to guard against bad things happening to ourselves, but that's not enough to have a planet, like, yeah—

In the book, I describe the scenario of "the concrete world", where humans are fine, at least in all of the measurables. We continue to have enough calories per person. We continue to have breathable air, at least indoors in bubble cities and with AC units and air filters and water filters. Like, we continue to survive while the rest of the planet continues to die. If we appeal only to self-interest, if we use fear to make people engage in whatever, zero-carbon lifestyles, or whatever we're trying to push, then we could end up with that result.

Fear will not keep us from humanity surviving on a dying earth. I mean, after all, what fear or self-interest motivates you to do is actually make no changes whatsoever and have everyone else make the changes.

So I think that if we want a living earth, and we want to fulfill our destiny, which in the old story was conquest and domination, and in the new story is service and participation; service to all life on earth. Participation in the universe's coming more and more alive, then we're going to have to come from a place of love.

[0:22:08]

Amber: I'm so grateful for the new book on climate. I didn't realize I was aching for it as I was getting more and more confused by the two dominant, competing narratives around climate change.

I'm just so curious what need did you see in the culture for this book to be written; for this new perspective to be gifted to the world?

Charles: I went to Paris for COP, twenty-one, twenty-two in Paris? I keep forgetting the numbers.

And I was put into a state of despair; not because of climate science and runaway greenhouse gas effects and tipping points and things like that. That wasn't the despair. The despair came from this is entirely the wrong debate and the fuhrer of the debate and the vehemence with which people are pushing this issue obscures what we really need to be paying attention to.

And this is true, generally, I think, in our society with polarized debates. The drama of the debate, the spectacle of the debate distracts our attention from what really needs our attention, which neither side is talking about. So, in this case, I was like, I'm not hearing anything about the living earth. I'm not hearing anything about the physiology of Gaia. All I'm hearing is about more of the same, more of how do we solve the problem with the same things that caused the problem. The methods of reductionism, methods of quantification. The basic template of quantify the problem. Find **the** cause, and attack the cause.

So we have then something as complex as — if you think, you know, human physiology is complex. I mean, even the physiology of a single cell, to map the metabolic pathways of a single cell takes a gigantic wall of diamond print. That's how complex a single cell is. All the more a human being, all the more the collective being of Gaia.

To reduce the health of that being to one metric, to carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere (and I know that there's no environmentalist that does that, but that's what is most easily translated into policy, and that's what people are talking about "green development", green growth, green new deal: it's mostly about this one number.

What gets left out? The things to get left out are actually the things that will end up being really important in the end. The beings that don't necessarily contribute to carbon dioxide, carbon sequestration. Where are the whales and the wolves and the sea turtles on that map? Are they important? What's their carbon number?

[0:25:44]

Well, actually, if you look at the world from a living earth perspective, they become very important. Maybe that importance is only visible when you're looking at water cycles, not carbon cycles. Which, actually, now I'm getting more into the book, but I identified a lot of the chaos that isn't ascribed to global warming actually being caused by disruptions to the water cycle through deforestation and soil degradation, development; all of the things that we think can continue as long as we offset their carbon dioxide contribution with something else.

So anyway, when I was in Paris, I was like, "This conversation has to change." So that's why I called it a new story. I'm hesitant to even put climate in the title, because people see that and are like, "I don't wanna read that!" (*Amber laughs*)

Amber: Gosh, there's so much to talk about in the new book. I really appreciate that focus on the water cycle and other things that you talk about because you're right. Just reducing it all down to just carbon is not going to move us forward. It's not going to move us forward in any way.

And I'm here in Northern California with the wildfires raging every summer and fall. I've watched it get worse and worse. I've lived here my whole life, and you know, the focus is on "What's climate change?" It's too much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It's like, there has to be more to it. You know?

Charles: I think it's more of not enough beavers. Too many dams. Abusing the water. If you abuse the water, then you're going to get fires, and the causal pathway might be obscure and multi-linear. It's not just this one thing is causing it. So part of the transition we are in is the transition away from reductionist thinking and unilinear thinking into systems thinking, into holistic thinking, life thinking.

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Charles: I know you're an herbalist. This transition is certainly happening in herbalism, too, where there's a certain branch that's very much about defining and understanding herbs through their proactive ingredient. You know, "Let's make a science of herbalism." And you can gain an insight into herbs that way. But by reducing them to a dataset, you will lose something.

Doing that makes the holistic relationship less visible, not more. So it's not that you shouldn't use those tools, but you have to be aware that they're only useful to see certain things. And the things that need to be seen the most right now are not visible through the analytic approach.

Amber: Right, just extracting the medicinal constituents of the herbs and putting them in their little glass vials, you lose the relationship. You lose the taste, which tells your body what it's just ingested, and your body remembers how to use it.

[0:29:16]

Amber: I really love just the words "the organs and tissues of Gaia." That immediately just makes it land for me. I know the earth is a living being, this is something that I live in my daily life. But I guess that human-body metaphor really helps to ground it.

Charles: Yeah, that was another impetus for writing this book.

We could cut emissions to zero, and the planet will still die a death of organ failure if we continue to degrade its organ.

The UN predicted that in 50 years there will be virtually no topsoil left, given the current rates of erosion. Well, why should we care about that? We could grow all our food in hydroponics factories, or grow meat in these big vats of animal cell tissue, animal cell cultures.

I met a guy in Maine who has developed ways to harvest oysters without them ever having to be in the sea. We're already — and a lot of these innovations are being — celebrated as responses to climate change, but in fact, if they are part of the destruction of the soil, then they are causes of climate change. That's even true from the carbon ones because what happens to all that carbon in the soil when it is exposed to the atmosphere? It oxidizes and becomes carbon dioxide.

From a physiological perspective, the danger caused by soil erosion is much, much greater. The rains can no longer soak in. If you have no soil or dead soil, that's not aerated by mycelial networks and earthworms and gophers and root systems that tap the totality of life, and the rain just washes the soil away. It doesn't sink into the aquifers. It doesn't water trees that then bring water vapor back into the air that forms clouds that extends the rainy season.

So you have drought and fires in some places, and you have floods, too, because the water can't absorb it all — the **soil** can't absorb all the water — so you have floods and droughts, and then that gets blamed on greenhouse gasses, on "climate change", but I'd say that **is** climate change. It's not **caused** by climate change. It is climate change, and the cause of this particular change in climate, the change from extended rainy seasons to drought-flood cycles, that is caused by forest abuse and soil abuse mostly in my view.

That's not going to be — that's not visible in the current conversation, although it's becoming more visible. There are... there's a lot of progress, and I just wanted to put, to accelerate that trend because, yeah, you can support regenerative agriculture and reforestation, motivated by the carbon, from the living earth perspective. These things become way, way, way more important, like, crucial. And then essentially, what's crucial is "Let's take care of these beings that we love."

So it takes us back to love.

[0:33:28]

Amber: You always talk about whales which are my biggest animal love, and it just hits in a certain way when that love is really there.

Another super valuable aspect of the book is the look at polarization. It's not just in climate change, as you know. I'm pretty vocal in the vaccine conversation, and I would say maybe it's even worse there.

Charles: Yeah. I joke that if I want to alienate half my audience forever, all I have to do is take a position on vaccines.

Amber: Yeah. (*Amber laughs*)

Charles: It doesn't matter position I take. If I take a position, then half of them are out of there.

Amber: Yeah, but you have, you know, talked about them in very intelligent ways in some books and podcast interviews, but how can we begin to address this polarization, especially the need to win no matter what? Like, winning is more important than truth now, which is terrifying.

What can we, as little people out here, do?

Charles: Yeah. So the problem... I've asked what does it take for someone to change their mind on an issue, a political issue, when we identify so strongly these days (or many people identify so strongly with a certain position?

Like, looking at the vaccine debate, what would it take for you, say, to admit that you've been wrong all along? And you can ask the same question of somebody on the other side. What would it take? It's not easy because if you are pro-vaccine, you're never going to read the best critiques of vaccines. You're going to be in a reality bubble where anything that could erode your position, that's going to be kept out. Like, "Ooh, that's anti-vaxx stuff. That's from a suspect website." I mean, even like, the search engines are going to demote that. SO you're never going to be receptive to that information. You might not ever see it because of the reality bubble that you're in.

And the same thing is often true, can be true, on the anti-vaxx side. Like, are you ever going to really read the best of the pro-vaccine material? Or are you going to merely read your side's interpretation and critique of the pro-vaccine material? So this is another thing that is really sobering for me. It's like the problem isn't that one side is right and the other side is wrong. The problem is that we have a culture that is impervious to ever being wrong. So where does that come from? How do we bring people to a state of receptivity and open-mindedness? If we do that, then all of these debates will be resolved in alignment with what is true, but if we don't do that, then the truth will never get it, and the side that wins will be the side that is most powerful; that has the most force; not the side that is bringing, that is in alignment with, what is actually true.

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Charles: So looking at the vaccines, yeah, I have my opinions on the vaccines and many, many other topics. One reason that I'm not vocal about them, usually, is that I don't think they're the most important issue.

The most important issue is why are we so polarized? What keeps us — at least half the people in every issue — in a state of delusion? If we don't address that, and we win in the vaccine debate, then we're going to lose in some other debate because the same dynamics are at play. So that's gotten me to investigate: "Why are we so attached?"

And I think one reason is the crisis in belonging and sense-making, and the epidemic, the pandemic, in civilization of self-rejection. So how do you gain some acceptance from an in-group and from yourself? Well, one way is to be right about something, and to identify, therefore, with the forces of good and right.

We get trained for this in school. We get credit for being right. We get penalized for being wrong. So, when your self-image is tied up with being right, and having been right all along, you're not

going to be very open to any contradictory evidence. In fact, you'll be hostile to it, and that's what keeps us as a society in separate warring camps.

In fact, each side needs the other side to achieve their real purpose which is validation as being on team good in the war against team evil. So that is what I've been addressing, like, even if I'm writing or speaking on something else. I'm always slipping that in there because if that doesn't change, nothing's going to change.

Amber: So is it like a crisis of real connection?

Charles: Yeah, because we've been stripped of the relationships that make us whole; to community and to nature. You might even find, like, if you have a deep experience of connection, or you take somebody out on an herb walk even, being right doesn't seem as important anymore 'cause you feel like you belong here. You're at home.

And when you feel at home, secure, and loved, it's a lot easier to admit that, "Yeah, maybe I was wrong this whole time. That's okay, 'cause you love me anyway. I don't need to be right to receive love and acceptance and respect."

Amber: Yeah.

Charles: So if we have a political culture that's always blaming, condemning, calling out, taking down, and critiquing, we're creating conditions where no one will ever change their mind because no one is feeling accepted. No one is feeling safe, and the only option is to overcome them with force.

Amber: Yeah so a crisis of connection and empathy. You've written about this and bringing it back to the question: What is it like to be you? And just how easy it is to say, "I would **never** build a wall. I would **never** do what Donald Trump is doing," without putting ourselves in, as you say, the totality of their circumstances.

If I think, "Well, if I was **me**, in Donald Trump's position, yeah, I wouldn't build the wall, but as Donald Trump with his father, his birth, his whole life story, living in New York City, hell yeah, I would build that wall."

Charles: Yeah. Maybe you would. Maybe I would.

[0:41:20]

Charles: And that's the question: what is it like to be you that makes so much more creativity available?

Now you have another option, potentially. Instead of having to defeat the perpetrator, the bad guy, Donald Trump, you might be able to change the conditions that give birth to who he is and what he's choosing.

And maybe you can't change the conditions. Maybe there's no option to run away from somebody, or to fight somebody or to physically resist somebody with force. I'm not saying there's

never a time for that, but when we live in a worldview where sometimes somebody is just bad and irredeemable no matter what their circumstances, then we have no choice but to fight them.

So we limit our options, and that is a recipe for despair in the situation where it sure seems like the bad people are in control of everything. If the only strategy is to beat them at their own game, it's a lose-lose. Probably they are better at their own game than you are, and they will ruthlessly squelch you if you attempt to show them up and tear them down. Unless you become so good at fighting that you can beat them at their own game, well guess what? Then you are the new dominator, and so you've won the battle, but you've lost the war.

So if we're to have any hope at all, we're to ally ourselves with the part of them that doesn't want to do this either; the part of them that is ready to be in love again. That's the only hopeful strategy.

Amber: We speak to that part and not to the evil, bad, opposition that we're seeing in them.

[0:43:12]

Charles: Yeah, it's in how we see them. Like, imagine if we all carry the seeing of Fred Rogers, Mr. Rogers, you know? He said, "I like you just because you're you; because you're special."

He wasn't repeating a mantra; he actually was seeing them, and he could call forth the beauty in almost any human being.

Amber: Yeah, I mean, I felt that when he said it to me through the TV screen when I was a kid in the 80s, and when I think about it now, I honestly tear up remembering how he made me feel.

Charles: Did you see the documentary about him?

Amber: I'm going to as soon as possible.

Charles: Oh my God. Everyone was in the theater crying.

Amber: (*Amber laughs*) I bet!

Charles: Yeah, but there's people out there who do this, who practice reverence. That's really what it's all about is reverence.

Amber: Yeah.

Charles: If you hold people in reverence, then you're a walking invitation for them to live up to the reverence that you see them as.

Amber: Right. I was going to bring it to children before you brought it to Mr. Rogers, too. Like, that's what we do when raising children, we don't say, "You were bad because you did that!" We say, "Oh I like it when you do that. It makes me feel so good and I feel really proud of you" and just bathing them in the resonance of the highest potential that you see for them, and then they grow into that.

Charles: Yeah, although, there's a fine line there between acknowledging and invoking their best impulses and manipulating them with praise.

Amber: Oh yes.

Charles: Because that can also be a form of conditional acceptance that actually makes them not feel safe and always seeking praise because associating love with the praise. So that can be manipulative, too, if you're not careful. But yeah.

Amber: Yes, yes. Agreed. I'll put some resources in the show notes for that, too, for any parents who that just piqued their interest.

I'm glad that we're talking about child-rearing. You have four sons? Is that right? And I was so thrilled when looking through your articles on your website that you interviewed Joseph Chilton Pierce back in the day. He's a hero of mine, and I remember something that he wrote in one of his books, which is "The highest expression of human love and creativity is mentoring the next generation."

[0:45:45]

Amber: And I've heard you talk about how, you know, we basically all have trauma in this culture. It can be personal or a legacy trauma of living in a culture that perpetuates the story of separation.

How can we raise our children to minimize the impact of that trauma? What has been important to you, as a parent?

Charles: I mean, I'm sure that I have passed on a lot of my legacy trauma to my children. I think that if you pass on a little less than you received, then you're giving a good gift to the future. We're only able to cease passing it on when we become aware of it and aware of the patterns that are associated with the trauma.

So one of them is the conditional acceptance and rejection through punishment and praise. A lot of them are societal. I think it is traumatic for children to be confined indoors and to go outside and it's an alien realm where there's no other kids and no engagement with nature, where nature is just a spectacle and not a hands-on relationship. That, in a way, is stunning to the human spirit, and that's hard to do anything about. I mean, you can shove your kids. I tried. When my older ones were little, "Go outside and play," but it wasn't like when I was a kid and there were other kids outside and that's where the action was happening.

All the other kids were indoors by the 2000s. They were on screens or they were being carted off to various organized activities. So how do I shield them from that trauma? The trauma of alienation, of loneliness. I didn't know how to do that.

We do our best, and then there are the patterns that we only become aware of through our mistakes. Maybe, you know, we try to make amends and apologize and heal the damage, and that experience of error and apology becomes the legacy that the next generation can carry forward and not have to repeat those mistakes.

So when our mistakes are followed by healing, by regret, by apology, by amend-making, by mending, then they become a gift to the future and part of the reunion, the age of reunion.

[0:49:00]

Amber: You write about this so beautifully in the *Ascent of Humanity*. My favorite chapter was the one on control, our obsession with control and with safety. Yeah, so, anyone who's curious about what you're speaking about with raising children in this paradigm it's really beautiful in there, but the part that really captured my attention was the war on germs.

I sometimes kind of joke that autoimmune issues are the new infectious disease. Can you just elucidate for us what the germ theory of disease gets wrong, and why there has been an explosion in autoimmune conditions?

Charles: I mean, I'm no expert on this. You know when I wrote that book I was almost... well, 15 years ago I wrote that when this information was not so well-known. I think there's a lot of people who could probably tell you a lot more about that than I could.

But basically, understanding that most infections are symptoms of the conditions that bring the infection in, at this time at least. That may have not been true in the age of the Great Epidemics. The age of the great Epidemics, there's a whole a reason why that had to happen, but right now, like, colds and flus and most of the diseases that people get, most of the infectious diseases are the result of body conditions that bring those diseases in.

One of those body conditions is the depletion of our inner ecology that is — you know, our bodies are supposed to be a community of life. That's what makes us strong. So when the body ecology has been depleted through antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals, and also, like, excessive handwashing, excessive sanitation, excessive hygiene, like, we're not getting a rich ecosystem in our bodies anymore. So just like a denuded landscape is quickly taken over by weeds, a denuded body gets overtaken by opportunistic infections that colonize everything.

And then I guess the autoimmune part — I mean, this is like a hugely complex issue — but I think that when we don't encounter the challenges that are normal for childhood, such as chickenpox, measles, and mumps, then... oh boy. So now I'm going to get in trouble for taking a position on vaccines, but when we don't have those challenges, the immune system is like "Hey, I'm not.... I'm supposed to be doing something. I guess I must not be sensitive enough," or when we get vaccinated, and it looks like we're getting a disease so the immune system is getting ready, but it's only a... there's nothing for the cell-mediated immune system to grab onto and attack, so it gets more and more primed for action, and then it can end up, it can result in allergies, where, you know, it's just so hypersensitive that it finds something.

But then it's so complicated, you know? We can go into leaky gut, we can go into all these things that I was more conversant with 20 years ago than I am now. I'm not an expert on this. I kind of have extracted it. I've taken steps back from it, and am more in the theoretical place of "We gotta end the war on life."

Amber: Right.

Charles: And the “othering” of this idea that health and progress and well-being comes to increasing separation and increasing control, rather than community.

Amber: Yeah, thinking that we can control nature with our antibiotics, with our vaccines, and there’s all these consequences that we didn’t foresee, rather than just being in relationship with the vast microcosm of our inner landscape.

Charles: Right and it’s not that there’s never a time to use antibiotics. Like, if you are on the verge of acute sepsis or something like that, then it can save your life.

Amber: Yes.

Charles: But it’s kind of like the political thing of when you identify somebody as an irremediable bad guy, then you have no choice but to attack it. So if we have a vision of bacteria and viruses as these competitors, as the self-interested competitors that infect you, from that lens, the only rational response is to try and kill them.

Like, seeing them, when we see life in fundamental competition with all other life, then it is a war of each against all. So the conventional medicine, the “germ theory”, the conventional medical view makes total sense in sight of that paradigm of biology; that sees all of life as a headlong competition, and that sits in the story of separation.

Charles: What is a self or separate? So when we understand that we’re not separate; that ecology works through the contribution of all beings, to the welfare of all beings, then we can understand the body in that way, too. Then we can ask questions of “Why am I getting this infection? What are the conditions?”

It’s just like asking that of Donald Trump. What is this a symptom of? What are the underlying conditions that are causing me to get strep throat three or four times a year? Or something like that. Is it because this bad guy got in again?! And we gotta build a wall to keep him out? Or is it a symptom of something?

That’s the change in paradigm.

Amber: Yes. Thank you.

[0:55:50]

Amber: I just want to move briefly into *Sacred Economics* which you’ve really gone into on many other podcasts, and of course, people can read the book.

So you not only identify “what’s wrong with the world economic system?” And I love hearing you once explain that the reason you came to write this book is because of all the world’s problems you were thinking about, when you went back, and back, and back, they all go back to money. They all go back to money, and that is so fucking true!

But you also layout solutions, like, very clear next steps forward, and one of them is the gift economy, and you practice this. On your website, you have a number of beautiful online courses, and people can pay what they want, including zero.

Was this a big leap for you to make this decision? Was it just like, “Oh, of course that’s how I’m doing it,” and how does that look on the backend?

Charles: Well, it originated when I wrote *The Ascent of Humanity*, and I kept putting it online, chapter by chapter, as I was putting the final touches on it. Then I published it — or pretended it was published. I self-published it, and I’m like, “Well, okay, I guess now I got to take down some or most of the material online because otherwise, who would buy it?”

And I almost went to do that, but it didn’t feel right. You know? I wrote this so people would read it. Why would I do something that makes people less able to read it? That just doesn’t make sense, and it just felt bad to take this beloved website that I painstakingly coded myself and just take it down. I couldn’t make myself do it. Plus, like, part of the book is the critique of intellectual property, and that fed into it, too. It’s like, is this actually mine to enclose and sell? Where did I get this book from? It is the result of hundreds of books that I’ve read and conversations that I’ve had and thoughtforms that are circulating in the nova sphere. I am just a scribe for a book that wanted to be written. I don’t really own it.

[0:58:21]

Charles: And so, I feel that way about a lot of “my” work. I mean, it’s not really my work. It is work that I am serving. It just doesn’t feel good, you know?

So I definitely like doing the work, and I want to be supported and in the current context, that means that I need money, and people are grateful for the work, so there should be a channel for them to express the gratitude and to pay what feels good for them.

So that’s the way I do it with online courses and most of my live events.

But I’m not like a purist about it. Sometimes I’ll speak — you know, I spoke in Berlin or whatever, and there’s some organization that renting the venue, and they’re setting it up and they’re selling tickets — I will declare my preference, and I tend to want to work with people who are open to doing things by gift and stepping into trust like that. Occasionally, I speak at conferences and people pay me.

In fact, if I do that, I want to be paid at the highest level to do honor to the work. Like, I don’t want to be second-class because it’s not that I have doubts that it’s valuable: “Oh, you don’t pay me because this is second rate stuff.” It’s not about that. It’s not about a lack of self-worth or confidence in the value of what I’m offering.

I even sometimes will be on an online thing that somebody else creates, and then you know I’m like, “Yeah, I’m gonna use your business model,” but generally speaking, I like to do things by gift.

Amber: And do you find that it works? Like, when people buy your online course, I’m sure there’s plenty doing it at zero, which is what I’ve had to do it at many times in my past, and then are there people who vastly overpay because they can, and they have a sense of gratitude, and they want to

cover costs for people who can't?

Charles: Sometimes people overpay. It's rare. Probably about half the people pay zero, and you know, sometimes it's because they genuinely can't afford it. Like, you know, there's been some times in my life where I would not have been able to pay even \$50 for an online course, so I'm really happy, and sometimes they write to me and thank me for making it available like that.

And then there's also people who are like, "Eh, well, I'll give it a try. Anyway, I don't have, so why not give it a try?" I prefer that. Like when people do that there's no buy-in, and they may not take it very seriously, and they don't bring high expectation and good energy into it. So that's the downside of offering it by gift.

I'm still experimenting, I guess you could say. There needs to be some kind of entrance ritual for people to take it seriously as a course.

Amber: Yeah, like, how you have people sign a form saying, "I will do this," even when they're not obligated to do it in any way, they're much more likely to do it. Yeah, just the ritual of it.

Charles: Right. Right.

[1:02:08]

Amber: So I'm taking your course, *Metaphysics and Mystery*, and I love that getting into the big stuff, you know, like, the things that literally used to keep me awake at night when I was a small child, and one of the things that you said in that is that "The individual is a holographic map of the universe unfolding."

Just like very big statement. What does that mean?

Charles: Hmm. The individual is a holographic map of the universe unfolding... I'm not sure.

Is the context that the **individual** is unfolding, or is the **universe** unfolding?

Amber: (*Amber laughs*) I think the universe. I mean, to me, this just feels like a larger extension of the story of interbeing.

Charles: Yes, yes.

So basically just the transformations, the evolution that we go through as individuals, mirror a cosmic process. They're not separate. Yeah, that's pretty abstract.

Amber: But it seems pretty important and helpful for me, too.

Charles: Yeah, how has that been helpful for you?

Amber: That I'm part of a bigger story; that my problems, and issues, and pains are not just my own, or, not just my fault, also. Yeah.

Charles: Yeah, one thing (I'm not sure if it's in that course or not, but I'm brewing a new book right now), and one of the things that's probably going to go in there is probably that every storyline needs to be told, and lived, for the next phase of human and cosmic evolution to begin. So we have to play out all of the dramas that the story of separation gives birth to, and that this marks a completion of a phase for humanity.

And on a, whatever, a galactic level, or something, here's this planet, Earth, that's gone through a particularly difficult storyline and made it through to the other side; and if that happens, a new chapter has opened up for cosmic evolution because — I say this in one of my books — no planet has ever gone this deep into separation and made it through.

Amber: (*Amber sighs heavily*) Um I just appreciate so much that you make things make sense to me; things that I've always thought about, that I've never delved into; things that I never knew other people thought about; things that I want to be thinking about and talking about; and I really appreciate that you just go there.

[1:05:19]

Amber: And I think I heard you say that you have a degree, but you didn't do extreme training in any of the things you talk about. You're just like a really intelligent person, who is willing to say, like, "Well, my life path is sitting down and writing books about these things and then talking to people about them, and pushing ideas forward."

Is that accurate that you've just been sort of self-motivated in all this?

Charles: Well, originally, I was motivated by an inquiry, a question, which is "Why are things so fucked up? What is the origin of the wrongness in the world?"

So there wasn't any obvious academic path to discovering that for me. I studied mathematics and philosophy which was where the answers were supposed to be found on the deepest level, and I didn't find them there, and then became really disenchanted with academic philosophy, in particular.

It wasn't like I had a conscious program of "okay, I'm going to gather all the knowledge that I can that is outside the walls of academia, but out there in the world somewhere." It was more of just a discontent, almost a rebelliousness, that I just couldn't go along with the program. It just was repugnant. Going to graduate school just was repugnant, like, I just can't make myself go through this bullshit anymore. So I uprooted myself. I lived in Taiwan for nine years, and just never put the question down, though.

When you hold a question long enough, it will always bear a result. The result may not be the answer to the question. In my case, it wasn't **only** the answer to the question; it was information that invalidated the question. That's often what happens. If you hold a question faithfully you'll eventually transcend the question. You'll realize that it wasn't the right question, and it maybe gets replaced by another question, or you have an experience that renders it irrelevant, but it's a powerful practice to hold a question.

Even, like, you don't even have to necessarily put it into words. If you don't put it into words, you might not call it a question. You might call it "quest", and holding it with fealty, with loyalty, it

exerts a tug on the universe. And then, to hold it without accepting the booby prizes that it will also attract, like, the false answers, you're like, "Yeah, that doesn't quite mean it."

For me, they have this question of like "what is the origin of the wrongness of the world?" and so one of the answers that was brought to me was, "Well, it's capitalism." Associated with that there's a whole Marxist worldview that explains everything. I engaged that for a while, but then I was like, "No, it doesn't really add up. There's, even if I go deeply into it, the question is still there. Maybe met in every rational and intellectual way, but not really met."

It's actually — the loyalty is to the discomfort. It's to allow the discomfort to operate on you. That's, yeah, I guess that's my intellectual practice.

Amber: And that's what keeps you from being on either extreme end of whatever conversation you're having. So thank you, Charles, for holding the questions, and waiting for the universe to feel the tug and tug back at you with some answers that you share with all of us.

[1:10:00]

Amber: You're at charleseisenstein.org. Is there anything else you want to tell the good people about?

Charles: Oh, no. You know, if people are resonant they can easily find me on the interwebs.

Amber: Yeah, many podcast interviews, including Oprah's. Books, I think there's six books. They're wonderful. Yeah, you're out there. Thank you.

Charles: Thank you, Amber, I really enjoyed this conversation.

Amber: Yeah, good. I know we went wide, but there's so much to talk about. Thank you.

Charles: Thanks.

—

[*Outro*]

[1:10:35]

Amber: Alright. Thank you, Charles, and thank you, everyone, for listening.

There's so much more that I want to talk about here at the end, and almost all of these subjects are things I've wanted to bring to the podcast before, and as I've said so many times, time is just so limited.

I cannot talk about everything that I would love to talk about on this show, but when it happens like this when things get brought up in conversation organically then it's the perfect excuse for me to spend some time recording an outro, and following up and flushing out some thoughts.

So I am going to talk about the idea that this very false narrative we have in our culture, especially around medicine, that we can “outsmart” nature, and the consequences of that thinking.

I’m going to talk about how important challenges to the immune system are, as Charles briefly mentioned, for developing true, robust, lifelong immunity; getting into the science and the ancient wisdom behind that.

And I’m going to talk about polarization, especially in the vaccine conversation in which I am so deeply embedded.

And finally, talk about praise, and talking to our children. You know you heard what Charles and I talked about in our conversation, so I’m just going to expand on that.

And through all of these subjects, I’m going to, of course, give further reading and resources which will all be in the show notes.

[1:12:19]

So, yeah, we have this idea. It’s been dominant for at least 100 years, getting stronger and stronger, especially around the invention of antibiotics, especially in medicine and science, that we can outsmart nature, and this is just verifiably untrue.

The human brain is not more intelligent than nature, which, another word for that would be “vital life force” or just “evolution”. Nature’s somewhat a problematic word because it implies we are separate from nature, and we’re not, but I’m probably going to use that word, and you’ll know what I mean.

So, antibiotics were hailed as the pinnacle of human achievement, right? Man triumphs over mean, old Mother Nature. There were pronouncements that we were going to completely eradicate infectious disease during the peak of the antibiotic — I don’t know what to call it — the beginning of the antibiotic age. We talk more about this in Episode 8 with Stephen Harrod Buhner, and you can also read his book *Herbal Antibiotics*. This just fascinates me so much. Like, infectious disease fascinates me, and the lens of modern medicine fascinates me, and like, true healing based on ancient, ancestral principles fascinates me, and immunity fascinates me. In fact, vaccines fascinate me, and antibiotics fascinate me.

So, as we all know, though, what those people making those triumphant pronouncements did not realize is that these antibiotics were going to push the bacteria to evolve, to outsmart the antibiotics that were trying to kill them. The word “antibiotic” literally means “against life”; anti-life, right? Bio, life. So, what evolution does is outmaneuvers the pressures and stressors thrown at an organism. That’s what life does. That’s what life is. That’s what the vital life force and the intelligence imbued in all things is and does, is it evolves. It outsmarts what is thrown at it. And so, of course that’s what happened, and like, it’s fine that it wasn’t foreseen, but we now know that it’s what’s happening.

Like many pharmaceutical companies that have just been trying to outsmart the antibiotics that are outsmarting their bacteria, the bacteria are outsmarting the antibiotics, and so now the pharmaceutical companies are trying to outsmart the bacteria that are outsmarting their

antibiotics. That's what I meant to say. They've just had to shelve their new, better antibiotics because they've realized it's just not gonna work. It's not gonna work. We can't outsmart nature.

Many, many, hundreds of thousands of people have died from antibiotic-resistant bacteria that have mutated into more virulent forms. So sure, of course, antibiotics have saved lives, **and** they've taken lives, and we have fucked with Mother Nature on a deep level, and it had consequences that we did not intend.

And so, the same thing is happening with vaccines. Vaccines are pushing some, maybe, all the pathogens that we have vaccines targeted towards to evolve. So, as far as I know, pertussis was the first to really be recognized to be widely mutating as a result of the vaccine. *Bordetella pertussis* is the scientific binomial for whooping cough pathogen, and it has mutated into *Bordetella parapertussis*. You can Google. Or, don't use Google. I don't use Google anymore. You can use Ecosia or another search engine that is not actively censoring natural health websites and news. So you can listen to the most recent episode with Dr. Kelly Brogan to hear more about that. But you can look for this paper, it's called, "Pertussis Resurgence: Waning Immunity and Pathogen Adaptation" or you can also search for "Pertussis, Dr. Cherry" because Dr. Cherry has published many studies on what's going on with pertussis, and it's evolving nature and how the DtaP vaccine does not prevent the spread in any way, and actually makes people more susceptible to it. The more DtaP doses they get.

Pneumococcal is evolving, and measles is evolving. So, for that you can search for the paper entitled, "Antigenic drift defines a new d-force subgenotype of measles virus," and that was published in the American Journal Society of Medical Virology. So, I'm not going to go into everything that is written in these papers. Again, you can look yourself, but suffice it to say that pathogens are mutating because that's what life does. That's what life does. You throw something at them, like an antibiotic or a vaccine, and the vital intelligence of nature goes, "Alright, how are we going to react? How are we going to adapt? How are we going to respond?"

[1:17:55]

So, I think about this and I talk about this because, you know, I mean the whole vaccine debate is so complex, so nuanced. I have said a thousand times that I am asking for just a rational, national conversation around this, and this is one piece that so often gets left out is the unintended consequences of, again, fucking with nature at this deep of a level.

So, yes, vaccines have saved lives. There have been times when a person got vaccinated; their temporary immunity had not come up; they came in contact with the pathogen they were vaccinated against, and they didn't get the full-blown infection because their body recognized it and was able to fight it off quickly. That has happened, and we are pushing these pathogens to mutate into more virulent forms, and we are shifting the disease burden within the population.

[1:18:58]

So it used to be that children got these infections, and they were generally mild, especially when there were no nutrient deficiencies. For almost every infectious disease we know of, there's at least one very important nutrient that if not present, fully in the system, will make the infection much worse and make death and complications much more likely. With measles, as most people know now, it's vitamin A.

So, generally, these are mild childhood illnesses. We now vaccinate against chickenpox. I had chickenpox as a kid. It sucked. I had an itchy rash. I remember my mom giving me an oatmeal bath. It felt like heaven, and then I got through it and it was fine. When my parents were kids, everyone got the measles, and it was fine, and then you have lifelong immunity to that illness afterward, and then you have a population of adults pretty much all of whom had these infections as children who are all immune. So they have true herd immunity. Then the infants coming in have immunity through mother's placenta and blood, for their first few years of life, and breastmilk, and then they would get the infections, such as measles, and then they'd be immune for life. So we're protecting the very young, and we're protecting the elderly, who, of course, have a harder time dealing with these infections, by having an adult population have true immunity.

[1:20:26]

And so it happens with vaccines because they are temporary is that almost every adult in America is unvaccinated, or, they've been vaccinated, but they are no longer immune. So, they're vaccinated, but they are not immune. So it's just, I mean, it's such cognitive dissonance in our culture when we talk about "Every child must be vaccinated to have herd immunity" but then we ignore the fact that almost every adult is walking around without vaccine-induced immunity, and without true immunity, because the vaccines wore off, and we never got the infections as children to give us true, lifelong immunity.

So we are putting young babies at risk, because there's no true herd immunity among the adults that they're hanging out with, and then, of course, the children that they're hanging out with could be shedding the live viruses if they've been recently vaccinated. And then, older adults are more at risk because there's no true herd immunity left. So we've shifted the disease burden within the population.

So those are just two of the ways that nature outsmarts the humans and the human mind. So now we have a situation where no adults have immunity at the same time as we are pushing the pathogens to mutate. So yes. There's been these benefits from vaccines and antibiotics, **and** there has been these very real risks that we just don't talk about enough.

So when we talk about risk vs. benefit analysis for vaccines, we're usually talking about for an individual child. You know, we need to do genetic testing and think about their epigenetic expression and their lifestyle, and which child is more likely to be injured from a vaccine and which are not, but we also need to have that risk-benefit conversation at a larger level, taking it into account all the things that I just talked about.

Okay, so there's that, and there's so much there. It's so complex and so nuanced, and these are just the things that I tend to think about, the things that I am aware of from my decade and a half of research and thinking about all of these topics that pertain to this.

[1:22:50]

Alright, let's talk about how important it is for the immune system to be challenged in childhood, especially. So this is something that Charles briefly mentioned when I asked about autoimmunity.

So there's two aspects I want to look at here:

1. The science around how important various childhood infections are for preventing later chronic illness in life.
2. And another is just this is a really ancient human idea. Parents, the world over, have always noticed that after their children get through an illness, they have some sort of developmental leap.

I've seen it in my girls time and time again, even after just the common cold, especially after anything that includes fever and just a lot of rest, they will have a new physical milestone, or just see their mental development, or their presence of mind, shift and reach a new level of consciousness. It's so beautiful to watch. I love it so much.

And what do we do in our culture? We try to shut down illness. We give the antibiotics right away, even when it's a virus, you guys, even when it's a virus, which the cold and flu are a virus. The doctors know antibiotics are ineffective because they work against bacteria, not viruses, but they will prescribe them anyway because the parents are asking, or because they know the parents need to feel like "I did something about this."

And then we give fever-reducers, Tylenol. We suppress symptoms. That is our approach to all illness and disease in our culture is just suppress the symptom. Don't worry about what's underneath it. Don't look for the lessons inherent in what this illness is bringing to you. Just squash it and move on. Drink your coffee. Watch your TV. Keep being productive. Keep consuming.

So it's just, this is something Rudolph Steiner wrote about really beautifully, the founder of Waldorf schools and biodynamic farming and anthroposophy — anthroposophy? Yeah, anthroposophy — Just, you know, how important it is to challenge the immune system when children are little. And he had even specific correlations: this disease will change this part of them. This disease will change that part of them.

I'm not sure how accurate that is, especially because our kids don't get those diseases anymore, so we can't observe that, but it's a beautiful idea that makes sense to me and that I've seen in my own kids many times.

[1:25:37]

So not only is this an old idea that countless parents can attest to, but the science really airs out the idea that when the immune system is able, is allowed, to process certain infections, especially in childhood, it is bolstered and strengthened for life and can better-deal with chronic disease throughout the rest of life.

So I'm gonna read to you some titles from a book called [Miller's Review of Critical Vaccine Studies: 400 Important Scientific Papers summarized for parents and researchers](#). It's by Neil Z. Miller with a foreword by Dr. Gary Goldman, and this is one of those books that was really pivotal for me. It was in my chiropractor's office, and I saw it there for years, and as I'm going to talk about soon with the polarization. There was like a decade at least where I was really open to both sides of the vaccine argument. I was super open to whatever the truth ended up being. So finally, I decide to buy this book and take it home, and it just, you know, it was a huge nudge towards where I stand now, which, I'm sure already know even if this is your first time listening to this podcast.

Okay, so, the — what I'm going to read to you is the title of, that sort of summarizes what the study says, and it's way too many studies, and it would be way too much for me to put this all in the show notes as a link, which is normally what I like to do. So if you want to follow up on these, you really just need to get this book in your hands. It's absolutely worth it.

These come from peer-reviewed scientific journals, and the name of the journals are in here, but they're abbreviated, and I don't know what they all mean. Otherwise, I would read them out along with every summary title, but I'm not gonna do that. Get the book if you want.

[1:27:42]

(Amber reads summary titles from Miller's Review of Critical Vaccine Studies)

- *Amongst infection, but not among vaccination, protects women against ovarian cancer. Women with prior infections of mumps, measles, rubella, or chickenpox are significantly less likely to develop ovarian cancer.*
- *Adults with previous infections of influenza, measles, mumps or chickenpox are less likely to develop malignant melanoma.*

And, in this case, there's two different studies that show the same thing, and that's the case with a lot of these summary titles I'm reading.

- *Infectious diseases, including chickenpox and influenza, significantly reduce the risk of developing a brain tumor.*
- *Wild chickenpox infections protect against brain tumors.*
- *Numerous studies confirm that acute infectious diseases protect against several types of cancer.*
- *Measles, and other childhood infections, protect against cancer of the lymph*
- *Lymph cancer is more likely in adults who are not infected with measles, mumps, or rubella during childhood.*
- *Hodgkin's disease is more likely in adults who are not infected with pertussis, measles, mumps, chickenpox, or influenza during childhood.*
- *Early exposure to infectious disease significantly reduces the risk of childhood leukemia.*

I mean, I'm skipping a lot of these, you guys. Like there's tons on the lymph cancer, tons on leukemia. I'm trying not to completely bore you, but just to give you an idea of the actual science that exists on this. So much about cancer. There's so, so much about cancer.

Okay, I'm gonna be done there. Check that book out.

So that's, again, when we're talking about the big picture, public health, this is just such an important piece that we just don't talk about. We don't want to talk about it. The whole point is conquering, killing infectious disease, triumphing over Mother Nature. Forget what that takes away from us in the process.

Okay, so, you can also learn a lot more about this in the book by Dr. Thomas Cowan called [Vaccines, Autoimmunity, and the Changing Nature of Childhood Illness](#), 'cause there it is: the

changing nature of childhood illness. Vaccines have changed the way illness expressed itself in the public. Less infectious disease? Sure. More chronic disease? Oh yeah.

[1:30:22]

So let's talk about the polarization, and Charles challenge to me in a way of what would it take to change your mind, and how much from the other side do you take in?

So, you know, I follow a lot of people who are aligned with me on the vaccine issue, on Instagram especially, and some of them are so harsh against people who vaccinate. It is such a turnoff to me. I do not feel that way at all. I completely understand why people vaccinate, given the information that we are given. I believe that all of us are making the decision that we believe is best for our child, which is like... I ain't gonna be mad at you if that's what you're doing, but some people, oh my God. Just the vitriol and the cruelty with which they talk about the other side, and of course, this is much worse from the "pro-vaxxers".

I truly hate the words pro-vax and anti-vax because they just deepen this polarization, but no matter where you stand in this argument, you've probably noticed that it is the kind of hate speech that isn't allowed anywhere else in polite society. You know, a lot of people are engaging in hate speech, but it's absolutely to talk to parents who have vaccine-injured children, or who are questioning vaccination, or asking for a rational, public conversation around the subject. It's totally fine to tell them that you hope their children die, that they're disgusting. I can't even believe the things people have said to me and that I've seen people say to other people.

When I did my first post on vaccines on Instagram, the comments were so insane, and I remember a "pro-vax" friend of mine (I have many of them) commenting, like, "Oh my gosh. I can't believe how much worse the rhetoric coming from the pro-vaxxers are. Is. I'm embarrassed to be aligned with this side." So not (Amber laughs), not trying to other-ize or further the polarization, just really pointing out that it's so extreme on the vaccine issue.

I just can't believe the things that people say. Like, every day on social media, I can't believe the cruelty I'm seeing from both sides, directed at each other, when really what everyone wants at the heart of this is children to be as safe and healthy as possible. So that's something that Charles writes about in the climate book.

So, on this issue, climate or any polarizing issue, let's look at the similar goals that people have, and the similar implicit underlying agreements. So I really appreciate that framework because I try to be, like, a voice of reason and compassion and nuance in the middle of the vaccine debate. Even though I feel very strongly on one side of it, I don't want to other-ize people and just create enemies. It's... it will never get us anywhere. Like, if you really care about moving forward on any subject that you're passionate about, making the other human beings on the other side of whatever of whatever issue it is your enemy does nothing to move the conversation forward.

[1:34:06]

So, (Amber sighs heavily), okay. So I try to be, you know, rational about it and be in the middle, and have compassion, but it's not always easy, and I'm definitely not saying that I've always been able to do that well.

So, Charles asked, “What would it take to change your mind?” And this is something I think about a lot in all sorts of subjects because I love changing my mind. I love proving myself wrong. This is like a challenge I started setting for myself years ago, especially speaking about things in public like I do (and this is years before I spoke about vaccines). I think it was herbalist, Jim McDonald, I read in a magazine once who said, if I am not consistently finding out that I was wrong about something, then, like, I’m being dishonest. And I just love that, and I’ve tried to go with that, and I hope that we can all do that, but it’s hard. It’s so hard.

So now we know that psychological pain registers in the brain similarly, or maybe it’s just the same as, physical pain. It is truly painful to have psychological pain, and being wrong is like, super psychologically painful for us. You know, I really wonder the nature vs. culture aspect of this, and I want to think maybe it’s because we’re so polarized that we just have to be right.

But then I think about, like, little kids, and they really don’t like being wrong a lot of the time. Different kids have different personalities and levels of this, but I knew one child who she just could not be wrong. She would literally be looking at a black piece of paper and be like, “No, it’s white. It’s white,” because she had already conjectured that earlier in the argument and was proved wrong and was just like “No. Nope. It is. It just is.” I mean, that’s a stupid example I was giving. That’s not actually what happened, but, like, there’s clearly something in the human that really does not like being wrong.

It’s very hard, and this is where cognitive dissonance comes in, where you are hit with a piece of information that, like, shatters what you believe and you have to, somehow, convince yourself that that piece of information is false, even if it’s like right in front of you and clear as day, and part of you knows it’s true.

[1:36:34]

And confirmation bias, also. This thing we do where anything we see that confirms what we already believe is what we pay attention to. We’re like, “See? See? It’s true.” And when information comes to us that contradicts what we believe, we just, like, block it out, or pretend it never happened, or just rationalize it away. So I just try to be really aware of those things in myself and like, I said earlier, there were about 10 years where I was really open to all sides of the vaccine debate. Even though I hadn’t vaccinated my oldest at that point, that was really based on instinct and some things I had read and some stories of other people; personal stories of their injury, their children’s injury.

But I was like, “Maybe I’m wrong. We’ll see what happens. We’ll see in time what the science figures out, and I’m totally open to vaccinating her if things change.” It’s not like I spent all ten of those years really researching it, not at all, actually, but I would read anything that would come across my way because I thought it was interesting.

Then when my second was born, ten years later, three years ago now, I started looking into it a little more. Both girls were born at home. It wasn’t, like, staring down at me: what are you going to do when the hospital staff comes at your baby with this needle?

So it’s really the legislation in the last year, 2019, here in California, that got me super-duper interested in this issue, and like, okay. I’m really gonna look at the science. I’m going to look at everything there is out there. I’m going to engage in arguments with people on Instagram. So

that's one way I try to keep open to arguments from the other side. Even though, at this point, absolutely nothing would change my mind. I have read enough science. I have heard enough stories. I know enough about the way the immune system. I know enough about the threat of new, unknown to us, mutated diseases coming through the population that I want myself and my children to have very robust immune systems to meet if that happens, that have not been altered by vaccines. I mean, I could go on, and, on, and on about the reasons why I am aligned where I am on this issue, but I do like to listen to what the other side is saying.

I do like to know, is there anything to it? Is there somewhere, somewhere kind of in the middle we can meet? What if we could truly make vaccines safe? What if we could really get the aluminum and the formaldehyde and the aborted fetal cells and the monkey kidney cells, what if we could get those out of there? What if we could get the preservatives out, if we could find different cultures to grow the antigens on, and if we could somehow do without the adjuvants altogether, then, like, sure, you know? Most "anti-vaxxers" feel the same way. It's not the antigens that are the problem. It's everything else, and it's of course, the insane childhood schedule that we're working on.

So, yeah, for me, it really is a practice to try and not exist solely in my own echo chamber. I think that's almost impossible if you're using social media in any way, which I definitely am. I try to stay open. I try to see where my own cognitive dissonance is coming in.

As I've said earlier, I have very many friends who have vaccinated their children. I actually don't know if any of them would identify (like, my in-real-life friends) as "pro-vaccine" because I think most of them really see the problems with vaccines and with the current schedule, but we all talk about this in person. For me, this isn't just an online argument. This really has consequences in my real life with plenty of friends with unvaccinated children, plenty of friends with vaccinated children, and plenty of friends somewhere in between: started vaccinating, saw the results, and stopped.

So I don't hate pro-vaxxers. None of my pro-vax friends hate me. It's so possible to hold differing ideas from other people and still love them and still be able to have a conversation where you still learn things and see the other person's perspective.

[1:41:10]

Okay. I think that's what I have to say about that.

So, let's talk about, too, the brief thing that got brought up in this conversation with Charles, which is around praise, and overpraising kids. If you're a parent, you've probably come across this idea, and, hopefully, some writings or podcasts on this, but if not [Alfie Kohn](#) has plenty of books, wonderful books on parenting. But the two that seem to most pertain to this are **Unconditional Parenting** and **Punish by Rewards**.

And then there's also Janet Lansbury. I think she has a podcast, too. So she really talks about the issues around too much praise. I'm also going to link to just a brief article ([Praise Not](#)), if you just want a few more paragraphs on this issue, maybe don't want to do a full podcast or book. I'll put this in the show notes, but it says children can become hooked on outside evaluation and praise and begin to doubt their own internal self-evaluation: Why should I do this? What's in it for me? What do I get if I don't do X, Y, or Z? Who's watching?

So those are all really valid, and what I meant in my conversation with Charles, and hopefully, it's somewhat clear, is not doing that. Rather, when there's a behavior I would like to change, instead of harping and getting really negative and putting a ton of attention on the negative behavior, when I see the positive side of that same behavior, that's what I give the attention to, and that's what I feed with gratitude. Maybe not so much praise, like, "Great job doing that!" but "Thank you! When you do that, it helps me do this, and it helps the whole family do this," and just explaining the consequences of when you do that, this is how it affects things; and doing things with love and with a smile. Same thing with the negative behaviors: when you do that, this is what happens without "you are bad" and without "you are good" when they do the good thing.

The idea behind unconditional parenting in that book is just you absolutely love that child no matter the behavior, no matter what they do, and so, that's what I meant too. I hold my child in love. That is the vibration of the home and the family and every interaction I have with them no matter what's going on.

[1:43:47]

I need to add one more thought to the piece on polarization and cognitive dissonance and being able to change our minds, and that is kind of comparing the climate change debate to the vaccine debate because they're different in one really fundamental way: which is that the climate debate has really become more of a thing recently.

Like, most of the people listening to this, when you were born, your parents didn't have a position on climate because it wasn't yet in the national discourse. Even if it had been written about in some papers, and there were some scientists that knew what was going on with carbon and everything changing in the atmosphere, it wasn't the national conversation it is now where everyone has an opinion and a side that they're on.

Most of us were born into a pro-vax family. I mean, that's also not a true statement because we didn't have the pro-vax/anti-vax false dichotomy going on in the public narrative back then, but we were born into a family and a culture where almost 100% of the people believed in vaccination and were vaccinating their kids. It's the default stance in our society.

So almost everyone who now gets labeled "pro-vax", I mean "anti-vax", at some point had to change their mind. At some point they went through the cognitive dissonance of like, "But wait, vaccines saved millions of lives. Vaccines changed the world. Vaccines are safe and effective." At some point, all of the pharmaceutically created slogans, all of the false science, the rewriting of history came crashing down on them, and they had to say, "Whoa. Is everything that I've ever heard and been told about this not true?"

A couple of months ago the Instagram account @EchoUnafraid posted. She posted just a perfect post that captures this thought process. So this is her own thought process when she really started to be open to information about vaccines as other than what she'd been told her entire life. So she wrote:

I want to know. I need to know. This is too much. I can't know. What if? What if it's true? No, they wouldn't lie to us. Surely, they are safe. Wouldn't it be illegal? The media would be all over this if it were true. But the CDC, the FDA, they look out for us. Gosh, this is too much. I don't want to know.

But my babies, my doctor. Trust my doctor. Surely, my doctor knows. "Safe and Effective." Phew! All these side effects are normal. All kids are this sick. I should read the science, the studies, but the science is contradicting what I'm being told. Ugh, I need to know.

Vaccine ingredients: these don't seem safe. Toxic on their own, but safe combined? I'm not sure I want to know. I don't want to lose friends, but I need to know. Maybe I can secretly know. No one has to know. What happens if I don't know? What if my kids are harmed? What if they are sick and no one can find the cause? What if they die in their sleep? This is happening all around me. Do I believe mothers? How do they know? Ugh, I need to know.

The manufacturers aren't liable? That can't be true. Get it together, self. Surely, they have to be safe. But if they make us healthy, why is everyone sick. Again, the media would be all over this. Gosh, this is too much. I don't know if I want to know. But, oh no. I think I know. It's so clear now. How is this real life? I'm glad I know my babies are safe, but so many others are not.

Knowing is hard. Is there a way to un-know? No.

Someone commented, "My exact thought process over the last six months."

Someone else: "Seriously, my thought process over the last ten months. So accurate. I started questioning after my two-month-old twins developed severe eczema after their two-month shot."

"Exactly. Goosebumps. I think this is how everyone feels. And think this is how almost everyone feels, and we all have these exact same thoughts when beginning our research."

"This is exactly where I'm at right now. This is how we are all feeling coming to this truth."

So anyway, my point is, there is a lot ... My point is that almost everyone who is questioning vaccines had to go through a dark night of the soul to get to that point. It's hard. It's hard to realize that there's so much more to what you're being told. It's hard to realize that you are actually actively being lied to by the government agencies that are supposed to protect you, but who are basically an extension to the pharmaceutical companies that they are so financially entwined with at this point. It's hard to realize that the media is just a spokesperson for the pharmaceutical companies and that they have their talking points literally handed to them.

It's hard, and no one wants to be on this side of things. Do you think I love speaking out about this and putting myself in danger? Do you think I love being talked to the way people talk to me online? No one (*Amber laughs*) has anything to gain by speaking out the way that I'm speaking out, except saving the lives of children.

So, I just had to add that to this whole piece on cognitive dissonance and being open to other information. Basically anyone who is called an anti-vaxxer right now was. Open to other information and that's how they came to be here, and they stepped outside of the narrative that was handed down to them.

(Amber sighs) Oh, man. It's hard to talk about this. I don't love it, and I am super appreciative to those of you who are still listening this far into my rambling, rambling. Okay, I'm going to be done, and thank you, again, so, so much for listening.

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

[Closing]

[1:50:26]

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

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

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

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

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

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