Episode 445: Understanding Consciousness, Ego and How to Reduce Suffering With Polymath Dr. Ted Achacoso
Child: Welcome to my Mommy’s podcast.

This episode is brought to you by Wellnesse, that’s Wellnesse with an “e” on the end- my new personal care product line of natural and good-for-you haircare, toothpaste, hand sanitizer and more. You’ve likely heard that much of what you put on your skin gets absorbed into your body, which is a good reason to avoid harmful products, but you can also use this to your advantage by putting beneficial things on your body! Realizing that many of my closest friends and even family members still used certain conventional personal care products even though they’d cleaned up many other parts of their diet and home, I set out to create alternatives that outperformed the existing conventional options, with no harmful ingredients, and thus Wellnesse was born. Our good-for-you haircare and mineral rich toothpaste nourish your body from the outside in while you nourish it from the inside out, for amazing hair and teeth. Check it out at Wellnesse.com.

This podcast is sponsored by Olipop natural sodas. They use functional ingredients that combine the benefits of prebiotics, plant fiber and botanicals to support your microbiome and benefit digestive health. 90% of Americans consume more than the USDA’s daily recommended added sugar intake (30g). In fact, many of us consume way more than that. Sweetened beverages (like soda) are the leading source of added sugars in the American diet. Olipop is much (much) lower in sugar than conventional sodas with only 2-5 grams of sugar from natural sources. No added sugar. For example, their Vintage Cola has just two grams of sugar as compared to a regular Coca-Cola which has 39g of sugar. Their Orange Squeeze has 5g of sugar compared to Orange Fanta which has 44g of sugar. All of their products are Non-GMO, Vegan, Paleo and Keto-friendly with less than 8g net carbs per can. We’ve worked out a special deal for Wellness Mama podcast listeners. Receive 15% off your purchase. I recommend trying their variety pack. This is a great way to try all of their delicious flavors. Go to drinkolipop.com/wellnessmama or use code WELLNESSMAMA at checkout to claim this deal. OLIPOP can also be found in over 5,000 stores across the country, including Kroger, Whole Foods, Sprouts, and Wegmans.

Katie: Hello, and welcome to the "Wellness Mama" podcast. I'm Katie from wellnessmama.com and wellnesse.com, my new personal care line. And this episode is all about understanding consciousness, ego, and how to reduce suffering. I'm here with polymath, Dr. Ted Achacoso. And make sure to tune in to part 2 of this as well, which will air next. And that one will go deep on the science of psychedelics, and I go deep on why I decided to take certain substances. And the reason I chose Dr. Ted for these episodes is that he is widely considered the world’s smartest doctor, having gotten his doctorate at 22 with many different fields of focus that he’s had over the years, everything from pharmacology, and toxicology, neurology, interventional neuroradiology, medical informatics, artificial intelligence, and much, much more. He is one of truly actually the smartest people in the world, having scored a 210 on the Stanford Binet IQ test, which is approximately 15 to 16 standard deviations above normal. So to put that in perspective, his IQ is literally one in a billion. And he’s using that to do good in this world in many different ways.

I’ve interviewed him before about his company that makes nootropics that have helped me focus tremendously. And I thought it was important to go deep in these episodes about topics he understands from both the medical and the meditative side, which is consciousness, ego, how to alleviate much of our own
suffering, and then as I mentioned in the next episode, about the science of psychedelics, which are in an emerging area of research and a lot of fascinating data on that. I know that you will learn a tremendous amount from this episode. I certainly did as well. Dr. Ted is always a pleasure to talk to. So, let's dive into episode 1. Dr. Ted, welcome back.

Dr. Ted: Thank you to my favorite wellness mama.

Katie: Well, it's such a pleasure always to speak with you. And I am especially excited today to have your help in talking through a topic that I feel like there's...well, several topics, but where there's a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding. And you come at this not just from the perspective of one of the smartest physicians in the world or often called, I believe, the smartest physician in the world, but also from many years of consciousness and meditative practice. And so I think you have two incredibly unique and very valuable frames of reference when it comes to these topics.

And I've heard you say before that we are in a time when upgrading the human consciousness is especially important. And I've said for a long time that I think moms are very much the frontline of any societal change, but especially here because we have the unique ability and privilege of directly interfacing with the next generation every day. And I think moms are incredibly powerful and forces of nature in so many ways. And so, it's an honor for me to get to talk to all these parents daily and to get to talk to you and to connect some information that I hope will help a lot of moms and a lot of the next generation as well.

So, we're gonna go a lot of different directions today. But to start broad, I wanna just start delving into the idea of consciousness because I feel like there's a lot of misunderstanding even on what that term means. And then beyond that, we'll go through a lot of different layers. So, start broad with us and explain some of the things we need to understand related to consciousness.

Dr. Ted: Sure. When you hear the word consciousness these days, right, it's very difficult to extract from a person exactly what it means. So what it usually means for a doctor, and that's why I call this the medical consciousness or the medical definition of consciousness, is...it's actually a negative definition. It says that which goes away when you're asleep, right, when you're in a dreamless sleep. Or that which goes away when you're under anesthesia. Right? So, it's a negative definition. It's what's not, right?

And if you take a look at, for example, when they're reading coma in the hospitals, there's a Glasgow Coma Scale, right? So that is what's called a...what I term a medical definition of consciousness. And the reason why it's very confusing is because we confuse it with philosophical definitions of consciousness, scientific definitions of consciousness. But let's call that the medical definition of consciousness so we don't get led astray, right? So, what are the elements of this medical definition of consciousness? And when you look at it really from just a physical standpoint, as doctors, we're able to identify it in the hospital.
For example, say you fainted, right. So you lost consciousness, right? And so, when you wake up, you are described as being awake, right? So, awake is the first component of consciousness. It's what's called interoceptive or the sensations of being woken up are coming in from inside your body, like waking up in the morning, right? There's nothing outside that's really waking you up. You wake up. And let's call that interoception portion of consciousness, and simply called, you know, it's waking up. And so the intern or the doctor will call you awake.

And then there is such a thing called...the next thing is exteroceptive, meaning you look around, and you're responding to stimuli. So, it's an exteroceptive form, right? And what do we call this in regular language? Is alert, right? You're alert. You're looking around, etc. And then what's the next thing that the doctor tells you? Do you know your name? Do you know where you are? Do you know what the date is, right? So that's oriented or orientation. That's already abstract because language, you know, is an abstract form. So, it's called the abstractive layer of consciousness. So you have the interoceptive, you're awake. You're exteroceptive, you're alert. And you're abstractive, which is you're oriented. So awake, alert, and oriented.

So very simple to remember what medical consciousness is. So, when someone talks about it, that's usually the way we think about it, right? But there are, you know, many spiritual definitions of consciousness, scientific definitions for consciousness. So, let's set medical consciousness aside. And now let's take a look at, you know, the scientific views on consciousness and scientific borders on philosophical because the philosophical part of it is really very simple. As you know, I really love to divide things into two things that I can just remember, right, even just to teach two things I remember.

One is to ask yourself a question. You know, is consciousness an inherent property of the universe? Like, meaning our atoms, you know, and their subatomic particles, etc., are they conscious? Right? So that's the panpsychic model of consciousness, right? It's everything conscious. So from the philosophy, it's an inherent property. And the other camp is the emergent property of consciousness. Right? So, this consciousness arise from the complexity of processing, and it arises from there. You don't have to take one camp or the other, right? These are the way we explain these things. So, why does this have so much bearing on us? Right? Is because right now, there's a huge $10-billion contest going on between two camps trying to prove which one is actually the correct one. If they're both incorrect, if it's something else, then at least we've shown the way, right.

So the first one is called the Global Workspace Theory. And this Global Workspace Theory says the following, right. There's a portion in your brain called the working memory. And it's usually in the frontal cortex, right here by your forehead, right, by the back of your forehead. And what happens there is that that's where you do all your planning. You know, if you have someone who plans all the time, it's basically an overactive prefrontal cortex. And it's said that anxious people actually have a very hyperactive prefrontal cortex. Basically, they plan all the time. They miss out on what's happening in the present. What is it that Lennon said? The Beatles or Lennon, right? "Life is what happens when you're making other plans." And the prefrontal cortex, that its function. It's actually the newest portion of your brain, right? So your capacity to plan and project for the future is actually new to us as an organism.
So, the Global Workspace Theory says that, you know, when the sensory inputs arrive, like what you see, what you hear, what you smell and taste, they arrive at the global workspace, right? So there's, like, working memory in there, and then they're going to be parcelled out, and remember the brain has different components, to the parts of the brain that's going to process it. And it says that consciousness arises as an emerging property...emerges from the computation, from the distribution, right, off the signal to the different components. So, that is an example of an emergent point of view, right? It's arising from the processing of the brain.

The other part is called the Integrated Information Theory, or IIT. Now, this is a little bit more difficult in terms of the philosophy, but basically, if you boil it down, it's more of a conscious and inherent property. Essentially, it says that, you know, you could put together, like, pieces of molecules, or pieces of matter, like that to make a thermostat, for example, and it will have some, some form of consciousness, right? Because it actually is able to process information out of those different components of that going. So, here, right, you don't necessarily have to be alive to do it. Right? You don't necessarily have to be alive to do it. And that's the fundamental difference here, is there's the emergent and inherent properties. And most of, of course, the spiritual world, etc., etc., think that the whole universe is conscious. So they're already coming from an inherent point of consciousness, an inherent point of view.

Now, there is something very important that I always really like to emphasize here. Is the concept out there that in order for something to be conscious, it needs to be alive. And that's where you can really get into trouble, right, because if you are from the panpsychist mode, it's like so is an atom alive, right? Is a subatomic particle alive? So, then you get into that particular trouble. But let's get into the definition now of biological life, right? So, biological life has a definition, and you can take a look at all the requirements out there of what it is to be biological be alive, right? And biological life actually means that you are physically close, meaning you have a boundary, but you're energetically open. You have to take your energy from the environment, right? So, like us, we eat. You know, in fact, but what we say is, the only reason why we move is we have to find something to eat. Right? So that's the whole concept behind that thing, is that you are basically physically close but energetically open.

And this, you know, to your listeners, Katie, should give you pause, right, why you should care only about yourself and not care about the environment. Look, the carbon dioxide that you breathe is converted to oxygen not only by the trees around you, 80% is actually converted by the phytoplankton in the oceans, right? So, these are the miniature plants in the oceans that actually convert your carbon dioxide to oxygen. So you could see, like, you know, we are focused on, for example, on just on ourselves, but we are really very open to the environment. And that's why, for example, I'm a big proponent of vitamin D, right, that's taken from sunlight, exposure to sunlight, grounding, etc., because you are not separate from it. You know, you should consider yourself as actually just an organism moving in an environment.

So, the question now becomes, and this is where much of the confusion arises, right, does consciousness only arise in living things? And therefore, you have to define what it is to be alive, right? And I actually...there is a
definition of what biological life is about, right? And you could see there's...we're already blurring this. And to add more to the confusion, there's a whole field out there, which your children will be actually be immersed in, it's called synthetic biology, right? Where they are actually creating life-forms from raw materials, right? So far, we haven't created a pure life form from synthetic materials, but we have been able to remove the DNA and replace it with an all-synthetic DNA. And just a few weeks ago, right, they showed that this version that they have can actually replicate, right? It can replicate regularly.

So, this will be the technology of your children's generation. I mean, we're gonna be left behind here, but this is rapidly developing, and so on. So, all the more, they will need to have clear definitions of what's life perhaps, we could erase it all together and put it all in the spectrum, right? Not one suddenly doesn't just become alive, just as one suddenly doesn't become as conscious, and that espousing, sort of, like, the inherent property, right? So, inherently, you add more and more proto-conscious elements into something, and the more it gets conscious, right?

So, that's a question that to ponder, is, you know, being alive to be conscious. To be medically conscious, yes, of course, because you have to be conscious within the context of life, right? So, remember that these have separate definition, so you could see now why there is such confusion, right? So, for me, it's easier to basically keep in mind that, well, okay, there is medical consciousness, which we talk about when we're talking about fainting, and accidents, and concussions, you know, and so on, and then there is the philosophical and scientific, you know, views of consciousness, which is they're inherent, a property of the universe.

You know, we don't know if they're just an inherent property of matter or is energy itself conscious, right? So, we don't know that. So we don't have any answers to this. But part of the beauty of equanimity is that you can rest in the uncertainty, right? Well, yeah, it's uncertain. And the other part is it's emergent. You know, as you process information, then there is this property that is called consciousness. So, that's now the scientific basis of that. And if you take a look now at, you know, when you move now towards... And these are very important because it's easier, for example, to teach these concepts if you...before, you have to, like, take a look at the sacred text and see what it means, right? But now you could actually correlate with science what's going on.

And one of the biggest discoveries, of course, and I presume that many of your listeners had it, is that the seat of the self or what they call the seat of the ego is now presumed to be known. Right? And here, I won't use the term ego, because ego is very value laden, right? We usually use it as one's inflated view of one's self-worth. And that's not exactly what I mean here. You know, what I mean here is a self-referential system. Anything that refers to yourself, right? I am Katie. I was born here. This is what I do. I have this number of kids. That is my husband, and so on and so forth.

So, that's a reference to yourself. Right? And that's the single most important concept, I think, here that we need to expound on because it's been very much misunderstood. Right? The self is different from consciousness. Okay? What I'd like to say here is the self is an appearance within consciousness. Okay.
So what do I mean by that? So let's look at it just from a physical point of view, right? So there are what's called neural correlates of the ego, right? They're neural correlates of what's called the default mode network of the brain. In other words, it's a network. The first thing I'd like to remove from the beliefs of your listeners is that the self or the ego, you know, is not a noun. It's a verb. In other words, it's a process that's continuously being created and destroyed the whole time. Right?

So, think of your true identity as, you know, Katie, right? And then, say you are an actress, and, you know, the self that you're really projecting out there, there are many, right, and these are the roles that you take when you're on stage, right? You may be Kate in "The Taming of the Shrew." You might be, you know, the queen in the "Queen of the Damned", you know, and so on. And so, these are roles. Essentially, the way you look at self or you look at ego as roles, right? You don't have to believe in them, but while you're acting, right, it's as if it's true, right? But the key part is not to forget that they're just playing the role, right? And that's very important.

Now, in scientific terms, the default mode network, the way I describe it is really very simple. If you, for example, imagine a series of lights, right, arranged in a circle. So, say one of those lights to represent your memory and the other light represents your emotion, right? The other light represents your planning ability. The other light represents your decision-making ability, right? So, say there are sub-networks of those and they're arranged in a circle, right. When your ego or your self comes up, you know, it lights up as if everything is going in a circle, right? It lights up as if everything is going in a circle. It's an illusion. That's why the self is called an illusion, right? The ego is an illusion, or the self is an illusion, is because it arises from the processing of the brain. Right?

So, right now I am Dr. Ted, the doctor who is, you know, trying to explain what the self is all about. And that draws on my memory, my emotions, you know, and everything else that's there. So, you see this as like going round and round. But when you quiet yourself down in meditation, right, when you try to meditate, say you quiet yourself down, you'll see this as just popping up as a memory, right, or as an emotion, or as a plan. There's really no thinker. There's really nothing that's integrating everything.

So the ego is the conductor. You know, it likes to integrate things. And it's there because during evolution, you needed it, right? You needed it to have what's called a sense of agency, meaning you are separate from others. You notice that your ego arises when you are butt against another, right? It's when you're butt against another person, especially, or your child, or essentially, when you are butt against a relationship, and not necessarily human, right? You're butt against your relationship with your job, your relationship with your house. "I have such a fucking small house, I want a bigger one." Right?

So you... I'm sorry, I swore. So you see that it's all about how it abuts on relationships, your relationship with your time. It's like, "I am not given enough time to finish this." You see how it actually... Basically, it's very protective, right? It's very protective. But at the same time, it also closes you, right? It closes to you and makes you think that that's the world. Right? It closes you, and so you think that that's the world.
But when you slow it down, and without even meditating, you could actually experience it yourself in the morning, right? When you wake up and you just opened your eyes, there’s a period of mild disorientation, right, because the self hasn’t crept up yet. Right? So you look out, and there’s just brightness, there’s this color, you know, and so on. And, you know, right before, "Holy fuck, I have to do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. I have to call this. I have to run..." da, da, da. And you see that it’s already formed, right? It’s right there. It’s like this is Katie, you know, in her Katie mode that has to be very efficient and do her time management and so on and so forth.

So, you see immediately there that essentially, it can be deconstructed, right? It can deconstructed from that. And so, what is the benefit of that? Right? You know, why am I big on meditation, for example, or why am I, you know...? And another topic that I’d like to touch on is, like, how can we use, for example, psychedelics, you know, in order to experience what I call selflessness? Other people call it egolessness, but let’s call it selflessness. Right?

So, what is the advantage of not having a self-referential system as you move about, right? It’s that the ego is the I, it’s like everything refers to you. So someone is getting angry, that’s you, right? Someone is getting slighted, like, "You, blah, blah, blah," you know, "you don’t know your face from your whatever." So, you know, someone’s screaming and yelling at you, you know, that’s the ego. That’s the self right there, right? But when you don’t have that, you see that these are just sounds with meaning, you know, being produced and arising from your consciousness, right, and arising from... Instead of using consciousness here, I call it awareness.

So, the ego or the self is what they call...it has self-awareness, right? So, it has what's called self-awareness. And the way you elicit self-awareness, if you really want it to be acute, is, you know, stare at someone else, you know, for longer than what is socially acceptable and you will get very self-conscious, right. And that’s intense self-awareness, right? People with stage fright, for example, have an intense, you know, fear of this self-awareness, like, how am I going to look at other people? And that’s an egoic function. That’s a self-referential function. Right?

And so what happens to you then? You’re suffering, right? You’re suffering all the time because there’s always something that’s always craving for something or resisting something at any given time. Like, "Oh, I don’t want that tea. It’s too hot." It’s like, you know, there’s always some something even in these minor things, right, that you begin to sense that there is always someone. When there is someone there, the ego is there, right? There is someone who is one thing, there’s someone who’s doing that, etc. It’s not bad, right, as long as you know, and as I will talk about later, you know, what can you do in order for you to observe your ego arise or for your self to arise? It’s like, "Oh, the self is arising." And that’s a beautiful skill to have to watch your ego arising.

It’s like, okay, oh, you know, there’s someone at the back of you that says, "Someone’s getting angry." And, you know, it’s you observing the ego arise, right? And before you even sputter out some angry words, you already saw, oh, the anger arose, and you already have examined it. It all takes three seconds, right. And you can actually...instead of reacting to a situation, you can respond. So the self-referential system is really a
source of so much suffering. In fact, I think it's the core of the suffering of human beings, right? It's the core of suffering human beings.

People ask me, you know, what, you know...I ask people, you know, "What do you want?" And they say, "I want to be happier." And define what is happiness, right? If you don't have a definition of happiness, you can't be happy. And, you know, there's a definition of happiness that's fulfilled by material goods. There's a definition of happiness that's fulfilled by internal peace. But, for me, happiness for me is a minimally perturbed bubble, right? So here you are... It's sort of like a dynamic sense of equanimity, right? And that's the whole point of this, is that, for you to be able to see that there is a self there that is suffering all the time.

Like, you know, even if you're waiting in line and you're getting impatient, who is getting impatient, right? Who is? Let's say the ego is like, you know, you're waiting in line and you're sort of, like, so impatient about the whole thing, and you are having all these thoughts racing your head. And what's the bad thing about that? The thoughts consume you. It becomes you, right? Everything that you think and you feel is all you.

And the example that I like about this is, as was given by Sam Harris, like, for example, you meet a friend of yours, right? You meet a friend of yours, and the person says, "Man, Katie, I can't that you did that to me." And suddenly, you go, "What? What the hell did I do to you?" You are already consumed by that. There's no more. So, the entire role engulfs here, right? So, the entire ego becomes you. There's no more space that says, "You know, there is something, there's an identity inside me that this person is responding to," right?

So on the other side of it is actually quite interesting. First, the science of the DMN or default mode network was actually discovered by accident, right? They thought that when the mind idle or when the brain is idle, they would not be seeing any blood flow, you know, everything will be quiet. But they saw that when the brain is idle, there's actually a lot of blood flow to the centers of the default mode network.

Now, opposite to the default mode network is what's called the task-positive network, right, or the TPN, the task-positive network. It has several components, but I'll keep it simple here. As I said, I like dividing things into two. So the task-positive network is the one that, you know, externally oriented. So for example, when you are engrossed in a game, right, you get lost in it, or you're actually baking, or you're doing some activity that you love, right?

My mother was a tailor, and she would, like, get engrossed in the pattern making and sewing, and, you know, time, would fly by and she wouldn't even notice it. You know, I used to do a lot of minimally invasive neurosurgeries. And, you know, what I thought was only a 45-minute procedure was actually a 4-hour procedure. That is when your task-positive network, which is right in the periphery, here on the sides of the brain, not at the center...the DMN, or default mode network, is a center to me, that which refers to yourself, right? These ones are the ones that are outwardly aware, right? So, when you're having a flow activity, your task-positive network is very active. So then, you know, if you want to have a good balance, then you must have a good balance between the activity of default mode network and your task-positive network.
Now, and this is very important, most depressed people, they find that the default mode network is very active, right, because of all of these self-reverberating circuits, like, "Oh, I'm this, and I'm this, and I'm this," and it's just going on and on and on inside. And you can see, you know, a heavy activity of the default mode network coming in. And this will assume, you know, relevance when I talk about psychedelics later on. So, when you're looking at, you know, a flow activity and so on and so forth, now you could see that this actually very much related to the emergence of the ego and to that self-referential system, and of course, to the task-positive network. In fact, there are groups that say that consciousness perhaps just arises from the delicate balancing between the default mode network and the task-positive network, right? So, there are groups that are saying that now, that it's just doing that balance.

So, what's interesting about the default mode network when we're looking at it this way, since this is the seat of the self, right, is that when you are totally self-absorbed...and this is interesting, in 2013, there was a study where people were actually allowed to stay with their thoughts or give themself an electric shock. And these are sort of 40 minutes. And, you know, majority of the experiment participants, humans actually, voted to electrocute themselves rather than be alone with their thoughts. And that's a sad indictment for us humans, right? It's like we cannot be alone with our thoughts. And that's because we get... The ego likes to identify with your thoughts. We think that our thoughts are everything, right? It's like, that's you. Your thought or your emotion is everything. Remember that in memory and coding in the brain, usually, memory is encoded both with the information and with emotion with it. Right?

And so, when you think of something...you know, say, you had an argument with your spouse, you know. Instead of setting it down, you know, last night when the argument was done, you're still continuing with the argument now that your spouse is already out of the house, etc. You're still arguing with your spouse in your head. What does that do to you? Right? And that's basically our default mode network, just churning things over and over. And what does it do to you really in the basic sense of things? It just really makes you suffer. Right? So, that's the awareness of the ego or the self, right? It's a self-awareness.

Now, let me introduce a term here, what I call meta-awareness, right? So we don't have to deal with consciousness. Meta-awareness is when...there are techniques on teaching meditation when they try to teach you how to form witness, something that's a non-judgmental witness to all of your thoughts, emotions, and all of that, right? And there are many apps that would teach that and so on. But I call that instead of pure awareness, some call it pure awareness, some call it pure consciousness, let's just call it meta-awareness. So, we don't stray far, right?

So there is self-awareness from the ego and then there's the meta-awareness, that which can be aware of your ego, that can be aware of your self-referential system. And it takes a while to develop this non-judgmental awareness of your ego rising, right, especially, because there are, you know, different ways of being able to develop it. There is, of course...we'll take meditation first. You know, I've been meditating since high school, right? And they're essentially...division by two, right? There are two types of meditation. There is concentrative types of meditation, and there is contemplative types of meditation. Right?
So, one teaches you how to concentrate, and one teaches you how to get inside. But the whole point of it, really, is for you to be able to be still and accept the moment for what it is, right? For example, and an extreme example that I would think about is that you look at something and you get extremely agitated and angry at what's going on. There is that part of you that's aware of the anger arising. Right? There's the part of you that anger arising. In fact, before I discuss the meditation portion of concentrative and contemplative, I would just like to inform your listeners, Katie, that, you know, little bit before, this was in, I think, '88, he performed an experiment on, you know, how much free will do you have? So, essentially, he was asking the volunteers to say exactly when...to mark exactly the time when they decided to reach for a glass of water, right. So they can decide whenever they wanted to. And he found that there's about a 250-second readiness potential, right, before the person was even aware, right, that he wanted to reach for the glass, right?

Recent computation show that that's actually about seven seconds, right? The Italian group says that seven seconds. So, our reality here, as presented to us, is actually about seven seconds late, right? We're seven seconds late. We're just used to the lag, right? So, our reality is about seven seconds late. And what I'd like to say here and what's the importance of realizing this...my computation, by the way, in 1992 of this lag, I did the studies before, and my studies were buried, you know, elsewhere, it said, 2 pi seconds, you know, more close to seven seconds.

So what can you do? Right? So what can meditation do? Is to bring you to that level, the readiness potential level, where these are simply arising? Remember, these are subconscious, right? These are subconscious things that simply arise. And then it's presented to your conscious. So before it... What's the big source of suffering when your entire self, right, is your reality? It's like that Katie who is, you know, absolutely concerned that this, this isn't working and so on. And there's nothing else, right? There's no space around observing the Katie. And that's when they say you're asleep, right. You're asleep because you're basically being carried by your thoughts where your thoughts are. Thank you, and enlightenment, you know, or waking up is realizing that the thoughts are just occurring in your conscious, so your awareness, right?

So, let's take a look at how concentrative meditation might help, right? Concentrative is when, you know, this focus on your breath, right? You can focus on your breath. You focus on sound, right, or you focus on mandala or an image, you know, and you could see this can be taught. And they allow you what's called a one-pointedness. It allows you to focus, right? It allows us to focus and just be totally aware of one thing, right? Now, just be totally aware of one thing in everything. Like, for example, when you're aware of your breath, you're told that, you know, focus on your breath. Don't lean on it. You know, don't anticipate it. You know, merely receive the breath, right? You merely receive the breath, meaning you have to relax into feeling, you know, this process. And you focus so you feel everything about it, right? And there's nothing in you that's resisting the breath or holding the breath.

And many students of meditation sort of, like, hold their breath, and so on and so forth. And this is your ego trying to exert control right, over, the whole process, rather than just relaxing and see that this is a natural process that can occur any more than you can control the heartbeat. Right? So those are concentrative. And,
you know, there is unifocal, where they just focus on the breath. And then there's a choice, it's where you basically flip from one to the other. And here's another important concept to know, is attention, right? So, the key element here is attention. And remember that attention also arises from your awareness, right?

So, whereas before, Katie, we even thought that attention is like a spotlight, right? We do a spotlight on what we wanna do. Recent findings actually show that what happens when you focus attention on something is that all the other areas in the brain that are not going to participate sort of, like, dim themselves down. And the one that is focused on attention...this is just, you know, less than a year old. The finding's just less than a year old. So we still have the spotlight model of attention, but rather, this is more like a filter model of attention now. And, you know, that's coming from the brain, and even attention arises, right?

So, you could feel that attention also arise, whereas the ego would say, "Well, attention is my tool. I will focus my attention." You know, "I am the one thinking.. I am the one doing this." But the whole point of this is for you to train the mind to say, "Okay..." Being able to focus on the breath without thinking about anything is, is an ordeal for many people," right? Even just for a minute. In fact, I challenged my patients before, you know, they would come to me, and I go, you know, "Dr. Ted, I wanna be happy." I said, "Do you want to be happy?" Play the happiness game with me." Okay? I said, "Starting now..." I will find you. I said, "Starting from now, until when you say it's over," I said, "tell me when a thought would occur to you." So, I said, "The longer that you don't have any thoughts intruding," I said, "the more happy you are."

Remember the study that they did, Katie, where via an app, they were surveying people and their happiness and how much thinking they were doing. And the people who were doing too much thinking were actually the most unhappy. And the funny part of it is that some of them who were surveyed, like, were thinking about something else while having sex. And it's like, "Seriously?" But there was a good chunk of people who were thinking about something else while having sex. So, can you imagine that, not being able to stay in the moment of what you're doing. Right? It's just an example of what it is. And then there's what's called, you know, choiceless. You know, you basically allow your attention to go where it wants to go.

So that's concentrative type. And the contemplative types, you know, are the ones that are usually taught in monasteries, right? You got Dzogchen, Bon, you know, stuff where... You know, this is where I'm trained at in terms of the contemplative modes in... From high school, I was in that concentrative thought. But the contemplative modes give you a different sense, right? It allows you to... If there is a... Like, for example, with a practice called Dzogchen, right, that D-Z-O-G-C-H-E-N, right? You know, it's becoming more popular now. Before, you know, when I was in my 30s, no one would actually know this, and this was what I was trained on. And what basically it does is, there's actually a teacher who points out, you know, the true nature of consciousness or, you know, what's the true nature of consciousness, and so on? But now we can point it out. The way I do with my pointing out, you know, is I do it through neuroscientific methods, right? You have default mode network, you have a task-positive network, you have a meta-awareness, and so on. And really, one of the most important skills that you can have is to watch yourself arise, to watch the ego arise at every moment, right?
When you're working on a document at home, you're typing up something, or when you are, you know, folding clothes or doing laundry, etc., look, your ego doesn't ever need to play a role there. Instead of saying, you know, "Why the hell did she stain this clothing and blah, blah, blah?" It's like, really, you know, it's already happened. It's already there. It's like, that's the moment where you are, and being able to recognize that, that that's causing your suffering, you're already, you know...the recognition of the fact that there is that part of you that's just aware of, like, "Oh, you know, there's this part of me that's actually getting irritated. There's part of me that's..." you know.

Or see when you catch yourself thinking about, say, you broke up with someone, for parents here with teenagers, right, with their first love and so on and so forth, they think it's the end of the world because, you know, "My life is shattered," etc., etc. And that's what romantic love is. Actually, it's a very contracting feeling, right? It's because it's programmed by evolution for survival in the production. It's built in there. It's very biochemical. Of course, we built up a lot of stories around it, right, stories, and stories, and stories. But inside, really, you know, we have just this biological tribe. But being able to recognize all of these thoughts, like, for example, in post-traumatic stress disorders, right?

And I'm going to segue now on what is being done in the psychedelic world, right? Now, let's start with one that is actually a non-common psychedelic, it's called ketamine. And, you know, I've seen or I've met therapists who have done this. And, you know, for example, for rape victims, right? It's very hard, it's very hard to...or for battered wives, or, you know, for people who've been physically abused, and so on. It's very, very difficult to go into therapy because when you talk about it, you have to relive the entire situation, right? You have to relive the entire story. Together with all the emotion that said memory, you know, stored with both the information and the emotion.

Now, what ketamine can do is keep a dissociation. And what it does is actually it dampens down your default mode network. In other words, it can do what's called the DMN reset. So, it's very short, right? It's very short. It can reset your DMN and can give you relief, right, from the depression that's resulting from your post-traumatic disorder. Right? So, that's one. So, ketamine is a dissociative anesthetic, right? It's used as an anesthetic for horses. It was used extensively during the war for surgery of the soldiers, right, because it doesn't have to be refrigerated, it's very stable, and so on. So, you could see ketamine clinics popping up all over, right? And so, ketamine is basically unusual in that, basically, it inhibits the inhibitor.

So, meaning, instead of inhibiting something, it makes something go, and it makes your task-positive network go, meaning, it doesn't make you focus on your self. It dissociates you from your self and gives you that, you know, activity of the task-positive network. Now, what's the significance of that, really? And the significance of that is, as we get through the different psychedelics, you could see that most psychedelics are actually doing the same thing, which is they actually try to dampen down the activity or default mode network. Remember, when your brain's not doing anything, it's gonna think about a lot of stupid things.

So, parents usually ask me, you know, "My kids are bored." I said, "There's a difference between just being bored or bored with something," right? So just being bored is different than bored with something. Right? So,
usually, it's just they're bored with some repetitive task. And what you need to do is give them another one that's stimulating, they'll get bored with it. Of course, their attention will flip from one to the other. Right? That's just an aside, you know, because parents usually ask me that question. And you have to identify whether or not it's a generalized feeling of boredom, which is a different case altogether, from just being bored for doing a particular thing.

So, all of these that I'm talking about now, which are being investigated, right? So, for example, ketamine has just been approved as an antidepressant, as I said before. You know, when your default mode network is hyperactive or hyperproactive, it says, "Oh, my God, I'm no good. I'm bored." You know, it's like, "I'm such a poor spouse. I can't even do this." And la, la, la. Essentially, what it does is that it decreases the blood flow to default mode network and it quiets it down, right? And as you see there, the ego dissolves, right? And there's a thing called the k-hole. It's like, you know, where you totally disappear into the k-hole. You know, and it's some experience because if you are used to having a strong ego, you'll actually fight the disappearance of the ego, right? It's just like when you have a hard time yielding to anesthesia, right? It's the same process.

So, when you take a look now at, for example, the MDMA, which is the other one that's being investigated, right? MDMA is actually now... when you're dealing with acute depression or treatment...sorry, when you're dealing with treatment-resistant depression, right, you can give...ketamine is now approved in the form of esketamine, right? It's a spray. And it's extremely expensive. So, it's extremely expensive, but it's very effective for treatment-resistant depression, right? And for a PTSD, right, so what's on Phase 3 trials now, therefore, for PTSD, like, for example, if you're a rape victim, or you fought in the war, or, you know, even a sudden breakup, like a loss of a loved one, etc., where a single book or a picture can trigger all of these memories that are very painful to you. You know, and if you really can't take it, it's actually part of our what's called the post-traumatic stress, right? So, like, a sudden accident, you lost someone, and so on. So, what they do now is this very low-dose MDMA.

For those of you there, you know, the street name is ecstasy, right? But please, the ecstasy that you find...there are, you know, 30 forms of ecstasy. This is, like, medical grade of ecstasy for research purposes. And they found out that having a therapist give you, like, two to three sessions of MDMA-assisted psychotherapy, you know, they have a very high success rate, anywhere from 60% to 80%, you know, cure of post-traumatic stress disorder. I'd like to say it this way, you know, if you're a rape victim, then what happens is that you're able to talk to your psychiatrist or to your psychotherapist, you know, about the information of the rape without the emotion of the rape. And so you're able to cut that, too. And it has very high success rate in keeping that permanent. So, whenever you tell your story, it now doesn't induce all those emotions. And usually, that is enough for the person to be able to move on, right, because he's not burdened with all of those state changes in the body that go on when the emotions are there or are flashing back, and so on.

So, there is, of course, you know, a large body of research now on psilocybin or mushrooms, right, the magic mushrooms. And psilocybin actually does the same thing, right? If you take a look at the scan of, say, an fMRI scan of someone on a full dose of mushrooms, what you see is that the default mode network is very quiet. And then the task-positive network that is normally quiet now has a lot of communicating networks. Normally, those are prohibited by your ego. Those are prohibited by the self. Like, "Hey, you know, pay attention,
because I am the conductor here. You cannot do that." Right? So, this is why people who take it say they get more creative, etc. But the other thing that they experience also is a loss of the self, right, a loss of the ego.

And so, when you come from a journey, for example, a mushroom journey, people usually experience, you know, more creativity. And losing your default mode network or the self, where it's me against the world, makes you feel more connected to everyone else, right? And you can tell people have experienced psychedelics, etc. They just don't talk about me and everyone else. They say, "What about the other species in the planet, and what about the planet itself? How do we take care of Earth? How do we take care of this?" It's like, so, you now have an expanded consciousness, which means you're not just dealing with what you need, and what your family needs, and what the society needs. You take a look at what everyone else needs, including what the planet needs, right? And that's an effect of...you know, when you hear, like, spiritual sayings, like, you know, the whole root of suffering is from us, you know, being separate from the universe, etc., well, there's your neuroscientific basis for it, right? And, you know, you could... Now, this is being investigated for a lot of things, for depression, for drug addiction, and so on.

And, of course, there are traditional, like Ayahuasca, for example. Ayahuasca is one of the sacred brews, right, in Peru. And it's composed of essentially two elements, what's called the monoamine oxidase inhibitors, something that inhibits your liver from degrading the molecule, and, of course, the plant that delivers the medical treatment molecule. And it's a long journey, right. And if you go to Peru to experience it, it comes with a lot of the cultural...I call them baggage, but that's not a nice word. All that cultural feels, you know, that come with it, right?

And from my experience with it, and there's a reason why I created my own version since I'm also trained in pharmacology, is that I found the experience very difficult in a sense that, you know, the inhibitor that they use for me was not the traditional one. You know, I found it a very difficult experience because I kept on vomiting, right? And I said, "I could probably make this into a drug-like formula." So, I actually found a drug that is a reversible inhibitor. And then, you know, in a country, not the United States, was able to, you know, get some crystals and actually titrate the dose so that, you know, like, I could get on...like, for example, if, you know, I'm a new user, then this is only how much you could take, and so on.

It's more like making it... A lot of people are mad at me because I'm taking away the naturalness, you know, the ceremony and so on. But for me, also, if you want this to get accepted, I want to know what's going in my body? Right? I want to know exactly what's going on in my body, how safe it is. What is the tolerable levels? And so on and so forth. So, I'd rather, you know... So, I created this therapy-certified Ayahuasca after pharmahuasca. Anyway, what's interesting here for your listeners is that you will hear something like a receptor called 5-HT2A, right? And the 5-HT2A receptor is in the family of the serotonin receptors, right? Serotonin receptors are...serotons, you know, is responsible for mood, right?

And if you heard about Prozac, I think all of you are old enough to have heard of Prozac, one of the first selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, right? So, it prevents serotonin from being destroyed by the enzymes of the body. And it was used for the treatment of depression. Right? So, what happens when you're...except
for ketamine, right? You know, essentially, and except for ketamine and MDMA. So, you take a look at, for example, psilocybin LSD, DMT, dimethyltryptamine for my Ayahuasca, these are what's called the classic psychedelics, right, meaning they act on 5-HT2A receptor of the cell. And the 5-HT2A receptor is a serotonin receptor.

This episode is brought to you by Wellnesse, that’s Wellnesse with an “e” on the end- my new personal care product line of natural and good-for-you haircare, toothpaste, hand sanitizer and more. You’ve likely heard that much of what you put on your skin gets absorbed into your body, which is a good reason to avoid harmful products, but you can also use this to your advantage by putting beneficial things on your body! Realizing that many of my closest friends and even family members still used certain conventional personal care products even though they’d cleaned up many other parts of their diet and home, I set out to create alternatives that outperformed the existing conventional options, with no harmful ingredients, and thus Wellnesse was born. Our good-for-you haircare and mineral rich toothpaste nourish your body from the outside in while you nourish it from the inside out, for amazing hair and teeth. Check it out at Wellnesse.com.

This podcast is sponsored by Olipop natural sodas. They use functional ingredients that combine the benefits of prebiotics, plant fiber and botanicals to support your microbiome and benefit digestive health. 90% of Americans consume more than the USDA's daily recommended added sugar intake (30g). In fact, many of us consume way more than that. Sweetened beverages (like soda) are the leading source of added sugars in the American diet. Olipop is much (much) lower in sugar than conventional sodas with only 2-5 grams of sugar from natural sources. No added sugar. For example, their Vintage Cola has just two grams of sugar as compared to a regular Coca-Cola which has 39g of sugar. Their Orange Squeeze has 5g of sugar compared to Orange Fanta which has 44g of sugar. All of their products are Non-GMO, Vegan, Paleo and Keto-friendly with less than 8g net carbs per can. We’ve worked out a special deal for Wellness Mama podcast listeners. Receive 15% off your purchase. I recommend trying their variety pack. This is a great way to try all of their delicious flavors. Go to drinkolipop.com/wellnessmama or use code WELLNESSMAMA at checkout to claim this deal. OLIPOP can also be found in over 5,000 stores across the country, including Kroger, Whole Foods, Sprouts, and Wegmans.

So, what’s the value of this in examining awareness or examining consciousness? And Stan Grof, who is a researcher here, you know, one of the gods essentially, off in the field, said that, you know, psychedelics are like, you know, a telescope is to astronomy, you know, and a microscope is to biology. So psychedelics is to the mind. So, your psychedelics are either your telescope or your microscope to the mind and to examine what's going on.

But the major action that, you know, you would experience if on a full dose, or what was called the tripping dose, or a full dose, or a journey dose, for those who don't like the word trip, on a journey dose, you know, is essentially the dissolution of the self. Right? But what is not good about it, in a sense, is that it replaces the contents of your consciousness with something really fantastic, or if you're having a bad trip, a phantasmagoria. Right? Or they don't use bad trip now. They call them challenging trips because you learn something from them. But the way I look at this, Katie, is really very simple.
When you go to the gym, right, you go to the gym, you work out, right? You work out. And, you know, for those bodybuilders, they would take, like, anabolic steroids, right? And for me, psychedelics… So, meditation is like a mental gym. Right? It's like a mental gym. And, you know, psychedelics are like your anabolic steroids for your mental gym. You know, you don't take them that often. Right? But you would like to experience what it is to be selfless. And once you have experienced that, you can bring it back to your meditation practice and say, "Okay, that was the experience of selflessness." Right? That's the experience of selflessness.

So that's the… You know, I don't have a recommendation one way or the other, but the way, if you're going to take LSD or magic mushrooms, which is very common these days, or mushrooms, or DMT, right, if you're going to take this, go beyond, like, get blasted into the stratosphere. You know why? Because when you stay, when you're too afraid and stay underneath where you get blasted out, you are going to work through all of your shit. Like, all of the emotion, etc., is going to be painful. So, I'd like you to experience once at least just being free of those, right? There will be a time and place to work for that shit, or you can go through your therapist to work through that. But to experience that kind of selflessness, right, even just once in your life. This is just me personally, I think, you know, in any one lifetime, it would be a regret, you know, if I didn't take at least one journey, even with a mushroom.

Now, Katie, so I consider this like, yeah, they're the anabolic steroids of the mental gym. So, you guys, you know, you have to have a mental gym, too. You know, you're always thinking about your body, but what about your mind? Right? You know, you have to have all this mental fitness stuff, right? Are you playing video games with your kids? You know, those are very good, you know, for spatial orientation, developing of new circuits in your brain, etc., etc.

But the major skill that you get from meditation, really, is to be able to witness the thoughts and emotions arise before they could even catch you fully, right? Because when you see something and you get immediately angry, that's suffering. Man, you're immediately screaming. It's like, "Holy f---, I just screamed," right? But the mere fact that, you know, at the beginning, when you're able to catch it off and you already screamed and you catch yourself, the recognition is already winning the game. You already won part of the game. And if you do little bits of that the whole day, can you imagine, this becomes longer and longer. Just the recognition is enough, right? They say recognition is enough.

But of course, you must realize that you're suffering. For example, I like to say that I am not the person who likes, you know, tidal waves of joy and deep whirlpools of emotion. I don't like those. I mean, those are roller coasters. Some people like those. Well, yeah, but for me, no. Gentle lilies are me. Yeah, I don't do, you know... It's like, you get caught up in this and they become your total world, right? And the usual image that they project is that, you know, all of these emotions and thoughts, etc., they are waves in the ocean, right? And you are actually the water underneath. So, you can just observe these waves just rise back and forth, right, then that is essentially what you want to do.
In Dzogchen, we look at it as, you know, the sky. The sky is always beautiful despite the clouds that are in there because the clouds are your thoughts, emotions. They change as this come and go. You know, you don't have to latch on to them. Right? Because they're not you, right? It's like, "I can't believe he said that about me." "I can't believe he unfriended me," right? And we're not being nice in social media, too, because that actually encourages a lot of egoic rewards, right? And that's where you actually need to be the more meditative and see that. As you can see, I'm absent in social media. You know.

And now, Katie, what's nice is that there are microdosing regimens for those who are actually afraid, right? You know, people ask me about this, you know, what about microdosing etc.? Microdosing, you know, doesn't give you the high or give you anything. It just gives you a certain level of awareness. Right? In fact, one of my projects right now, my secret project in my company, is can I create an enlightenment troche, something that you could shove up your upper cheek and gum, and, you know, for at least eight hours, you're able to observe your ego arise, you know, and you can work without a self or without an ego in there, just, you know, everything. Because it's possible to live without a self-integrating everything, right? And when it does arise, you know, you are very well aware that it has a reason, right?

So, in microdosing, essentially, it gives you at least a taste of what it is to be, for lack of a better word, dissociated, at least mildly dissociated, meaning there is a buffer or a sense of separateness. You know, in fact, microdose LSD, for example, in the experience that I had, is more like, what I say is, I feel matrixy today. You know, like being in the matrix. It's like you are aware. It's like there's a certain awareness that you are in the matrix, right? And it's usually one-tenth of the tripping dose, you know, as Fadiman has suggested. So, if 100 micrograms is the tripping dose, then 10 micrograms is the dose. And you take it, you know, basically, three days apart, say, Monday and Thursday, you know. And you don't take it in successive days.

And, you know, for so many years now, it's been the rage all over, Silicon Valley, programmers, etc. But what is interesting, and there's the danger in it, is that there are now people who actually take CEOs and so on on microdose. They give them microdoses. And they go for a walk in the forest, and they talk about, "So how can I increase my company profits?" It's like, "Shall I use child labor? And shall I pollute the earth a little bit more," and so on and so forth? And that's the danger when your ego has not been blown or you have not experienced at least it disappearing completely, right, right before your eyes is integrating.

And people, for example, on Ayahuasca journeys, who have a very strong sense of self can have a very, very difficult time, you know, relinquishing that sense. And that's why I said, you know, it would be nice for you to microdose if you have already experienced what it is to have your ego blown. And then you could see this, right? You could reap the benefits of that. For psilocybin, you know, it's, like, 2 to 3 grams is, like, the tripping dose, right? And they were recommending, like, anywhere from 200 to 300 milligrams. So, again, this is the same scheduling. So these are not recommendations, by the way. These are all over the internet. You can search them. You know, they're there, and they're not coming from me.

But then these are like... You know, you experience that sense of...at least when you're working, you experience a sense of connectedness with what you're doing, right, and you're able to...for me, especially, I'm
able to catch quickly what the other person's motivation is, right, because sometimes... See the thing that gets us into a lot of trouble, Katie, is assumption. We're assuming something about something else. Remember that saying, "Don't assume, it makes an ass of you and me." And although it's a very common saying, we don't really internalize. It's like, we're assuming something, but actually, we're assuming wrong, right? And it's like, "Oh, no, that's not what he really meant." Right? And we've already, you know, spewed our anger. We've already criticized. We've already, you know, whatever, given the punishment and so on.

So, that's what these microdoses at least, you know, do. For many, they use this as a creativity boost, right? And for some, people that I know, they actually have stopped taking antidepressants. This is not an advice. I know I'm a doctor, but it's not an advice. But, you know, they were able to wean themselves out of it within consultation, of course, with their psychotherapist. Now, remember that psychedelic-assisted therapy, you know, is...you can go on training, for example, with MAPS, the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, that started by Rick Doblin, for example, you know, to be able to know how to do these things.

Before you engage in anything like this, you know, talk to someone who's knowledgeable or someone who's done it. And, you know, if you really want to do it, do your research and then get a sitter. A sitter is someone who is going to take you through the journey, preferably someone who has had the journey himself several times, right, and knows what to expect. And, for example, at Hopkins, the clinic of Roland Griffiths, right, they're doing a lot of studies on mushrooms. And they rank these experiences as one of the top five experiences of their lives, right? But they are very... You know, these guys are very non-obtrusive. Like, they will hold your hand etc., but they will not intrude into your journey. And this is for the full dose. Right?

So you can see that all of these psychedelics are now...you know, as I said, MDMA is on Phase 3 studies, ketamine has already been approved for treatment-resistant depression. So we have...psilocybin is coming up next. And then DMT is now...you know, there are preliminary studies on addiction, for example, and so on. There are others, like ibogaine, which is, you know, what's called the overnight treatment for cocaine addiction. And they have had...if you few search for Ibogaine on the web, you could see, you know, these parents, for example, there's this documentary of this father, essentially, very angry at why we're not popularizing this more because his daughter ran away at 13, right, you know, and got addicted to cocaine and sold her body on the streets. And on rehab, she relapsed times, until he found out about ibogaine, you know, went to clinic in Mexico, and just, you know, one overnight, medically supervised session and then came back with continuing psychotherapy with a psychiatrist and, you know, got over relapsing cocaine addiction.

So, there are a lot of this. And I am sorry that what has happened to the United States is that, you know, during the Nixon administration, and even before that, you know, people were actually fearing, you know. It's sort of like, we swept all of these things under the rug, you know, as having no medical value or no use whatsoever, but it is actually very funny. Like, for example, we put marijuana CHC as a Schedule 1, and then put cocaine Schedule 2. So you could see how messed up that is. I wanted to say another word, but I forgot how family-oriented this is. So, you could see that. And you could see that many of the studies have actually been done despite all of these restrictions, and why is this, Katie? You know, why do this? Because we are running out of things to give, right? You know, there are many, many clinical studies that were done, for example, already on LSD before, which were just all swept under the rug, right?
So, we have all of this data before, what I call, the prohibition, all this scheduling and so on. And what is sad, is, all of you guys, you know, who were born in the '80s and who were growing up as kids, you know, and seeing this TV ad, "This is your brain on drugs," and, you know, and then they smash egg and so on. It's like, you know, that's brainwashing. So, that is what they call social-cultural programming, right? You were programmed that way. So, it's very hard. I mean, even for some professional athletes or actors that I deal with, right, in my clinical practice, you know, they have this fear, even if they know that this is like...it has been put in there by the television programming, by culture, etc., they're still afraid to touch it. Right? They're afraid to go into it. And it's really quite interesting that they pass this fear on to their kids. Right? And that was a lot of really great propaganda for the government, you know. It had nothing to do with the scientific merit of things.

Now, if you now go to around the world, right, you could see that all of these substances have been used for thousands of years, you know. The Shamans, those cultures with Shamans, for example, they use this to...it is normal for them to know that there are other dimensions. Like, for example, when you're on Ayahuasca, right, what comes to you when you come back is that you come back with, like, there are other dimensions out there that you can't see, right? And these are dimensions that the Shamans see, you know, when they're on Ayahuasca. You know, you see that there the origin story of Santa Claus, right, on Amanita muscaria, and the mushroom with polka-dot cap, you know. And you could see stories around the world that uses...even in the Eleusinian Mysteries in Greece, right, we don't know what Nasalma is, but these are all psychedelic. So psychedelics has played a long role. In fact, Terence McKenna introduced what's called the stoned ape theory, right, of language, where, you know, you eat this mushroom and, like, you know, suddenly is able to produce these sounds and make all these connections and so on.

So we don't know. But for me, it's like, why don't we use this as microscope or a telescope, if you will, to our means? Because, you know, as Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." And if you really pay attention, Katie, you know, all of your experience, remember that...I say experiencing, right, because I think experience is not personal but it's something that's continuous. It's like a self. I call it selfing, right? You're selfing all the time. You're producing a self all the time, right? You're selfing all the time, you're experiencing all the time. That which tries to cling on to experience or wants to have experience, that's the ego, right? Rather than having the experience itself arise.

So that's the clinging, right? I want this experience. I don't want that experience. I want this experience. I don't want that experience. That's the ego or the self right there. Right? That's why meditation teaches you to just let your thoughts arise and emotions arise, etc., and not be caught by them. And when you're meditating, you know, the name of the game is to know when you've been captured by thought. And I say this, the game is, you know, don't allow yourself to be hijacked by your thoughts and emotions as they arise, right, or if you're hijacked by them, immediate recognition that you've been hijacked, you know, you've already won the game. Next. You know, next round.
Because it's impossible not to have any thought or emotion, right? But being able to watch them arise without any judgment, right, you know, is the name of the game for me in that suffering, right? Because once you become identified with that thought, then suddenly you're feeling this, you know, "I need to make this thing happen." You know, you have all of your plans and so on. Because that's what they say always in, you know... It's, like, why the mind can never be in the present, right? It's always, like, what's gonna happen in the future? This is what happened in the past. It's always in those two places that it goes. It never stays in a present moment. And what meditation or, you know, psychedelics teaches you is, you know, there is a place to stay at the present moment.

And, you know, judicious use of these molecules, you know, can allow you to feel selflessness, right, and, you know, bolster it with your meditation practice. And the thing that people misconstrue about meditation is that it's something that's formal and that you sit down and do it. No, that's a form of meditation that you do, you know, you sit, right? Your life should be a meditation in itself. Like, each and every moment that you do, there is that meta-awareness that's just there that's just experiencing everything for what it is, right? Oh, there is the pain. There's a this. There is a that, right? See, the suffering is the story that we create out of it. Right? It's like, there's this pain, right? It's like, "Why the f--- did I...?" You put the chair in there, now I hit my shin. That's the pain. Because there's a story that's created out of it. And we're very good at that.

I mean, now, you know, Katie, why when I tell people that I actually...you know what, I'm allergic to when people ask me, like, what's your story? I have no story. I'm allergic to stories because they're the cause of so much pain, right? But it is the way we learn. It's the way we teach, is to create the stories. And, you know, so be careful of the meanings that you put in. Just be careful that it's just a meaning, right? It's a meaning that's there, right? And you have to be able to separate the syntax from the semantics, right, and the semantics from the semiotics, and semiotics as far as the context of the meaning, right, because the meaning changes according to its context. So, these are very important things to look at.

Now, as you probably have deduced, you know, I have had these experiences, both the full doses and the microdoses, as they call them. And I would like to ask you about what your experience is and with what molecules?

Katie: Well, I'll say you have an incredible ability to know the questions I was going to ask you and answer them without me asking. I love how you basically gave a scientific explanation for some quotes that I love about how we suffer more in imagination than reality and how you shouldn't believe everything you think, or the often misattributed one that all of man's problems stem from his inability to sit quietly in a room alone. And how there's actually...we'd really rather shock ourselves.

So, for me, what I discovered in my own journey of this is, I did have sexual trauma. I was raped in high school. And so, I identify very much with some of these things you've mentioned in studies. And for a very long time, I think my ego did a great job of keeping me safe, but it also kept me from working through a lot of things because it didn't feel safe. And I had certainly attached a lot of meaning and had trouble in traditional talk therapy, talking through some of those things. And this, I believe, was also very much connected to what
ended up being thyroid disease to having an inability to lose weight. My body didn't feel safe doing that because it was protecting me.

If you're enjoying these interviews, would you please take two minutes to leave a rating or review on iTunes for me? Doing this helps more people to find the podcast, which means even more moms and families could benefit from the information. I really appreciate your time, and thanks as always for listening.