

## How to Reclaim Feminine Divine Power – Kelly Brogan, M.D. – #1017

Dave Asprey:

You are listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey. Today's episode is with a second time guest on the show whose name is Dr. Kelly Brogan. Kelly came on episode 635 and we talked about depression and how that works. She's a holistic women's health psychiatrist and really thinks very differently about depression than you might think. She's board certified in psychiatry, psychosomatic medicine and integrative holistic medicine, and it's a very, very interesting character. So we could talk about depression, but that would be boring. Kelly, what do you think we should talk about today?

Kelly Brogan, M.D.:

Let's see, pole dancing.

Dave:

All right. If you're not following Kelly on Instagram or on social media, was it Kelly Brogan or Kelly.Brogan or what do you go by?

Kelly:

Oh, my handle, it's Kelly Brogan MD.

Dave:

Yeah, Kelly Brogan MD. I knew there was something on there. You've been stirring up a lot of shit lately.

Kelly:

That's what I do.

Dave:

Let's talk about the masculine and the feminine. What do you think?

Kelly:

Yeah. Well, I got to the point where I recognized that it was not going to come from the outside in through relationships and after I ended my second marriage, I got down to the business of healing that inner polarity, and it took me to some pretty interesting places. Not like I am healed. It's a journey. It's unending, probably. But yeah, so I've become really interested in polarity dynamics, and you can call it whatever you want, yin yang, dom sub, penetrative, receptive. But it's the ways in which we imagine there are irreconcilable forces that come together in complementarity to create something larger than the parts.

Dave:

I make it a practice when something doesn't work out the way that I expect to just go in and say, all right, how do we deconstruct it? How do we figure this out? It sounds like you went through something similar. That's good. You're a psychiatrist. I would hope that you would do that. What did you believe about polarity before you went through this recent upgrade? And you've been very upfront on Instagram about this, but what was your position on the masculine and the feminine before you had this recent change?

Kelly:

I think it was more about the role that a man would play in my life. I imagined that it was a partner's job to make me feel safe, and there are all sorts of polarity teachings out there that would validate that and support that perspective. And so I found all of those. I said, you see, it's your job. And of course, when we don't have that inner safety cultivated, we choose partners by virtue of the fact that we're not safe with ourself. Our compass is askew, if you will, and we end up choosing partners who are going to invite us into the process of finding that safety within. So after my breakup, I began the process of, I mean it's like the worst news. All we want to hear as women is that there are good men out there who are going to show up fully baked, and they're going to know exactly how to hold space and be that strong, confident unflappable presence.

And the uncomfortable and convenient and frankly annoying truth is that until and if that inner masculine is cultivated and matured is the language I like, there's no way I could even discern who that is. And all I would ever choose is a trauma bond relationship. All I would ever choose is the familiar field of my abusive upbringing, so to speak. And so the process of coming into honestly the very mundane small ways that I can access safety in my nervous system, in my body on a daily basis, whether it's literally as I'm talking to you, being just a little bit aware of the air coming in my nostrils, my back against the chair, my foot on the ground, and just taking a quick glance once in a while around the room to orient to the here and now. I mean these simple practices are the bedrock of what I have come to really explore as my responsibility to offer myself the container is the word I like to use for every single experience I choose to enter into.

And I think, okay, well, would my man, this fictitious man, would he put me in this situation? Would he send me to dinner with that person? Would he set me up with this interview with you? And so I'm always living through self husbandry. So I'm becoming in many ways the husband to myself that I would like because I'm assessing conditions, I'm seeing if my needs can be met. So a phrase that I like to use is buying eggs from the hardware store. That was the big epiphany for me was to see, wow, all of human suffering stems from the intention to source the impossible from a place that is not offering it, whether that's health from the allopathic medical system, whether it is the meeting of basic emotional needs from a partner who is not wired to deliver on that promise. But we do this, we get in these kinks where we just want it to be different.

And in the past couple of years, so many in the activism community have been stomping their feet, insisting that the government be different, that systems be different when of course that is needing something outside of yourself to change so that you can feel okay, so that you can feel safe.

Dave:

We all know that complaining always changes other people's behavior.

Kelly:

Right. Exactly. But it's sed addictive. You get into this habit of victim consciousness and then you collect people around you who fetishize it with you. So you're colluding constantly recruiting that support against the enemy, and it becomes this obsessive erotic caress of the enemy where you're so fixated on that which you say you hate needing it to do different, needing it to change. And this becomes really the dynamic in so many dysfunctional relationships where you stay and you stay and you stay when the evidence was probably there from week two that your basic needs were, there was a conflict around your basic needs. And that's called incompatibility. And of course, we are attracted in polarity to these incompatible folks for very complex psychospiritual reasons. And I believe that we get to a point in life where we can choose with sober eyes or we can choose and say, "Okay, what you have to offer is what I

need and vice versa, and let's just experience and enjoy each other." I don't know. I'll let you know. I have some experience in that realm.

Dave:

We have this idea in the West that if you feel romantic attraction and you feel passion and desire for someone, that means they're a good partner. And if you go say to India or somewhere, it's actually a good partner is someone whose family is aligned. They come from a good family, they have the right aspects, and then people who know you better than yourself, they match it up and you're like, hey, there you go. There's an arranged marriage. How would you go about teaching a western young adult who's looking at these longer term relationships, whether it's a marriage or just cohabitating, whatever you want to call it. How do they sort out the drunken passion? Oh my God, this is the best thing ever from a good partner because we are all taught the passions of how you pick a partner, but it's not. How do you as a psychiatrist tell young people whether they're men or women, it may be different. How do you tell them here's how to know if it's compatible versus if it just looks really juicy?

Kelly:

Right. So I really like the Imago framework, which basically speaks to the fact that we are attracted specifically to partners who hold positive and negative qualities of our primary caregivers. So if I have a dad that's super punctual and a mom who used to beat me, then I might find myself with a partner who's super punctual and slaps me around or whatever. And the more erotic tension that you have with this partner, the better a match you are. And so you become almost foils for one another. And this kind of erotic energy, which I have personally experienced, it's like a lightning bolt to your life. The first awareness you have of this person. And I would say if there is any counsel I could give, it's the lightning bolt is it's a particular path. I don't believe that there's such a thing as mistakes, but it's a particular path that is rife with struggle and suffering.

And there is no possibility that you can achieve intimacy with that person unless both of you are willing to change, guided by the sensitivities of the partner. So if I am super, super sensitive to the fact that my partner is always flirting with other women around and just it tears my heart up open, then his willingness to honor my sensitivity and to evolve that behavior would mean that he would need to meet the need another way. So he would evolve his own self integration by meeting my need. Now, that willingness to change in that way for another person outside of the realm of appeasement has to come from a place of seeing like, wow, this is a teacher for me in this lifetime. This person is a guru and I'm going to use them as a sentinel for my own evolution. That Imago framework, there are ways that you move through conflict together like it's a whole thing.

I haven't honestly seen it in real life, although I'm sure it exists where people can be incompatible and transform that into very specific maturation. But for the most part, like you said, there is a sober self-possession that can accompany the early interactions with somebody so that you can feel literally in your body, you can start to feel the beginnings of those no's. So the beginnings of, I don't like that or that didn't work for me. And you can almost keep a list. You can keep your little red flag list so that as you're focused on all of the incredible traits that this person has, you're in what psychologists call the mixed object of the thought process of holding all of their qualities and perceiving all of their qualities without focusing simply on the ones that fit a narrative of projection and idealization, which of course on the other end comes to bite you. And the signs are resentment and disappointment.

So when you start to feel resentment and disappointment, it's because you have needs that are not being met, you haven't expressed them, and/or your partner literally can't meet them. So I mean, how

many couples do you know who live in a realm of disappointment and resentment as their baseline? Romantically? It's very common.

Dave:

It seems like it's more than half.

Kelly:

Yeah.

Dave:

Is that what you see in your practice?

Kelly:

Yeah, in even life. I can count on one hand how many healthy erotic partnerships I have exposure to on a daily basis.

Dave:

I definitely know the friends I have who have achieved that because you can see it when they look at each other, it's painfully obvious. And there are a lot of people where there's something that's not right, but they don't know what it is. And I thought you've been posting such interesting and differentiated stuff lately. I'm like, we need to catch up on this topic. You said a couple things so far that caught my interest. You said that if there was that strong erotic tension, it sounded like you said strong erotic tension means that you won't be able to evolve because there's such a strong connection there. Did I hear that wrong?

Kelly:

It's just a symptom. It's a symptom. There's a teacher called Robert Augustus's Masters, and he introduced me to a phrase early in my process called the eroticized wound, which is the tendency that many of us have to be attracted to the qualities that have actually hurt us the most in childhood. So how is it that I could fall for a very passionate emotional man because I had very volatile parents and that actually could be hot to me versus a very stoic saved man who's probably a way better fit for me temperamentally. And because of my emotional needs, I wouldn't choose that because I would say, oh, that's boring.

So before we have integrated and met these parts that we're projecting onto our partners, we often find boring that which would be a healthy match. And so we are specifically attracted to that which is going to bring to the surface these wounds. And that's why these relationships save for Frank abuse are in extraordinary crucibles for change and evolution. I mean, the ways that everyone can see it. I have a public platform, and the ways that I've grown in the past and change in the past eight years have been largely because of the challenges that I experienced in and through my relationship.

Dave:

There's this old joke, I actually met the guy who made it from Boston Consulting Group, and it's called The Crazy Hot Matrix. Do you know the one I'm talking about?

Kelly:

No.

Dave:

It's a famous trope, but it basically is this four quadrants that says the crazier your partner is the hotter they are. And it was one about how would you ever find a wife because there's no solution to this. And what that is was a management consultant's view of what you just described, which is that, oh my God, this is the hottest thing ever, but I know it's probably not good for me, but I'm just going to have to do it anyway. Because same reason you had to eat all of the Ben and Jerry's and the same reason you followed the other meat operating system, things that your body made you do kicking and screaming, but it felt really good. And so you're saying if that's there, that might actually be a red flag.

Kelly:

Well-

Dave:

And you might want to play with it.

Kelly:

Yeah, exactly. Can you consciously play with it? Because if you followed, I'm a huge David Deida fan, and if you followed his work, then you know how he talks about the dark side and how essential it is for men and women to be in contact with what society would call the dark side. So the messy, gross, violent, aggressive, predatory teeth gnashing, hair pulling, fluids spraying, that's like what-

Dave:

[inaudible 00:15:40] good heart date. I gotcha. Okay.

Kelly:

Right? And so he says that if a woman and a man are not in touch with their respective dark sides, they will seek it elsewhere. They will seek that level of stimulation elsewhere. So some crazy is a wonderful alchemical tool because otherwise that's why people sit and watch Fox News and all of the... or CNN and the ticker tape of all of the horrors that have occurred because if we have an attraction too, this part of ourselves that we don't have an intimate relationship too. So I call it wearing your villain crown. And it's a practice that I've gotten into in the past couple of years where every time somebody criticizes me for something and it hurts. It hurts because there's part of me that agrees with it. So if somebody says, you're a narcissistic attention seeking slut, not that anyone's ever said that to me.

Dave:

But if they did, wouldn't that be a little bit sexy? I mean, just a little bit.

Kelly:

Right. And can I try it on and see? Oh, what if I am? What if they're right? Because then I'll meet the part of me that agrees with them. And it may be that I try something on and it just doesn't do anything. It doesn't matter here or there. And that's probably because there isn't a part of me that's holding that secret belief. So the ways in which I can hold myself when others see me as bad and wrong is how I grow the fortitude to develop intimacy with the parts of myself. I would otherwise be ashamed of the

inclinations. I mean, that's what BDSM is, the whole kink world is attraction to that which is taboo. This is a huge domain of human sexuality to simply acknowledge that there are things we are not supposed to be because we were enculturated around good girl and good boy, and we hid all of these, and it's different for a lot of us, but there's some archetypal elements.

We hid all of these other dimensions that would have garnered rejection or abandonment or punishment. And so how do you bring those out and hold them so you recognize that you're this circus, you have all of these different parts. And I will tell you, it's become clear to me that one of the major reasons I went into psychiatry is because I have a huge crazy part of me. And the crazy part of me is probably still afraid that I could lose it and get locked up forever. So look at what I did. I created an entire professional sanction where I never had to interact with that part because if I'm on this side of the desk, I'm the not crazy one. Obviously I'm the not crazy one, but how am I actually the crazy one afraid of those who are more potentially wildly expressed? So when you get into this practice, obviously it's called shadow work.

As you get through the first couple of experiences of it becomes funny. Yeah. Oh yeah, I do that. I do that too. Yeah. I'm also that. And these hidden motives that we have for why am I even showing up on this podcast to talk to you? Is it to help the people? Is it to gain your approval? Is it to grow my career and my exposure? It's a good practice for me to have a degree of inquiry into that because otherwise... Huh?

Dave:

Do you know the answer?

Kelly:

Yeah. I mean, I think on the surface as an activist and as somebody who is very identified with spreading the good word, I have signed up to basically say yes to most people who ask me to speak on their platform just so that I can reach more people. But the truth is that there are some people that I make more time for and it has to do with their power. And so I like to be in the field of people I experience as powerful, whatever that means to me on a given day. And then it's also, there's also a part of me that's like, wow, you still want to talk to me. Because I have experienced so much marginalization for many different topics that I've chosen to express myself on, there are... I mean, I can't even get a book deal anymore. Literally, I was at million dollar advanced New York Times bestseller, and I literally cannot get a book deal. So I was in my angry activist mode years ago.

I probably started 10, 15 years ago and ran my mouth about the CDC and pharma and all these things. Published a book with an exploding pill on the cover. That was very 2014 to let's say 2017. And then I really was bored of that as you get. It's like, no daddy, no mommy. Stop doing that. And everybody got the point and I published a bunch of papers. And then I thought, wow, you know what a fun game is? To play in their sandbox. And that's when I started publishing all these papers. So I published a bunch of case studies, a case series, and then I even published an IRB randomized placebo control trial on my program, Vital Mind Reset for Depression. And I was like, this is fun. It was a sport for me playing the game with them, so to speak. And then when everything went down in 2020, I was one of the first people to run my mouth about germ theory and the beliefs that I had come to around infection and contagion and that I didn't think this was about what we are being told it was about.

And that got picked up and I got sucked right back into that angry activist mode. Let me tell the people the truth, and if they don't hear it from me, they might perish. Whatever it is that my responsibility to care take the masses, which is something I talk a lot about in the shadow of activism is this idea that people can't help themselves or save themselves without my good word or whatever. So then I spent a

lot of 2020 in that space and it put me on the disinformation dozen list, but I wasn't even that vocal about because I was much more interested in, honestly, I started doing deeper shadow work at that point. I started to see, okay, so I feel there's a totalitarian takeover happening. I don't like that. And so I'm judging that. So if I'm in a practice of investigating and interrogating myself for that, which I judge, then how in my life was I acting like a totalitarian dictator who knows better than other people what's best for them?

And I surveyed my life and I made a lot of changes from little things like telling my kids to clean their room all the way to the way I ran my business. And I rerecorded all the videos in my program from a different energy. So I was really focused on this is a spiritual war, and the way out is not demanding that they change. So what is the way out? So I really was not even super interested in debating a lot about the interventions and mandates. Somehow I still ended up on that list, and I think it's probably because somebody really liked the way my lipstick looked or something. It was so random. So whether it was that, and then I brought a whole another wave upon myself when I started to post my body on the interwebs, which I had never done, meaning in bikinis, dancing or whatever. It's my chicken. And it was a witch hunt. And so there are a lot of-

Dave:

Wait, hold on. I must have missed up. So you actually danced in a bikini on Instagram. It's shocking. But what happened? Why did people complain about that? It seems like that's what you do on Instagram, you can wear a bikini.

Kelly:

Well, you don't do that if you're a doctor. You do that if you are a dancer, you do that. If you're Mama Gina. You do that if you are somebody that for whom that is their lane. But socio culturally, we have a lot of trouble when people try to ride different lanes. Then it was my own inner shame and my own inner judgment that was being reflected back to me because it was several months of, it was really difficult. The criticism that I'm harming people, that I'm damaging people, that I am supporting the porn industry and dance is one of my passions. And it's so joyful to me to learn or make up a choreography, put on a cute outfit and pick a song and create the video and whatever. The whole thing was a creative expression for me, but I also knew that it was desecrating my sexuality and that people were way more comfortable when I just talked about health and whether or not how many servings of this to have and how bad gluten is and just stick to what I was doing.

And I think it's because change, literally change. And I don't know if you've experienced this or even if it's different for men and women, but that we have coupled change with admitting that you were bad and wrong before. And that's not necessarily true. I was somebody who prescribed psychotropics to pregnant and breastfeeding women. That was my specialty. If I see that woman as bad and wrong, then I'm rejecting a part of myself that I'm then going to judge on the outside instead. So I am still that woman and I'm also many other kinds of women, and I have changed. And it doesn't mean that I was wrong before because the experience, even somatically of being wrong and bad is so intense for most of us that we would rather just stay the same and be really right about all of the ways that we are living our life.

And ultimately, that keeps us stuck in a victim realm where we end up being right about how wrong do we are, because the things we don't like about our life, our relationships, our illnesses become our victim stories. Oh, I'm so wronged in all of these ways, but at least I am right about it. At least I'm on the side of right. And that's a small comfort relative to the pleasure and exhilaration really of changing your story. But I recognize how people don't want us to change. They don't want us to change. They want us

to stay consistent because change itself is threatening. It's like a threatening concept. And if we all embrace change, then we're all constantly having to recalibrate around other people's trajectories. And we have to see other people as separate on their own journey, having their own experience and really let people live their own damn lives, which is something that we're not really that accustomed to. I can't tell you how many women feel that they need to tell me how to live my life.

Dave:

Is it just women?

Kelly:

It's mostly women. And that's why I came to this conclusion. I was like, wow, the world would enter a dimension of healing that is so transformational. If women would just stop offering unsolicited criticism, feedback, and advice to other women, period. Let's just do that and see what happens, including our daughters, because I have two daughters, I made a commitment a long time ago never to tell them negative things about themselves that they didn't ask me for. So literally, if my daughter goes out in booty shorts and I'm like, oh my God, I don't say a damn word because I am committed to allowing her to organize herself around her own preferences, her own sensibility, and ultimately what works for her.

And to insinuate that she should change because of something that would make me more comfortable is of course, the wound that we come from in our experiences as children, that our parents know better for us, that government knows better for us, that our doctor knows better for us than we possibly could for ourselves. And so if we just stop doing that, because that's what so much of social media is, it's like, let me tell you how you should be doing you. But if we stop doing that, then we have to sit with our own discomfort about how somebody's being, and it's like a rich terrain to explore

Dave:

You mentioned a little while ago that being bad or believing that you were bad was just so incredibly triggering for people. They almost couldn't handle it. And here you're saying, sitting with your own discomfort. It seems like at the heart of a lot of the practices in BDSM and kink is actually learning to be comfortable with feeling bad or being bad or being uncomfortable. Just so you realize you're not going to die. Is that an accurate assessment?

Kelly:

Yeah, I think so. Creating a safe container with agreements that allow you to visit with the parts of you that are holding the shame and the fear around punishment. That is why actually I'm right now with a researcher friend of mine writing up a blog post on the scientific research supportive of BDSM as a trauma intervention because it must speak to creating safety where formerly there was not. It's like for a so-called alcoholics who go to AA, they have an experience in the AA meeting of belonging. They have an experience of safe, organized human interaction.

And for the most part, those of us who are attracted to substances and alcohol, we don't feel safe in human interaction. So how can that be created and structured so that you can start to unwind that and meet the gem in the cave? Because there's always some gift that is lying behind your shame wall. I mean, every single time there is a part of your self-expression, there is a dimension of your child's self that wants to come forth with play and creativity, and you're not going to access that if you're keeping it all under wraps.

Dave:

I actually recommend when people come to me and say, "Dave, I want to go do ayahuasca." I'm like, hold on a second here. That's probably the last of all the plant medicines you might want to try. Before you do that, have you tried EMDR, which is a trauma resolution method just for I know you know what EMDR is. And have you tried deep breathing, like holotropic breath work or something similar? Have you tried tantric sex? Have you tried BDSM? And after that, you get into the legal things like ketamine that are relatively safe and well understood before you, and then MDMA and then mushrooms and then LSD, and then maybe if you still need to do it, you find a really powerful shaman. But a lot of people don't put eroticism, whether it's tantric practice or king practice into the realm of psychotropic healing things. But that's what they are from everything that I can understand about them.

Kelly:

Totally. I mean, there's a psychiatrist who wrote a book called Fear of Life, and his name is Alexander Lowen. And I really love this book because he framed for me the origins of sexual shame. And we think like, okay, I don't have sexual shame. I have a healthy sex life, whatever. But when you look at sexual energy or Eros or a vital force energy as the animating force of the human body, you recognize, wow, this starts in infancy. So this is the nursing infant who bites the nipple. It is that it's the predator. It's the, I want this, I will grab this. It's the forward contribution to the space and it can look like singing and playing and jumping on the couch. And we are divorced from that energy very early on when we are told how to behave and comply by our parents when we are told that we are okay when we're crying, and we're clearly not okay when we're told to calm down, when we are told to be some other way than how we are being.

And that's not to say that proper parenting is to just let your children be feral, but to validate that there is sense, there is meaning and there is rightness in the energetic state that this child finds themselves in. And then he talks about, of course, the classical Freudian triangle. When you're in this first triangle of our lifetimes with our mother, father, whether they're living or there or it doesn't matter, and you're in this triangle, and you develop a certain kind of attraction, a certain kind of erotic connection to your opposite gendered parent just to take a heteronormative example, then that is typically threatening to your same gendered parent.

And this classical edible dynamic, I threw it out when I became more interested in Young's work, even though I was trained in a very Freudian program. But it's very real because that triangle then gets replicated throughout our lives where we are pitted against ourselves. And one of the most powerful examples is with health, with the medical system, my body is doing a symptom thing that I don't like. And because I don't trust my body, I've been told my body does gross things. I've been told I don't know how to operate my body. I have to be told when I compete, I have to raise my hand in school. I've been told when to eat, not to eat. I'm told like farting is wrong or whatever. All of this confusing messages about our bodies. So my body, which is not me, is doing this scary thing.

So I'm going to collude against my body and subdue it with what? Doctor. So that's a triangle. It's just that the villain in that triangle, if there's a villain, a victim, and a rescuer, the villain is the body. So these triangles get set up all over the place and we're turned against ourselves, our energy, our embodied expression, and this is how we end up struggling and suffering with shame. I think that shame is the most expensive emotion there is because it's the dream is immense. And that's why after my patients would get off these meds, I mean the first thing that I would encourage them to do is take a survey of all of the dimensions of your life where you're holding secrets.

You don't got to come clean about them immediately. But I went to this Adyashanti silent retreat a couple years ago, and he said this one sentence I'll never forget where he said, it prompted us and he said, "What is something that you deeply know that you wish you didn't know about yourself?" So there

are a couple of things that can come to mind, whether it's about how you're eating or something about your partnership or something about your parenting, it's a direct conduit to your shame spaces. And you don't have to tell anyone. But once you know it, once the light of awareness has been cast on those issues, that's when the process of walking towards them can begin and it can take years. But that shame catacomb is essentially the understanding that you will be experienced as bad and wrong if this is ever known, and how dangerous it's to be bad and wrong.

Dave:

The interesting thing about shame is that when people are experiencing a lot of shame, they'll have shame about having shame. So it's this endless loop of that. And I know that because that's something I dealt with many years ago. There's a book called *Healing the Shame that Binds You* by John Bradshaw. This was like, geez, 20 years ago. And I did all my work on this stuff and I come across it all the time at 40 years of Zen when high performing executives are upgrading their brains and all of a sudden they come into this big wall of something's holding me back.

I'm like, well, yeah, you might have to deal with that. And there's various techniques. But when I started doing transformational psychology, I had no idea that I had any sort of shame or anything in there because it was just so part of reality. And then of course, if you'd have told me that, I'd be like, well, having shame would be wrong, therefore I don't have shame, because I can't possibly be wrong. And it gets really messy really quickly. As a psychiatrist, what's the fastest way that people could know whether they have shame or how severe it is because it hides?

Kelly:

Well, one of the... So I relate to that completely. I don't think I had any awareness that I had anything hiding behind spaces of shame because I had so curated a life of mastery. I only ever did the things I was good at. I never had to even experience, I don't know, learning how to do something I might be mediocre at. And this is very typical of people who are very well defended like me. So one of the points of inquiry that I find really helpful is to consider somebody that you're intimate with in your life, whether it's a family member or a friend, and it has to be somebody that you've had some conflict with. So this is where a relationship and a challenging relationship is the perfect playground for this inquiry. And you can ask, what is it that I am most afraid they could be right about? So it has to be whether somebody says you're so embarrassing or you're this or you're that. It could be an infinite list.

So maybe it's not one person, but what is something that someone has said and you're just literally make sure nobody ever finds out that they might be right about it. And there is a part of you that agrees that is holding tremendous energy. And to be in, so you mentioned a lot of modalities, to be in dialogue with this part of you and to not coerce it, not to convince it, because in spiritual bypass, a lot of what we do, I could feel lonely. Let's say I feel lonely. And then I'll say to myself, why do you feel lonely? You have kids and cats and friends. You have it all. Just be grateful. So that kind of bypass is a subtle way of coercing, dismissing or otherwise negating the part that feels lonely. So a lot of the healing work is simply around giving enough of a shit to listen, to actually listen to these parts and what they have to say without needing to convince them that they're wrong.

And so to the list that you offered the pre ayahuasca list, I would add probably my two favorite modalities and the ones that have changed my life. So measurably, one is parts work or internal family systems work. The idea is simply to meet these different parts by identifying how it is that you feel about a given feeling. So you mentioned that compound emotion of shame. The shame about the shame. So you'll have a feeling you located in your body, you meet this part and what they have to say, and then you'll have a feeling about that part. So annoying. I wish I would just stop being so anxious.

Now you've met another part and they multiply out in this way. And then the other one is family constellation work. And I've done a great number of group family constellations. You can participate as one of the people who is exploring an issue in your life, or you can participate just to support other people. And honestly, you get almost the same amount out of it.

And you can also do one-on-one family constellation work. And it's difficult to summarize, but there's a Turkish Netflix show that does a really great job called Another Self. And it's actually also depicted on, God, I don't remember. It's like love, sex and goop or something. It's like this another Netflix show because it's in the zeitgeist that people are recognizing that we hold unfinished business from our mother line, father line. And that these patterns in our family of origin, especially around excluded family members, miscarriages, abortions, these elements of our family system that are not being accounted for in our consciousness can actually be responsible for these patterns that we get stuck in. Especially if you feel like, God, I've done all the things and I'm still attracting this kind of partner, or I'm still in debt, or I'm still struggling with this substance. It's probably one of the first stops that I would recommend is actually family consolation. So you organize what isn't yours and you get back in your position.

Dave:

What powerful knowledge to share with people. Thank you. If I'd have known what you just shared when I was in my 20s, it would've been a lot easier because I remember the first time I was working with a psychologist and I basically, I understood anger as an emotion pretty well. And she said, "Well, you're feeling something. What is this?" I'm actually feeling off. This whole thing is dumb. And she said, "Well, do you feel something in your body?" And I said, "Yeah, there's a weird feeling in my stomach." She's like, "There's a name for it." And I said, "What is it?" And she said, "It's fear." And I looked at her and I said, "Oh, it can't be fear because there's nothing to be afraid of." Spiritual bypassing right there. And it's when you use your brain to try to think yourself out of an emotion.

And her answer to me was, fear is an emotion. It doesn't have to be logical. And I was like, oh my God, mind blown. Where is all this crap coming from? It's coming from in the body. And when that reflects up into your relationships, you talked about at the very beginning of our interview, you talked about women healing their inner masculine so that they can show up differently in relationships. Does the inner masculine live in the body or does it live in the soul or in the heart or the emotions or the, I don't know, the fifth dimension? Where is that thing?

Kelly:

That's a great question and I can so relate. I mean, it's amazing. I don't think I felt an emotion literally until probably six years ago. I mean, when your defenses are that effective, you are literally unaware. However, those buried states and also the somatic storage. I mean, we've heard about molecules of emotion from Candace Pert, and this idea of stored trauma from all of the somatic experiencing world for a long time, and it's not new age mumbo jumbo. It's very real. So all of that stored energy is influencing how you can feel and navigate through that felt sense. So I'm really into watching all of these Viking shows recently. I don't know what's up with that, but I am really enjoying Last Kingdom and Vikings and whatever, and I'm watching these warriors and how they attune through their body without their mind. Their mind is literally not even involved.

And they can feel when somebody is deceiving them. You can tell within seconds, even if it makes no sense and it seems like they're telling a pretty good story, they can feel it. And they're so embodied that of course they can fight on the battlefield in these extraordinary ways. That is so attractive to me. That is so exciting, what it is to be that embodied. However, if you can't get to know your default state, what

does my body actually feel like at this moment? When I started doing somatic experiencing work, and I would sit in these sessions with people and they'd be like, "Tell me about a sensation in your body. Okay, let's track it." I was like, "There's nothing. There's nothing going on." It's just dead-

Dave:

What are you talking about? Shut up. You're bothering me.

Kelly:

It's dead space. But that numbness is also a somatic experience. And so as your body comes online and you start to feel what is already present, but what's not available to your awareness, then you can start to get to know how your body tells you no, how your body tells you yes. And it's like a subtle sensation. No, not this restaurant. No, not this podcast. No, not this partner. And often there will be a whole bunch of mind nonsense, like a mind yes pile that's like, oh, well come on, what's the big deal? It's fine. That pile's on top. And then the opposite is also true. When something is like, yeah, go there, explore that. And then it's like, no, I don't have to. I'm not going to be good at that anyway, forget it. So there's just a subtle little sense that your body can convey to you, and the reclamation of that is essentially coming into trust and safety in your body.

So when I think about this masculine container for my body, for me, there's a meditation that I often do where I imagine this masculine energy up my spine from my feet up my spine, and it's this, and my head even looks down. It's like this encompassing, embracing but strong back body energy. And then the feminine is like whatever is swirling around. So then I attend to whatever it is that is the emotional state in my body. So the tingling in my stomach or the clench in my chest or my throat or whatever it is, and go into inquiry around that, just being present to it. So yeah, the masculine for me lives in the back of my body and the feminine is whatever is moving around internally. And that is a very simple practice that anybody can engage. Anytime you want to sit with an emotion, 30 seconds, 45 seconds, a sensation, you just first connect to that energy of strength and that spine behind you feeling the back of your chair.

And then you just bring your attention and that awareness to whatever it is that is alive, whether it's a discomfort or an excitement or whatever it is, just so that you can be with it. Honestly, I had to start with 10 seconds, 20 seconds, and there's a somatic experiencing practice called pendulation where you just visit with it for 10, 15 seconds and then you go somewhere else in the body that doesn't have any sensations, like a point on your thigh or something like that, and you just swing back and forth so you can ease into it. It is way harder than it sounds to just sit with a sensation for seconds. We weren't taught this and we were taught quite the contrary, that our sensations are problematic as kids.

Dave:

It's a very common thing. If feelings are annoying and they get in the way of behaving, so you should just smash them down and it doesn't create happiness, and it also doesn't create high performance. And a lot of listeners are like, look, I want to kick ass. I don't just want to be healthy. Maybe I'm not healthy now, but my goal is not, I just want to be enough. It's like, fuck that. I want to be so much more than enough that I can change the world. And that's why you drink danger coffee instead of boring coffee. It's built into us. We want to be better than average. So with that said, the amount of energy, like electricity from mitochondria that goes into all of these garbage suppression of emotions, all of the bypassing, all the stuff that we do automatically without any choice, it's all unconscious. It's all pre-programmed until you go in and you hack it.

It's a large, large percentage of your energy in your brain every day. And that's why you aren't doing all the things you wanted to do or experience all things you want to experience because you are throwing away stuff on useless either notifications, being anxious all the time because everything in the environment's triggering you and you don't know why and you think it's you and well, maybe you could work on having less bullets in your gun to be triggered. So I appreciate that you're sharing it the way you're sharing it, because that stuff has been difficult for me.

But the thing that unlocked it probably the fastest was feedback systems. And that's why I brought him into the world of quantified self and why when I started the biohacking movement, feedback is part of this because I wasn't good at feeling my body or my emotions, but when I learned how to do heart rate variability feedback, I'm like, oh my God, if I make the light go green, I feel this weird stuff in my chest, and now I can consciously open my heart and I can give forgiveness, I can move energy, I can do all this crap.

But it started with a computer showing me, hey, dummy going on in your heart. And now I've created the tech for 40 years of Zen. So the spiritual states, I know how to turn them on without the technology, but I just feel like to do forgiveness without having first done heart rate variability, it would've taken a lifetime sitting in a cave. So I'm hopeful that tech is going to help people realize that there is a signal in the noise of their body. Do you like tech or are you more like, give me flowers and a paintbrush? [inaudible 00:49:35].

Kelly:

So I am all of it. So I clearly espouse a lot of spiritual concepts and am very interested in, right now I'm looking at my chickens and my almost an acre and my garden and my cats and iguanas and I love it all.

Dave:

No, that's not your pets. Those are just natural.

Kelly:

And they basically are, because I feed them every day and they're like-

Dave:

I have an iguana for years. [inaudible 00:49:55]-

Kelly:

I'm a dragon.

Dave:

... older. Oh my gosh, okay.

Kelly:

But I'm also, I have hot pink long nails and I love makeup and I love fashion. I'm all of it. So I am not like for or auntie, and I'm fascinated by what you just said. I've been a hard math fan since for many, many, many years.

Dave:

Oh my gosh. I was an advisor to the company in 2008.

Kelly:

That's amazing. Because it makes so much sense what you're saying that for, and I'm sure that's why it helped me for the same reason as it helped you is because there was no other way for me to actually begin the process of introducing my embodied experience to myself. And so it absolutely can have that impact. I have struggled publicly with my phone. I got off my iPhone a couple of years ago because of what was going on in the world and the tacit consent and all these things. However, it was primarily because I was addicted and I could not control myself, and I felt shame and specifically shame around my kids, and I recently reintroduced it into my life, and I am watching.

Is the shame there? Or does it feel like I am using this technology or does it feel like this is just an expression of my inability to be with myself? I did a water only fast, like a nine-day fast this summer, and it was one of the hardest things I've ever done, and I've pushed two babies out of my vagina in my living room. So that's saying something. It was so difficult because the nature of the fast was like, no, nothing, almost a silent water... I was by myself, but there was no-

Dave:

[inaudible 00:51:38] like a dopamine and water fast at the same time.

Kelly:

Well, yeah, I guess you could look at it that way because there was no journaling, no reading, no watching TV, no podcasting. It was just-

Dave:

Wow.

Kelly:

... sip water, sip water, sip water, sip water all day long. And being with myself that way, because I, like most of us, I distract myself. I love reading books and I love listening to things, and I love watching things, and I love talking to my friends. And if I'm just literally with myself, no food, no nothing to take me away from, so no addictions, let's say, to take me away from being with myself. I mean, I met the part of me that doesn't even want to be here. It was that difficult. It was so challenging. So if that is the goal, that's why pharmaceuticals are problematic, especially psychotropics because it is fundamentally a divorce between you and yourself.

That's why substances are problematic because they're fundamentally putting your awareness on the altar of your life and just offering it up there. I choose not to be aware at this moment, then the reunion of you with you, whatever brings you there, it doesn't even matter. It really, there's not a method. I'm sure you would agree there's not one path or one way, but the goal is to get to a space where you know yourself, you have unmitigated awareness of yourself and you're ever exploring new terrain within yourself, and you do that through your triggers. I call it entering through the upset. So you take every single opportunity in your life to find where you are judging that which has been disavowed within you every opportunity, no exceptions. There are no villains out there, period, unless you want to be a victim. And you also take every opportunity to really feel into the present moment.

I know for me, some of the hardest work I've done is just feeling pleasure. I mean, I was walking across my yard an hour ago, and this breeze, it's like the perfect temperature, and this breeze came across my

body and it just felt so good. And the light was beautiful, and I could feel it for, I closed my eyes, I could feel it for five seconds, and then I started thinking about something else and kept walking and started doing something else. My capacity for pleasure, the ceiling is going to be as low as my capacity to hold discomfort. And so as we grow this, I'm sure you know that you have a great awareness of much tech that could help with it, but if the tech is divorcing us from ourself versus introducing us to ourself, then it's just going to be counter to what I think is probably the path to fulfillment and happiness.

Dave:

You have a point there. You can easily use tech to dissociate from yourself and just to distract yourself entirely, whether it's using social media or just watching TV. It's very-

Kelly:

Totally.

Dave:

... different from hearing something. In fact, there's studies that show that when you read a book or you hear a book, you draw pictures and you imagine, and it's active, but when you watch TV, it's just passive and your brain shift. And those are all uses of tech. The ones I'm talking about specifically are ones where when your body does something you wouldn't notice, you get a signal. So then you go, oh, what do I do in order to cause that signal? Or why is this signal there? And suddenly you're curious. For me, it felt like I was developing a new control panel for my body. Oh, look, there's a signal that's a gauge. And oh, that's a level. And oh, that's when I can control consciously, or that's one that just changes.

But I noticed the change now. So it was labeling a bunch of stuff that should have come with an instruction manual when you're born, but it doesn't. And it's to the point now when I hook up our newest version of software, we've got 3D sound, and I'm like, oh, there's a violin to my upper right. Okay. And that little meditative state makes that louder, and I'm not matching the one. And all of a sudden you're constructing stuff. But I don't have a strong sense of what's going on inside my brain, which is the hardest part. I know my thoughts, but not the signals that are causing the states. And I could become very aware of that as well as a lot of the stuff in the front of the body, the back of the body, and to the point where through a forgiveness and a gratitude practice.

I was at an event the other day and I hugged someone who is just moving in from a very masculine role to a more feminine role. And she stops. She goes, "What did you just do?" I said, "I just hugged you." I'm like, "Oh, no, what did I just do?" And she's like, "No, give me another hug." She's like, "You're doing something different." And I was doing a heart opening thing that I do when I hug people, but she picked it up and was like, "Can you teach me how to do that? What is that?" And I was like, "Okay." I'm feeling a little validated because something I'm doing is working. But I had unconsciously started doing it because I learned this from tech, but I wouldn't have known the feeling.

And I've done my fire ceremonies, I've done my shamanic stuff, I've done my fasting in caves. I've traveled to Nepal and Tibet, and there was some of that came out of that. But I truly think that was a tech derived ability that wouldn't have existed. And the fact that someone else could feel it consciously, who hasn't done all that stuff, I'm like, maybe it's more important than I think it is. I don't know, but I'm still playing around with that. You don't know, but most people deny the existence of it. And when I see you talk about stuff online, you don't seem to deny the existence of a lot of stuff.

Kelly:

Yeah. It sounds like it's an effective mirror and that's showing you, you.

Dave:

It was interesting. You talked about the dark side of activism and I've done my human design in my Enneagram. These are personality and spiritual profiling things. And what it came up with is that probably the most counter energetic person or archetype to me is activists. So my spiritual type basically despises activism as a bunch of complaining whiners. And you talked about the dark side of activism. Is there actually a light side to it?

Kelly:

That's a great question. I mean from the belly of the beast, I certainly identified as an activist for a good decade, especially around pharmaceuticals and injectables, and then got into birth and the activism around the birth space. And of course then into psychotropics and the specific significance of psychotropics for women. And it's very reinforced socio culturally. So I can't tell you how many hundreds, maybe thousands of people told me, "Oh my God, you're so brave. Thank you so much for your work. You're saving so many lives. Again, New York Times bestseller." All this stuff. That was all activist Kelly. And so it really wasn't until more recently that I began to observe that most of the activists that I know have really unhealthy personal relationships are really angry, bitter people.

So I started to see, oh wow. So if we're going to be the change, are we being that change or are we so in the erotic of the enemy? Are we so preoccupied with monitoring every move of what it is that the enemy is doing? And this enemy is a shifting target that we don't even know how to prioritize creating the life experience that might be on the other side of the victory. So most activists, I don't know if I can generalize, I think I can, don't spend a lot of time envisioning the world that they want to live in. They couldn't even do that, because that involves a pleasure capacity and a creative imaginative capacity that is not part of their skillset.

Dave:

They start being the victim.

Kelly:

Exactly. And so that's where I was going. And then what I really came to understand is that the rescuer, the rescuer role, the rescuer says, "I must help because I can and because you would benefit from my help." Seems benign enough. Of course, that's philanthropy, that's altruism. But the rescuer is one of the three positions on the Karpman victim triangle. And so the rescuer is the most insidious because unlike the victim who says, "Poor me, this is no fair." And the villain who says, "I'm going to get you for doing this to me." The rescuer is reifying, the victim's powerlessness.

If I give my girlfriend who's broke, if I pay her rent, I am implying that she cannot figure this out herself and that she needs me and I'm just going to step in and deal with it. So I am reifying her victimhood, and I'm also putting myself in this inflated position of power that wouldn't otherwise exist if we were all sovereign, if we were all doing our own thing. So yes, it is victim consciousness. And one of the big ticket items that I chose to explore was self-serving selfishness. And what it is to recognize that literally nothing that we do is for anyone else. So how would your activism change if 100% of what you're doing as an activist is for your damn self, not one word out of your mouth, is actually helping in service of helping somebody else. So if it's all for me and whatever it is that I'm getting out of it, which would be good if I had some insight into that, it'd be good if I explored that.

It'd be good if I knew we were saying about why do I come on your podcast? It'd be good if I knew what I am getting out of being a former activist or whatever. Because then I'm no longer in the illusion that I'm doing it for the people because there's no such thing. We are always meeting our needs directly or

covertly. And this is a major covert sourcing. And I always say, the way you know that I teach my daughters the way that what you're doing is not for someone else, not out of the kindness of your heart, is if you do something that's uncomfortable for you and they don't appreciate it. If they don't appreciate it and there's no gratitude in exchange that covert expectation, then you will immediately know because why? You will feel resentment. So the ongoing dynamic for most activists is, after all I've done for you, to their family and their children, and look, I'm doing this for you.

I'm doing this for the world. And they're like, I don't want you to do that. I don't appreciate it. I don't even want you to be in that role. And then there's bitterness and resentment on both parts and it becomes a very good example of Nietzsche's quote becoming the monster that you are fighting. And that's what I saw over and over and over again, that these people who are at the helm of activism are scared shitless. They're super terrified. They have very minimal exploration of how they are embodying that which they are condemning, and they don't have a great capacity for experiencing the benefic aspects of life, the positive emotions or really holding space for what it is that is on the other side of the fight. And so what happens is they just feed the fight. They need the fight. I know that if everything were to go the way I wanted it to, let's say five years ago, I wouldn't have liked that.

I wouldn't have liked that. I mean, up until recently, I remember in 2020, so I've never worn a mask, a face mask or whatever. And I went to Naples. This is in early 2020, a town across the way in Florida, and it's very partisan. So that's a red city, and I'm in a blue city in Miami or whatever. And anyway, long story short, I get there with my girlfriends and no one is wearing masks for whatever partisan reasons, part of the [inaudible 01:04:19], nobody's wearing masks. And I'm walking around. I could go into supermarket easily, which I hadn't done, and I didn't like it. I remember feeling like I didn't like it because I didn't know who was on my side and what was going on, and I thought I was playing this game and I didn't know how to play it when everything was resolved, even for that little moment.

So this is very typical. We don't actually want the resolution we say we're seeking because it would make us irrelevant. It would in many ways make us wrong because then it wasn't as bad. It wasn't as bad as we thought it would be. And we need the prophecy to come to its grotesque fulfillment in order to validate our rightness and all the sacrifices we've made. I'm doing a whole masterclass on this later because it's really a pretty heinous realm.

Dave:

It's a dark place that I've met. I went through this when I first lost a lot of my weight. I was like, I have to tell everyone that it's all this sugary crap that's making you gain weight and it's the bad fats and all this stuff. And I stopped because I realized that the more I pushed, the more people push back. And so eventually I got to the point where I have influenced many millions of people to move in the right direction on their nutrition. And I'm grateful for that. I did not do it by forcing them and by protesting. I did it through demonstration, and I did it through making them want it and asking me about it.

And it got to the point where I gave a talk at Google a while ago, and I was talking on a panel about nutrition with an angry vegan activist who made one of the propaganda movies about vegan stuff. I don't remember which one, but a very anxious and odd and unhealthy person. I don't mean unhealthy physically. Well, that comes with being vegan, but it was more psychologically like a darkness that was like, oh man, wow. But in the back of the room, one young guy stood up and he said, I want to be a vegan activist. Can you give me some advice?

Kelly:

Yeah, don't be wrong.

Dave:

No, that's okay. I'll give a vegan activist. Hey, maybe I'm wrong. So I'm like, "Here's my advice, shut up and eat." And he goes, "What?" And the whole room started clapping. And even the other guy on stage agreed with me. And I said, "If you want to be an activist, what you do is you demonstrate the future that you want. You demonstrate that yourself works. And when someone asks you what you're doing, then you've earned the right-

Kelly:

Exactly.

Dave:

... to be an activist, but you don't get to stand up and tell the people what to do. And if you try to do it, most healthy humans will tell you boundaries. And this is something that, maybe it's in my archetypes or something, but I see the dark side very clearly of activism and the energy you put into that if you put into improving yourself or into creating a solution to the problem instead of to talking about it, wouldn't the world be a better place?

Kelly:

It's so funny. I mean, it took me a long time to see this and people feel it because there's a type of, especially male activists out there that's very histrionic, very hysterical, red face, tantrums, yelling kind of a thing. And that is an indication of what is behind a lot of activism, which is the inability to remain in self possession in the face of that which is uncomfortable, unwanted, unpreferred. So there are many aspects of life that are not going to go the way we want them to go. How can you hold yourself in your nervous system capacity in the face of that? Do you need it to change in order for you to find basic emotional self regulation? And if you do, should you be leading anyone? And I came to the same exact place you're describing, which is like, I will not tell anyone what to do unless they ask me.

It's the same thing, the unsolicited advice. I don't know. Certainly I came to a place where I thought it is never okay for a child to be vaccinated. That was a belief that I had. It's never okay. And if I can save one child by speaking to their mother when they wouldn't have otherwise heard it, but they needed to hear it from me and all this stuff, then I've done a good thing. Meanwhile, ask my kids where the hell I was the first eight years of their life, because I was not with them, because I was so preoccupied, workaholic, obsessed with my activism and saving this anonymous child that literally my own kids were-

Dave:

Wow.

Kelly:

... in many ways they didn't have my present energy. And the truth is how do I know? How can I be so sure that that child's journey is supposed to look the way I think it's supposed to look, the way that is comfortable for me because I can't tolerate, which is true to this day? I can't tolerate how it feels in my body to be exposed to something I have labeled that bad. And so the truth is, it's not my business. I have no idea what somebody's life is supposed to look like. And if they want to take 12 million meds and 8,000 vaccines, that's your choice. And that's why of course, it comes down to exactly what you said, which is like, how can your activism be to give a permission slip to be who it is that you've come and found yourself to enjoy being? And that's it.

Dave:

Now, you said something there that's really interesting. You said that even to this day that you don't know how to feel, how to stand, how your body feels when you're around something that you think is wrong, something like that. What are you doing now to teach your body to feel comfortable in those situations?

Kelly:

So there's a practice in the somatic experiencing world that's called titration. So it's like you put yourself in little versions of the experience of what is otherwise intolerable. So there was a time, I think the no comes before the yes in life. At first you find out what's not working for you, where you're trying to buy eggs from the hardware store. First you set your boundaries. And then later as you grow your inner resiliency, you're going to find, you can be around all sorts of things that were a no to you before. So for example, I ended a friendship in 2020, several actually.

But one, because a close girlfriend of mine participated in the vaccination of her daughter. So her daughter was vaccinated and had otherwise not subscribed to that medical lifestyle. And in fact, whatever, the details don't matter, but I could so not handle that. And I felt literally, I love this girl and I could not deal, I literally couldn't emotionally hold myself through it. And so I ended the friendship so I did not have to be around her or her daughter or her husband and have exposure to whatever came up in me being around people who make that choice.

Dave:

That's some serious trauma on your part.

Kelly:

Exactly. Well, exactly. And it's what I needed. It's what I needed so that, this is also why some people need to not speak to their parents or their abusers or whatever they need total, firm, stark boundary so that you can find yourself. There's no way when I'm that activated and that minimally resourced that I could find myself, be with myself, hold myself, and relate to her. I'm just in a field of my own projection and trauma informed perceptions. So years later now, I saw her recently at a party. I can totally be around her. I enjoy her company. And what has changed? What has changed is that I don't need her to be different, for me to choose whether or not I want to hang out with her in a given moment. And so that for me was the big, that's the metric when I don't need something to be bad and wrong in order to exercise my power of choice.

Because often when we're in victim consciousness, we need to condemn in order to choose. But those two things can be decoupled. You can choose all the time. And somebody doesn't need to be bad and wrong. Your partner doesn't need to be bad and wrong in order for you to leave them. The job, the employee doesn't need to be bad and wrong in order for you to fire them. There's all sorts of choice that we can access when we don't need to validate our inner sense, like you were saying earlier. So I have a practice now of having micro experiences. So the first time I went to a party I knew, let's say she would be at, was a micro titration into seeing. Can I find safety here in myself even in though I'm around the thing that felt unsafe before? Oh, look, I can. That's cool.

And so there are myriad examples of that. Another example might be like if you're somebody who often is appeaser or you freeze around difficult social situations, you might just take a little example with a waiter or an Uber driver or whatever, and you might say like, oh, it's actually cold in here. Can you turn down the AC? You might reveal something about your current state that you would otherwise suppress to keep things comfortable. You're getting massage, and this is a creepy example, but their hand moves

in an area that's uncomfortable and you actually say, "Hey, that didn't feel good." Whatever. So you bring to presence discomforts that would otherwise have been labeled as dangerous to express. But in little ways, little almost inconsequential examples. And that is how you begin to grow your capacity.

Dave:

Very interesting. So just micro exposures. When you're looking at reprogramming your meat operating system, your body to be less reactive, it's not like you chose to be reactive instead it's happening that I don't think we know yet exactly the frequency and timing of signals of exposure for the best result and the least amount of time. One approach would be, do something that's uncomfortable until you feel like you can't stand it and then back off. The other one is just do a little bit and oh, that was interesting. And then don't disrupt your day. And it may also be a different for men and women or for different Ayurvedic body types, and we just don't know all of that. But the basic idea that you can push the body up to the edge of disequilibrium and then return very quickly to calmness. That is the backbone of my new books, *Smarter not Harder*, is that for any time you're creating change in a biological system, it's speed of turning on the stress, but it's also speed of turning off the stress.

And if you can do the on off thing very quickly, like exposure, and then do a heart opening or a heart math or some other practice, a breath work practice that shows your body, you know what? You thought you were going to die, but actually you're super chill right now that then the body goes, oh, I guess I was wrong about that because I couldn't be super chill now if I thought I was so tweaked. So then it turns down the tweak meter, if that makes sense. And it turns out we can do this for muscle, for cardio, for mitochondria, for emotion, for spiritual. So all of it. And that's why *Smarter not Harder* is the title of the book, but I feel like you're onto something there with micro things. And maybe in another five, 10 years with more data, we'll actually be able to tell to resolve the trauma. Here's the fastest way and pattern of exposing yourself to something that triggers you. How triggered do you get? How was it once a week? Is it twice a day? We don't know. But what you're doing, it's groundbreaking and awesome.

Kelly:

Well, I have an amazing coach, Whitney, who's helped me with this, and she's helped me to see that I have a spiritual aggressor in me that's like push through it. Don't be like a baby, whatever.

Dave:

You have a strong masculine side, that side of you. I can see that.

Kelly:

Yeah, for sure. For sure. And in order for my body to trust me and to understand that I care and I'm listening, I have to meet myself where I am, even if that's in the weak place, the tired place, and actually listen. During this interview, I had to pee. I would've gotten up and told you, I'm going to the bathroom now. Because formerly I wouldn't have done that. And those little things, actually, I want to take a nap right now. Or actually, I don't feel like doing that. So meeting yourself where you are is how I think this restoration of trust gets established because your body starts to, and your nervous system starts to say, oh, okay, somebody's here. Somebody's listening.

Somebody's actually paying attention to these basic needs and these leads, and the vigilance is no longer as necessary. So that has to come first before pushing yourself through the discomfort and whatever that more muscley version of showing yourself, you can handle shit that I'm very accustomed to that. I think that's a later stage at this point. And it's really essential for me to just check in with

myself constantly. And if I'm out with my girlfriends and I feel like, oh, I'm tired and I want to go, then I go instead of finding some reason to push through.

Dave:

Got it. So that's more kind of self care and learning to have that as a practice, that was a very hard one for me. And because I'm lazy in the most beneficial way. I mean, I've done a lot of stuff. I've done so much stuff because I'm so lazy that I just do it with the least possible work. So I could do more stuff, but I'm like, how do I recover faster than I'm supposed to? Because I'm so lazy. I didn't want to spend the work it takes to be kind to myself. I was just going to automate the kindness to myself. So I'm still working on that, but I'm making progress. So I needed a turbo recovery. That's an act of kindness to myself versus a long, slow recovery. And maybe that's a personality dysfunction. I haven't figured it out yet, but it seems to be good.

But that practice, I wouldn't give myself permission to that. That's why I burned myself out in my 20s. I made tons of money and had a great career and all this stuff, but it didn't come with happiness. I'm with you there. Well, Kelly, I feel like I could chat with you for hours. You are evolving in a unique way and at a really, really rapid pace. And you're completely fearless, maybe because you had all that experience being a victim activist, but you're fearless online. You talk about all the hot touchpoint topics that are going to trigger people about activism, about feminism, about the role of masculine and addiction and depression and just all the cool stuff. So whatever you're doing is working because you have a unique view and you're just saying it the way it is without the edge that I think you used to have.

Kelly:

Thank you.

Dave:

It's with passion, but it's with less anger than you used to have. So congratulations on whatever the heck you're doing. This has been a super fun conversation. Kellybroganmd.com is your URL. Anything else that people should know about to find you, anything you're working on?

Kelly:

Thank you. Well, those words of approval feel really good to hear. I appreciate that. Yeah. So I am hundreds of episodes behind you having launched my first podcast just a couple... One week ago, actually.

Dave:

Congratulations.

Kelly:

Yeah, I know. I'm like, I have a lot of trepidation going into this world. It feels like a high maintenance relationship, but I'm excited to go. It's called Reclamation Radio. And I was thinking about the first episode as a solo that I did, which was 25 ways that I've become that which I judged.

Dave:

Wow.

Kelly:

Developed a lot of insight into it. It's funny to me now. There's 25 in that episode, but I could list even more. So now it's become a sport to expose these aspects of my journey, which I know are very archivable.

Dave:

You're relentless. I very much like that about you, and I look forward to seeing how your podcast progresses and having you back on sometime after you have your next big epiphany.

Kelly:

Awesome. I appreciate it so much.

Dave:

Upgrade Collective, thank you for being in our live audience today. If you're listening, please go to [daveasprey.com](http://daveasprey.com) and there magically, you could order Smarter not Harder, or you could join the Upgrade Collective, be in the live audience who got to actually ask me questions that I could then ask of Kelly. And last but not least, you should follow Kelly on Instagram, Kelly Brogan MD because she's interesting, unlike a lot of the people dancing in bikinis. But I will say if she's the one dancing in a bikini, it's even more interesting because she's probably saying something smart at the same time.