

How to Get & Stay Sober—Even if You Don't Think You're an Addict – Luke Storey – #1030

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to the Human Upgrade with Dave Asprey, and if you're watching the video or hearing unusual licking sounds here, that's because I have a cookie on my lap. This is a gluten-free cookie named Cookie. A wonderful kind dog who just happens to hang out most of the time with today's guests, who is none other than Luke Storey. Luke and I have known each other for a long time. He was a consulting coaching client of mine many years ago and has done 40 years as Zen and is a big voice in the biohacking movement and has really grown as a person since we started and changed from being the school of style into talking about a broad range of metaphysical and other biohacking things. And I wanted to chat with you today on the show, mostly because we're in Austin, and so it's easy to do guests together.

And we just did a podcast on your show. And so guys, you should check out Luke's story show and listen to my interview there because we went through some really cool stuff I haven't talked about anywhere else because he asked good questions. And so, I want to talk about psychedelics and addiction and recovery because Luke has been very public about his history with addiction. And the reason you might say, "Oh, I don't care about this, is I don't have addiction." You actually, a lot of people have addictions that are just more socially acceptable, like a work addiction, sex addiction, gambling, social media. In fact, it's exceptionally common. But more importantly, what we're going to talk about in this episode is why and how your body does that, and how it could possibly be. So, I'm going to go deep on this with you. You're going to learn something about how you're wired in a way that's invisible to you. Plus talking about psychedelics is always fun. I mean, it could be even trippy who'd ever get that.

Luke Storey

It's certainly that my friend.

Dave:

Luke, welcome to the show.

Luke:

Thanks, man. It's good to be back. It's been a while since we dropped in on your show.

Dave:

Yeah, it's be like several hundred episodes. I was just looking on my notes.

Luke:

It was quite a few ago.

Dave:

Yeah, you were episode 562 on spirituality hacking and negativity fasting.

Luke:

Yeah.

Dave:

And we're at about a thousand in change. So yeah, that's probably four or five years ago. So, long overdue.

Luke:

And a lot has changed, especially in the realm of finding different ways to heal trauma and work on one's emotional state, specifically in the realm of psychedelics as you alluded to in the intro. So yeah, I've lived a lot of lives since we did that last podcast. Yeah, I've lived a lot of lives since we did that last podcast.

Dave:

I've been watching you online and you've definitely, how's the word for it? You've become more grounded and just in your approach to things. So, I think you're doing really good work and it's awesome.

Luke:

Thank you, sir.

Dave:

And your show is growing, and I can definitely see it, so. And you're one of the voices in biohacking, and it is a global movement, and we need people who are spiritually paying attention, in addition to looking at the latest in ketones because I mean, frankly, if you get your ketones right, you'll have more energy. But what are you going to do with it? Well, eventually you're going to realize you got to hack the invisible parts of your body. And I feel like anyone who's successfully dealt with addiction and recovered from it, ends up having some aspect of spirituality come in. And I've become more and more convinced that a lot of what feels like spiritual stuff, and thus is spiritual stuff, is our interface with our body and our body's interface with reality. It's just the stuff that we don't normally see. It's hidden because it's too big to pay attention to all the time.

Luke:

Yeah, absolutely.

Dave:

Does that make sense?

Luke:

Makes perfect sense, yeah.

Dave:

Okay.

Luke:

Yeah, and I think right now it's interesting as someone who was a very committed, diehard addict who suffered for a long time, well, I'll be honest, I had fun for a little bit of it.

Dave:

I mean, people drink alcohol for a reason.

Luke:

There was a few months maybe where I kind of had it in balance. But the thing is, when you sober up, which for me was 25 years ago when I was 26 years old, you kind of go into this bubble because you surround yourself with hopefully, at least I think people are more successful when they do. So, you surround yourself with other people in recovery and other people that are supportive and getting healthier and happier and doing all the things, right? And so, you sort of lose touch with the fact that there are still untold numbers of people who are still stuck in that trap. And I sort of forget, but in the past three years, it's come to my awareness that this has become an even bigger problem than ever. And I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that one of the main underlying issues in addiction is just loneliness, right? A disconnection from other people.

And so, many people have been separated from their loved ones and specifically within the model of recovery, so far, the best we've done are 12 step groups. And a lot of the success there has to do with teaching people fundamental spiritual principles by which to live, so that you feel better, and when you feel better because you have a connection of something greater than yourself, as you alluded to, you don't feel the need to use drugs. But a lot of it is just the unconditional love, that field of energy that's present in a group of people that all share one purpose and that purpose is to get sober, right? And you're supporting one another. So, you had all of these people around the world that were losing touch with their community and people in recovery that were losing touch with their very insulated community of people like them, right? And relying on Zoom meetings and things like that.

And I know for myself in the beginning, I mean, it took a lot for me to walk into a church basement. I had to really want to get well, and to do that sometimes two or three times a day just to keep my feet on the ground. So, to get me to log onto a Zoom meeting or go back to the bar or call the dealer. So, I can imagine a lot of people fell off, and I know they did. And then you have the prevalence of fear in the air, especially in the beginning when it was kind of unclear and we didn't know what was going on, and there were so many conflicting ideas about what was happening. So, you have people who are very often living with a lot of unresolved trauma, who are now being traumatized by the experience and the media and all of those things.

So, you have traumatized people being more traumatized who now don't have the ability to connect with supportive communities. So now, I think is a really important time, and it's one of the reasons that I've been more outspoken about this is just to remind myself just because I made it out of the abyss of addiction, doesn't mean that everyone did. There's still people out there on the streets that are really suffering, and also people running companies and heads of families and everything else. I mean, all walks of life, as you said, are prone to addiction to something. And I would argue that even if we don't have an addiction to a substance or a behavior, many of us are addicted to false thoughts that we continually think that we can't stop. It's like if you say-

Dave:

Do you mean a plant-based diet is good for me, despite the fact my teeth are falling out of my head, the plant-based diet is good.

Luke:

That could be one false thought, yeah. But right, it's the rumination, the limbic system, just continually feeding one's self thoughts and feelings that are disempowering. And sometimes we can't stop even

doing that, right? Like try to not think a thought right now, everyone stop thinking. Good luck. So, we're all habituated to something.

Dave:

So, you think of that as an addiction, that's actually kind of profound, Luke, I had never thought of that. I teach people a lot now, especially within the 40 years of Zen and some of the stuff in Smarter, Not Harder on my newest book that just came out, I teach them how to turn off notifications in the brain. But I've never thought of that as an addiction because if your brain constantly gives you an alert, well alerts kind of feel good because the dopamine, a little bit of attention, a little bit of cortisol. So, if you have a belief system, I'm a victim because I'm a member of X, or I'm a victim because something happened to me, or I am amazing for no reason, therefore I deserve, these are all facets of narcissism. They are, it the I deserve, even though I didn't do something, right? But the idea that those little alerts, so you get a little squirt of anger every time someone else has something you don't have, or every time the world didn't match your inner story, you get angry, then maybe that's an addiction.

Luke:

Yeah. I mean, it's like an addiction to one's own biochemistry, right? It's the cortisol to adrenaline.

Dave:

Did you just explain the whole woke movement?

Luke:

Possibly, inadvertently yeah. But this is from my own subjective experience.

Dave:

It's totally true.

Luke:

I mean, when I got sober, which was in and of itself, I mean it's not overstating to say that it was a miracle. I mean, there was no statistical probability of a guy like me being free of addiction. I mean, just-

Dave:

No, you broke all the rules.

Luke:

It's exceedingly rare.

Dave:

And by the way, just for listeners, crack and heroin were part of your story, not just alcohol.

Luke:

Oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, for sure. Yeah, especially heroin. For that one, I'm actually really grateful because I think if I had just been an alcoholic and I also just smoked weed, it was air. I mean, just literally 247 for years. But with heroin, it just gets so dark. And what happens when you go through withdrawal from

opiates is a very unique experience, and it is nothing short of torture, right? So, thankfully for me, things like crack and heroin sped up the process, so that by the time I was 26, which is when many people start kind of experimenting and going into it, I was already looking for the exit door. But yeah, it was like that. But to the earlier point of addiction, to negativity, and just like you said, those hateful thoughts or fearful thoughts, it took me about one day to realize when I walked out of rehab that drugs and alcohol weren't really what my problem was.

Dave:

Oh wow. What was your problem?

Luke:

My problem, well, now I perceive that it was unresolved trauma, right?

Dave:

Yes.

Luke:

And also the compounding trauma of being an addict, because you put yourself in situations continually in which you are victimized, or in which you are a perpetrator of harm on others. So, the whole cycle of behavior-

Dave:

It retraumatizes you-

Luke:

Yeah, the drama and destruction and the compounding of the shame of knowing that you're doing something that's antithetical to your wellbeing and the wellbeing of those about you for whom you have love, family, friends, et cetera. So, this compounding shame, so when you take the drugs and alcohol away, or at least in my case, it's like having a raging migraine and you just removed the aspirin. It's like you just ripped the Band-Aid off, and that's where the real work begins, which was a shock to me, much to my chagrin because everyone externally in my life had always said, "Luke, you're an addict. You're an alcoholic. All your problems are because of that, if you just got sober, you'd be a great guy." So, I eventually comply with that, just out of my own suffering and being at a real dead end. I like to call it a subterranean bottom. It's like the bottom that's underneath the bottom. I mean, emotionally, so. And yeah, that's when the real work began. And things, before there was a word biohacking, I mean, I started doing hyperbaric chambers and infrared sauna, and-

Dave:

Anything to work.

Luke:

Yeah.

Dave:

When you need a word for what we do.

Luke:

Yeah, but making there you were just called a health nut then. But making kombucha, getting into herbalism. So, I realized, wow, I'm so physically toxic and sick, I can't think my emotions are so erratic. And I was so obsessed with thoughts that were harmful to myself. And that's where I have that idea of being addicted to one's thinking, where I might have a grievance or a resentment towards someone, right? I mean, resentments are classic for people in recovery. Everyone knows that that's the road to relapse. So, say somebody cut me off in traffic, a healthy, normal person that had a brain that functions properly would be afraid for a moment, feel threatened, and then self-regulate, and move on with their day. Literally, I haven't thought about this in a long time, I would fantasize about tracking that person down, hurting, you know what I mean? I would be thinking about that interaction all day.

Dave:

It's crazy. I was the same way. I had toxic mold induced brain damage and yeah I mean, my middle finger was very strong. And-

Luke:

Well exercised.

Dave:

The amount of rage that would bring up for me at that time, it was pathological, absolutely pathological. And I'm not proud of that at all. And in fact, I was ashamed of it when I would, why would I do that? Well, I need to because my brain wasn't working. I had a hardware problem and I had a forgiveness problem too. Resentment comes from that. And it's interesting, why do you think some people hold resentment but don't become addicts? Or do you think they're just addicted to that feeling of resentment?

Luke:

It's interesting and I've of course pondered this, why you have, I mean, even siblings, I have two siblings, right? Two half-brothers, and they had a different set of childhood circumstances and their own set of what I would consider to be trauma. I'll let them label it for themselves, but went through a divorce and parents with their own issues as many of us have. One of them is like me, he's now sober too, my brother Cody, thankfully 12 years or so. But they both had very, very close in age, very similar circumstances. One sort of withdrew and became a little bit insulated in his personality, that's my brother Andy. He's still somewhat that way, just kind of an introverted person and he's not very expressive, and he had his own way of coping with his childhood. You can't get that guy to drink half a beer. He just doesn't like it.

Whatever bothers him is not medicated by drugs and alcohol. My other brother, case study, basically the same experience externally, the minute he tried drugs as a young teenager like me, it was the answer. It just solved all the problems. So, I think it has something to do, and this is just a guess. I think it has something to do with just our biological makeup that some of us seem to find ease and solution with certain substances for our trauma or unresolved emotional pain, or just disconnection from spirit or people or whatever that is that causes us to suffer emotionally and mentally. And then you can have the same exact person with the same circumstances, and they have another coping mechanism. And for them, for some unknown reason, drugs and alcohol don't provide a remedy, and they just find a way to cope.

Dave:

It's interesting that you chose two of the most addictive substances. I mean, heroin and cocaine, right? And cocaine removes your ability to feel happiness without it, so you feel pain without it.

Luke:

Oh god. There's nothing worse.

Dave:

And even if someone without trauma who does cocaine for a while is going to fall into that because it's neurochemical. But if you're predisposed to having trauma, and there are people who are genetically predisposed to having higher vagal tone, for instance, or just a nervous system that just naturally goes more towards fight or flight, right? And then you said heroin, which opiate receptors, we all have those. And you get anyone addicted to heroin, even if they don't get predisposed or you just give it to them every day for a few weeks.

Luke:

Yeah, you see this a lot with people that go on pharmaceutical opiates and synthetic opiates and whatnot, right? Where they're not a drug addict type person and they get physically dependent on it.

Dave:

Right.

Luke:

It's really interesting.

Dave:

It's an interesting business model, isn't it? Like you force people to inject stuff for a while until they just can't live without it. You might be onto something there, someday you're going to make something of yourself.

Luke:

Yeah, my entrepreneurial mind is taking note. But yeah, man, it all boils down, Dave, to me and my experience. I mean, in a couple decades plus that I've been somehow able to not be addicted to anything. Well, maybe other than nicotine, I think if I'm really honest, I have a nicotine habit with these loosey snoozes.

Dave:

I don't think it's that bad.

Luke:

Well, see I'm going to say classically, I would say it, I'm addicted to it, but it doesn't have any deleterious effects on my life. Where my model of addiction is that you're doing something that is harmful to you and the people with whom you share your life, and the consequences outweigh the benefits, and you still can't stop doing it.

Dave:

You just said the consequences, benefits, and all that, because one of the things people say, "I don't want to drink coffee because I'd be addicted." I'm like, okay, let me just put the scenario out there. There's something you do every day that makes you feel good, and when you stop doing it, even for a day or two, you don't feel good. Are you addicted? And they say, "Yes." I say, "Great, I'm talking about exercise." "That's not an addiction." I'm like, "Triggered much," Right. So, what's going on here is risk and benefits, right? Is there a downside to drinking coffee? Yes, it's very small compared to the upside, but I'm sure that you can find some.

And then with nicotine, well, high doses of nicotine, hair loss, erectile dysfunction, you might not want to overdo it, right? But low doses of nicotine, really good for you. I find after having used it consistently for 10 years, never having smoked. Okay, maybe I smoked a cigar at a wedding or something, but I've never been a rose milk cry. I've never smoked a cigarette in my life. I'm like, you know what? I've gone through phases, a first five years one milligram a day, just one a day. And I'm like, yeah, I love it. I'm going to do more.

Luke:

What form of nicotine comes in one milligram? Because I do the gum and they're like four or six milligrams. I find that I get a lot of cognitive benefit, and I experience just feeling more grounded when I use nicotine. It's very grounding.

Dave:

Yeah, and thinking about the shamanic perspective, which my wife pointed out to me, she says, "Well, there's no accident that human civilizations, especially in the shamanic realms, have used nicotine and continue to do so."

Luke:

For their grounding benefits. Especially in the shamanic realms, have used nicotine and continue to do so.

Dave:

Oh, we have to talk about that on this episode.

Luke:

For their grounding benefit, right? The tobacco plant is a sacred plant for good reason. And that could also sound like a justification. You could say, "Well, the opium poppy is also sacred." But there is some utility value in nicotine. So I'm not hard on myself about it, but I'm also just honest. If you said, "Hey, Luke, what if we throw away all your nicotine gum tonight?" I'd probably be fishing it out of the trashcan.

Dave:

Yeah, I get it. I'm kind of the same way. One milligram nicotine, you can buy Nicorette mini lozenges. They have the least amount of bad sweetener of anything available in the US.

Luke:

The aspartame issue?

Dave:

Those don't have aspartame. The mini ones don't, but the full size do. And you break them in half and you get one ml.

Luke:

Oh, there you go. Good to know.

Dave:

But what I use now is a Nicorette spray that you can buy in Europe or Canada. And you can also buy it in the US, but it's not approved here, so you have to buy it on eBay or somewhere. That's a one milligram dose per spray.

Luke:

Oh, cool. But it's really kind of convenient, you have this whole thing in your pocket. People see me do it on the show all the time. And it is a great cognitive enhancer. Oh my God, it's almost as good as Modafinil and coffee. And I believe almost every great work of writing, of authorship has been done on coffee and nicotine.

Dave:

I saw a tweet the other day that said, "The United States was built on nicotine and caffeine."

Luke:

It was. Wars have been won on it. In fact, literally the supply chain for coffee is a deciding factor from the Civil War forward.

Dave:

Wow.

Luke:

It's crazy. So these are fundamental drugs, but when it comes to nicotine, I'm like, "Okay, I'm just going to take the gloves off." I just like my life on a little bit of nicotine. And it's an anti-aging drug and anti-Alzheimer's at low doses, and smoking's bad for you. So guys, don't smoke, don't chew. It's bad for you.

Dave:

If I was smoking cigarettes, it'd be a different conversation.

Luke:

Yeh, we'd be cooked.

Dave:

I smoked for a long, long time, and I think that's why I have wrestled a bit with the guilt of using nicotine in different forms that are much more safe, and from which I had derived benefit. Because when I quit smoking, it was like quitting drinking and all the other drugs. It was just a hard stop. I'm done, never

again kind of thing. But then I heard people like you talking about the cognitive benefits of nicotine. I was like, "Well, I mean, I'm not going to start smoking, but what's a little gum?"

Luke:

As long as it's a little. And what I found is that when I just said, "Okay, I'm not going to self-regulate, I'm just going to take it whenever I want to." I got to a point, I was probably doing like 48 milligrams a day, like 40 sprays a day. And I like it. Until you get to a point where they don't work very well and you get a little bit nauseous from it, and blah. Still, that's two cigarettes worth of nicotine. There's 20 milligrams per cigarette. Maybe you don't absorb all of it. But anyway, it's still not that much, but it was too much.

So I went cold turkey. The physiological washout for nicotine is three days. After that, it was all psychological, but the psychological is strong. So I did it and I found I could take any other kind of essential oil spray. So the habit was done. I found that using a patch works great. Use a patch and just keep cutting the patch in half every two days. And pretty soon you're off of it without cravings. And now what I do is I have my little spray thing and I have a time box, a little box, for cell phones or something, and I toss my supply of nicotine in there and I just set it for 24 hours. And it doesn't open again. So even if my meat operating system is like, "Use more nicotine," it's like, "Oh, I can't." And you're fully in charge when you decide to spray nicotine.

Dave:

I like it.

Luke:

It's later in the day or some other time when I'm focused on just this little voice in the back of my head's, like, "Wouldn't your brain work better on nicotine?" And the answer is yes, but it doesn't mean that I choose to do it. It means my body is trying to get me to choose to do it. So I might listen to my body. Then I'm like, "Ah, it's not available." So now I'm on my dose. It's one spray. And if I'm like, today is going to be a heavy day, I'm going to set the box for 12 hours. But if I'm going to do shamanic work or journeying work with substances or neurofeedback or big energy medicine work, and yes, guys, I do that kind of thing. If you didn't notice this, I had yak butter tea on the side of Mount Kalash. I've interviewed Alberto Vito. I have a very strong and potent practice that is cross lineage. Anyway, when I do that, bring on the nicotine. I might do 20 sprays in a session, and it re-ups whatever substance I may be using for medicinal purposes. Or for neurofeedback, although certain forms, like [inaudible 00:23:43] nicotine, is counterproductive. For other forms, it works better. So I reserve it for the times when it has shamanic uses.

And one of the things that convinced me of this was just trying it while I was doing curated, medically supervised vision work with substances like ketamine. Also, there are tobacco niros. These are basically shamans who instead of using ayahuasca, they're using tobacco at high doses to hallucinate. And a friend of mine who's a very, very powerful shaman, some people may guess who it is, but it's up to him to tell the story in full. I convinced him to try nicotine for the first time. He'd never done it because, you know, for purity and did not want to be addicted and all that other kind of stuff.

So he takes a spray, flies back on the couch, literally flies back, starts speaking in a language he doesn't know. And literally, according to him, the spirits of the ancestors of North American indigenous people came into the room and they had a two-hour conversation that I was a witness to. It was brought on by the sacred spirit of tobacco as concentrated in a pharmaceutically pure spray of nicotine. What the hell? The world's complex, maybe we're all crazy, but I think nicotine's awesome, just I don't want to overdo it. So I outsource the decision of saying no to myself all the time.

Dave:

I like that.

Luke:

[inaudible 00:25:09].

Dave:

That would work with nicotine.

Luke:

If it was heroin, you'd be hitting that box open with a sledgehammer about every four hours and be like, plan canceled. Boom. So respect that.

Dave:

We talked a little bit about addiction and why it's exploded in the last three years, just the lack of human connection. And you've talked about how 12-step programs which provide community have been very successful, but you said the most successful. What about ibogaine? I've seen so many powerful neurological arguments that ibogaine is very potent for addiction. Do you think it's not as strong as 12 step?

Luke:

Well, I've not worked with ibogaine, so I can't speak to it directly, but it is widely known as specifically for opiate addiction. And then the iboga in terms of traditional ceremonial use is widely revered for its ability to alleviate addictions. And so, I think there's some truth to that because there's enough evidence to support that fact. But I think my case is a little bit unique, Dave, in that I went with the most trusted model based on the historical reference that we have access to outside of indigenous peoples throughout history that have probably done all kinds of things to alleviate addictions. And there were probably fewer things to be addicted to back then anyway, right?

But when I got sober and what's prevalent, and I think wisely so, in the 12-step model is that complete abstinence is the key to long-term sobriety. And it has to do with this phenomenon, and it truly is a phenomenon. It's called the phenomenon of craving. And it's when you have an addicted person, let's say addicted to alcohol, which I was, and if I drank alcohol, I could not control the amount that I drank or the duration that I would drink or the frequency with which I drank. But additionally, if I drank alcohol, I had zero resistance to taking other drugs that I really didn't want to take. And this is this kind of thing that I like to refer to as switching seats on the Titanic. You see this a lot when people are trying to get sober. Well, I'm just going to use cannabis, or I'll just have a few beers, or I'll just do a little blow on the weekend. And inevitably, no matter what seat you're on, the ship is going down.

So because of the phenomenon of craving that's very common, and I would say universal really, to most addicts, that if you quit one thing, try to substitute with another substance, you'll eventually get addicted to that and likely get back on the first thing that you tried to quit. So based on that idea, and my own experience of that year after year just trying to, in my case, I just wanted to use cannabis. I liked it. I could still function.

Dave:

At least it felt like you could still function.

Luke:

Yeah, I mean, I was brain-dead. I functioned at a minimal level, but it didn't destroy my life and put me out on the street at four in the morning in dangerous situations and things like that. So I experienced that myself. So then the answer is complete abstinence. You don't do any drugs or any alcohol if you want to be sober, and you want that sobriety to last.

So that's what I did for 22 years. And I became deeply immersed in all types of different therapy and 12 step groups and going to India to learn to meditate, and just anything I could do to better myself and just feel more comfortable in my skin because, as I said, when I didn't use drugs and alcohol to feel comfortable, it was wildly uncomfortable just to be me in my sober body. And at 22 years, after interviewing a number of people on my podcast and just running with people in similar circles that you and I share, I started to meet people who had been former addicts and went and did iboga or ayahuasca, and were essentially struck sober from the sort of transcendental experience. The potency of that experience would render them sober.

Dave:

Even aya? Very few people I know got cured by using aya.

Luke:

I've met a few of them.

Dave:

Interesting.

Luke:

Enough to pique my interest. But still, it took me a few years of just being like, "Well, that's good for you guys, but I don't trust myself and the kind of addiction that I had that I'm not allowed to play in that sandbox." That's interesting. It's intriguing. And the stories I would hear were fascinating. And not just people getting sober, but people just being absolved of their trauma and their problems and just fundamentally having a change in their character and their whole perception of their reality, and their lives dramatically improving as a result of working with psychedelics and plant medicines. But it was still off the table for me.

But I interviewed enough people and met enough people that, as you often hear, you hear the call, that's something people say. And this ayahuasca just kept coming into my awareness to the point where it was getting ridiculous. Just meeting someone, and they could be talking about an infinite number of things, and they would start talking about ayahuasca. This happened for a while, and eventually I just started getting this intuitive feeling that it could benefit me. And even though I had been sober for 22 years and had a great life, I was a celebrity fashion stylist in Hollywood and doing all these great things, a musician. By outward appearances, I was successful. But there were still areas in my life in which I was stuck, particularly around romantic relationships, just clueless, not successful in making those work in a healthy way, co-dependency issues and whatnot.

Dave:

A lot of addicts have co-dependency. I had to deal with being co-dependent when I was younger. It's rough.

Luke:

It's a real thing. And speaking of addictions that aren't a substance, being addicted to other people is very real, as is codependency. So long story short, eventually I interview someone who's got an ayahuasca center in Costa Rica.

Dave:

Yeah, he's been on my show too.

Luke:

They invited me down there and I interviewed this channel named Paul Selig, and he taps into these entities or beans, and he asks them questions, and the answers that they reveal are quite profound, and seemingly trustworthy and based in truth. It's not really as wacky as it sounds. Because when you hear the channels speak through him, you're like, that rings as true. So we were interviewing and I said, "Hey, can I just go off the script here a bit?" I said, "Paul, would it be appropriate to ask your guides if it would be appropriate for me to go to Costa Rica and sit in an ayahuasca ceremony?" And he listened for a sec? And he goes, "Yeah, I think you can do that." He asked the guides, and essentially the message was, "It will be safe for you to do as a recovering addict. It's likely that it would benefit you, but you could not go and you'd still be okay."

And I was like, bing, green light, and went in and had four really incredible experiences over the course of the week. And in so doing, I had to totally rearrange my whole model of addiction and what recovery looks like and what abstinence is. And there was a lot of reconciliation within myself because I had built an identity, and rightly so, of someone who is a sober guy. I am sober. It's like when someone says, "I am vegan." Nope, you're a human being who eats plants. I am sober is not an identity, but I needed to build that for my own self-preservation.

Dave:

Yeah, it was a hack.

Luke:

Yeah. So in those first few ceremonies, it was scary because I thought, well, what do I call myself after this? What are people in my recovery community going to think and so on? But what became abundantly clear to me was that, and I've done, of course, a lot of research and just examination of this because I've benefited so much from many different experiences over the past few years, is that higher states of consciousness can heal.

Dave:

Absolutely.

Luke:

And there were parts within myself that didn't heal, and I found ways through meditation and neurofeedback and different things that had elevated my consciousness, but not to the point of sitting with ayahuasca or 5-MeO-DMT or some of the things that I've experienced. And what's interesting is the origin of the 12 steps, and many people don't know this. And let me give the caveat, this is just my story. I'm not telling someone who's trying to be sober that they should do psychedelics. I really want to make that clear.

Dave:

Yeah. We can talk more about the most efficacious ones for that. But keep going with your story.

Luke:

And I mean, it's important to say that because this is not me promoting this. This is saying, I am shocked that this has been my experience, and it's fascinating and beautiful, and it's benefited me a lot. I don't know that that would be true for everyone.

Dave:

It can be dangerous, especially if you do it to be cool. If you don't have the intuitive calling and you don't check in with someone who's not you, I think doing ayahuasca is exceptionally dangerous.

Luke:

Well, I contemplated this for about two years.

Dave:

You see? You did it right. You were called and you checked.

Luke:

This wasn't like, "Hey, this weekend we're going to go sit with ayahuasca. Want to go?" And I'm like, "Yeah, what the hell?" So I'll just give that caveat. And just really, this is earnestly from my heart. These medicines are not something to play around with. It can get very dark, and things could go horribly wrong. And I know that because when I was an addict, I did LSD and mushrooms all the time and had terrifying, horrific experiences. And because I wasn't doing so consciously, there was no intention other than to try to numb the experience of being me.

But anyway, the really interesting piece here is that if you look at the origins of the 12 steps, and that began with the organization, Alcoholics Anonymous, the co-founder Bill Wilson's story is very fascinating. He was a drunkard stockbroker from New York City. And he tried to dry up again and again, it never worked. Well, he checked himself into this hospital called Towns Hospital and went through a drying out process in which they administered something called Belladonna, which was sort of a cocktail of the plant medicine, belladonna and some other sedatives to get him through the DTs. Because coming off alcohol addiction can be extremely dangerous, and you can die from alcohol withdrawals much more-

Dave:

It's a deadly nightshade.

Luke:

Yeah, much more so than a lot of other drugs. I mean, coming off heroin's not fun, but you're not going to die, likely. So he takes this plant medicine mixture, has all these wild hallucinations, and then a couple of days later has the infamous white light experience upon which the entire program and the entire 12 steps is built. And that was-

Dave:

Based on a plant journey? Wow.

Luke:

Yeah, and it's a really interesting dichotomy. I just find this so fascinating. So he had this peak experience. Then a couple of days later, probably still in the DTs a bit, and the after effects of that integration, and the way he described it in the book called Alcoholics Anonymous, is that the whole room filled with white light, and he felt the presence of God and the presence of love. And from that moment on, the guy never had a drink ever again.

So it was not the plant medicine, but it was the spiritual experience, the transcendent experience that was a higher state of consciousness that allowed him to access God, source, whatever you want to call it, to give him the restraint and remove that obsession. So then he goes on to get these downloads, which are codified within the actual writings of the 12 steps, which are essentially universal principles that are present in many different lineage of spirituality and religions and so on. Just, be a moral person, essentially. Have integrity. They're about building-

Dave:

Those pesky things.

Luke:

They're really just based on having integrity. So the purpose of him creating the 12 steps was to elicit a similar spiritual experience so that one could have a spiritual awakening and no longer have the need to use alcohol or drugs addictively. So it's really interesting. And then he later went on to experiment with LSD with Aldous Huxley in the '60s, which is crazy. He wanted to bring LSD into AA. And of course, wisely so, I think, everyone said, "Bill, you're nuts. We're not bringing..." It was legal then. It was like a psychiatric medicine.

Dave:

Yes. Stan Grof has been on this show, the guy who first used it in medical practice, right?

Luke:

Right. So there's a history that's inconvenient for many in terms of recovery and rightly so, and I respect that because complete abstinence was the path for me. But what I can say, after some years of venturing into the realm of psychedelics with some degree of consistency, is that there were traumas in my body and in my psyche that were preventing me from living my life fully as a sober man despite 22 years of very committed spiritual work, years of Kundalini yoga, years of every 12 step group you can think of for every problem you might have, a course in miracles, reading Eckhart Tolle, reading Ram Dass, David Hawkins, going to India, meditating.

Dave:

All the above.

Luke:

And my life improved dramatically. But there were still things within me in terms of true acceptance and self-love and just healing abuse and trauma that I experienced as a kid that I just couldn't get to it until I

explored that realm. And nothing has come close to being able to provide those benefits to me. And also-

Dave:

When you say nothing, do you mean... You've taken, I have, let's see, 5-MeO-DMT, psilocybin, Ayahuasca, peyote, and ketamine.

Luke:

That sounds like a lot when you say it like that.

Dave:

Well, which of them are we referring to here?

Luke:

Each one has had its own benefit. And I said, when you read that list, it sounds like, "You're a drug addict, dude. You're doing all these drugs." But that's over the course of four years. And it's like each time that... I mean, I live in Austin. I could be doing plant medicines every weekend.

Dave:

I find I do them more often now than I'm in Austin. It's kind of weird how that is.

Luke:

So it's not something I seek out. I'm not looking for it. These experiences that you just listed have literally just fallen on my doorstep. "Hey Luke, I have this intuitive hit that you're supposed to be here at this retreat in a month." I take a few days, think about it. And 90% of the time it's a no, because I don't have a good reason to be there. There's nothing I want to work on or manifest or heal or just the set and setting doesn't resonate with me. But out of those experiences, each different medicine has had such diverse benefits in terms of healing and realization, and also just a deepening of my relationship with God.

Which is the very most important thing in my life, and the thing that got me sober in the first place. How I got sober, Dave, is I checked myself into rehab. I had never been around religion. I wasn't spiritual. I didn't believe in God. I guess I would be an agnostic at that time, just like, I'm not saying it doesn't exist, but all I know of it is from movies of people going to church. I'm so disconnected from any contact with that realm.

Dave:

What was that, a Eddie Murphy movie?

Luke:

But I check into rehab, and I'm going through all kinds of crazy withdrawal and I'm like, "Can you guys give me some Dilaudid or something?" I go to the nurse and she said, "Oh no, you don't need that. We checked your vitals. You're fine. You just got to rough it." And I said, "Well, give me something." She said, "Luke, you have to go to your room and pray. Pray to God to remove your obsession." And that's all she gave me. So that's all I did.

And I went to my little room in that rehab, and I literally, just from seeing it in the movies, it's the only way I knew how to do it. I got on my hands and knees, I put my hands in prayer position, and I prayed the most humble, sincere prayer of my life that was just, "I want to be free. I just want to be free. I'm not asking for anything, but just take this freaking obsession out of my body and my mind." And from that moment until this moment right now, I've never experienced that ever again. But there was work to follow up on that, or I would've relapsed for sure. But I surrounded myself, I changed my whole life.

But with each of those medicine experiences, I've worked through something different because they each have their own flavor. And each shaman or facilitator has their own unique energy, the sort of energetic grid, the container, the context of the experience.

Dave:

That's why the shaman really matters with these medicines, right?

Luke:

So much. And thankfully, I've never had a negative experience.

Dave:

Don't do it with a newbie.

Luke:

Yeah, because I've been very discerning. I have a wife who's very experienced in these realms, and is even more discerning than I am. And I trust her vision on things. But with something like 5-MeO, I mean unequivocally, those experiences have by far been the most profound experiences of my life. I mean, outside of, so far, so much so, it's ineffable. There's no words to describe the place that you access for that brief period of time. And even just having those experiences sans any realizations or inner work or understanding, just being in a state of non-duality for three to five minutes, fundamentally changed who I am forever and there's no going back.

And in terms of the things you talk about, reactivity and being triggered and your nervous system not being able to be regulated, and all the things that are also useful in the biohacking realm, neurofeedback and all of that. I mean, the things that I'm able to be resilient through when my nervous system gets triggered and there's a natural moment of fight or flight, I'm shocked at how quickly I come back into my body and I'm me again. And I couldn't do that before. Neurofeedback, all these things help, float tanks. I mean, I made a lot of progress, but some of those experience that you mentioned have just fundamentally changed me into a totally different person.

Dave:

Wow.

Luke:

But some of it I think is also because of the fact that I did have 22 years of a model that I had created. I know what the goal is. I want a deep level of presence. I want a spiritual connection. I want loving, healthy relationships. I wanted to be an integrious, honest, authentic, loving, kind, patient, forgiving person. I've been working on all of that and making progress. So going into those experiences, I'm not just kind of like, "Ooh, let's see what happens." I know what I want to work on, and I know what's blocking me.

So in that first Ayahuasca ceremony, I had no idea that it was going to be that powerful. I'm sitting there 22 years sober, sitting on my mat with my eyes closed, just waiting for it to happen. And it starts to happen. And I've never felt so free in my whole life. And the freedom really came from learning to trust myself, and that this isn't an excuse to get high or escapism. It's like-

Dave:

It's hard to get addicted to Ayahuasca. You throw up, it's rough.

Luke:

Unless you like throwing up licorice juice, essentially. But anyway, to your question, each of those experiences have been so unique and so beautiful. And at times, harrowing, and facing things that are very difficult to look at within myself, things that I'm ashamed of or still hurt by, or areas in which I'm still stuck. There's still something in the subconscious, and I need to go into that quantum realm in order to get in there and kind of do a psychic surgery and remove those parts of myself and evolve and emerge as a different person. I mean, I used to be terrified of having kids. It was like my absolute worst nightmare. I would never commit in relationships.

Dave:

Yeah, I had that too.

Luke:

And now we're in the process of wanting to get pregnant and going through whatever is necessary to do so.

Dave:

It's a lot of work.

Luke:

Now, for example, just one small example, I'm more afraid now of not having a kid.

Dave:

Well, you've done it so much, inner inner child healing work. That's what's profound, it's what it takes.

Luke:

That's it. So in summary, again, I don't recommend this journey for others, but I would be doing myself and others a disservice to not be open and honest about this, what for me is a unique experience. I'm sure there are many other people that are combining both of these realms of addiction recovery and also using different medicines to heal. But to me, it's still just front page news in my awareness, because the change that I've experienced has been so profound.

Dave:

Wow. I think you did a lot of the personal work before you did the plant medicine. I see a disturbing trend in people saying, "I'm going to go to Ayahuasca." Which is one of the more dangerous substances actually, "I'm going to do that first." And I have some friends who are like, "Oh, I've done 200 ceremonies." I'm like, "When is it not working? At what point?" And so I do see kind of a disturbing

trend, and because it is uniquely, I think, dangerous spiritually, it needs to be treated with reverence and respect.

Luke:

I agree.

Dave:

I prefer to do it with someone who's exceptionally experienced at sitting with it, because a good shaman's like a firewall.

Luke:

Oh, 100%.

Dave:

To keep the bad stuff out while you get rid of your bad stuff.

Luke:

100%. I'm so glad you brought that up, because I'm always conscious to give my disclaimers, but this one that you bring here is really important because when the veils of your, as you would call your Meat OS. When your awareness, your consciousness, is no longer confined within your senses, and you're in a realm where your senses are pushed to the side, and you truly are in a quantum realm of no space and no time, not only do benevolent angels and guides and God itself reside there, but because we're living in a polarity, we're living in a duality in that realm, there is also polarity and there are definitely dark forces in that realm. And this is very traumatizing for many people that go into it sort of willy-nilly and don't have the protection of a proper guide.

Dave:

Those things will move right in and take up residence if you don't have a great guide.

Luke:

Yeah, and in circles I run in, I mean, I won't say it's common with people that I'm friends with and stuff, because I think they have the same level of discernment and caution around this, or maybe prudence. But I mean, I do hear stories and I know they're true, of people taking on entities or just almost becoming possessed and just having really dark experiences. Whether or not those goblins exist in those realms or not, they emerge worse, and have a very difficult time finding their way back to this reality. So yeah, it's definitely nothing to play with. But for me, when I've done so with that prudence and being very mindful about it, I've had nothing but positive experiences.

Dave:

And you did your work first. You did lots of personal development work, lots of therapy, addiction recovery, neurofeedback, breath work, cold therapy. You did the preparatory work instead of just jumping in looking for a panacea.

Luke:

Well, that explains why you hear these stories, because I've benefited so much, I've been a bit naive in terms of if I meet someone and they say, "Oh, I've sat with Ayahuasca a few times," I would immediately trust that person because I think they've done the same work that I've done.

Dave:

No, no, no, no.

Luke:

But it's so interesting, you see-

Dave:

It's actually a sign they're weird.

Luke:

You see people that have had a lot of these experiences yet still really lack moral fortitude and just integrity, which has been-

Dave:

You can lack integrity and do Ayahuasca a hundred times, you won't get integrity. That comes from something else.

Luke:

Right. It's like you hear these stories of these predatory shaman in South America and stuff, and they're drinking Ayahuasca all the time and they're raping people. So it doesn't necessarily, if you have a peak experience, it doesn't necessarily give you access to or instill you with moral character and trustworthiness. It's interesting to me, and it's one of my points of naivete that I'm learning to overcome that just because I've had such tremendous transformation and I've become a much more pure person, just wholly speaking.

Dave:

Even since I first worked with you on coaching, you've dramatically evolved. It's really impressive.

Luke:

And I'm not trying to toot my own horn.

Dave:

I practice integrity in my word. I don't say things that aren't true at any level that I'm aware of.

Luke:

I appreciate that. And all by the grace of God, honestly. But it's like, the way I look at the relationship with God for me, and it's not a religious thing, but it truly is a relationship, and it's like a partnership. And so when I show up fully and I'm really ready to change and I'm ready to surrender those parts of myself that are based in falsehood, the power that's needed to cause that change is the power of God. And it's like, when I give my humble permission and I really surrender and turn myself over, then these

tremendous changes take place because I've allowed them to happen. And all I've really done is shown up and said, "Hey, there's some things about me that I would really like to change because they're not working for me. God, could you help me?"

Which is what I did in that first prayer. I wasn't asking to be a millionaire or have a lot of pretty women around or a fancy car. I just said, "God, I want to be free, and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to facilitate that liberation." Which for me, the message from God through the people around me was, "You need to go to goddamn meetings every day. You need to give up your old friends. You got to have a whole new life." And I was willing to do so.

You have to learn to meditate, you got to pray, read spiritual books. I did my work, but the real transformational energy and power came from and continues to come from God. It's like I'm giving God keys to my room and he's coming in and cleaning it up.

Dave:

Wow.

Luke:

So I'm a participant in the process. So when you say, "Yeah, you've grown a lot." It's like, well, yeah, and I've been partly responsible, but mostly it's just grace. It's just me allowing grace to infiltrate my life and my awareness and to change things about myself that I have difficulty changing in and of myself and my own willpower.

Dave:

It seems like a lot of the substances that you were using, actually, they work on some level to help facilitate forgiveness, which is at the core of the healing work that I do. And you know you've been through a very early version of 40 years of Zen, and that protocol has evolved since you did it. And it's actually in my new book, in Smarter Not Harder. Just how to do a reset to do a rapid forgiveness with or without technology.

But when I did ketamine for the show, I was like, "Oh wow, this is a complete forgiveness drug." When I sit on this, now that I know how to do the reset, I can just go, bam, bam, bam. I'm like, "Oh man, I hadn't thought about that girl in high school. It looks like there's something to forgive there." And you just get it done. So some of these really facilitate that. And sometimes there's downloads and all. The one that you haven't done though is the one that I would actually recommend to a friend who would call and say, "I have an addiction problem." And that's ibogaine, because ibogaine resets your neurotransmitter receptivity kind of back to baseline. It's like a reset. So people describe doing it, and then the next day, they don't crave alcohol, they don't crave heroin, they don't crave nicotine even. They don't crave anything.

And it's not one that you microdose. It's when you do it, you do it. It's intense. A buddy of mine who's a high level military guy from one of the branches went through an ibogaine ceremony recently for traumatic brain injury. And I had a chance to talk with Jared from Black Rifle, because now I'm in Austin, I get to hang out with cool people. And he's also working on companies like Mission Within, which is taking veterans with brain injuries and using the same thing. It's very interesting that they're having profound resolution of trauma and brain injury as well as addiction recovery from this one of the plant substances. But I don't think you see that from, say, doing Ayahuasca. But I do think you see trauma resolution more from ketamine than you would Aya. But Aya is a slippery kind of a snake. In fact, you see snakes when you do it.

Luke:

Yeah, it is interesting that on paper, the most logical substance for me to work with, with iboga, [inaudible 00:54:29] but the reason why I've never done it, and it's around, is honestly, I've never felt called.

Dave:

There you go. And I'm so happy you said that.

Luke:

So you could say that, and if I wasn't thinking correctly, I'd be like, "Oh, well Dave, yeah, that makes sense." So I'll go do that. But it has to do more than make sense, it has to make my heart flutter a bit. There has to be, ooh, a tingly yes. There's a charm, a sense of charm that draws me into the experience.

Dave:

Yes.

Luke:

That brings that decision. If it's just an intellectual curiosity, it's a no.

Dave:

Good.

Luke:

And for me, it's not only got to be a yes, it has to be a yes on multiple days in a row where I recheck in and I go, "I'm signed up for this thing. I could still pull out, is this a yes, Luke? It's still a yes." For example, there's an opportunity in a month or two to sit with bufo again, 5-MeO-DMT. And I've done that quite a few times. And I mean, honestly, some of them have been a little scary because of the ego dissolution, the part of me that doesn't want to let go of being me and having a persona and an intellect. I mean, it's such an immersive experience. So I haven't felt called to do that at all.

Dave:

I don't feel any call there.

Luke:

After the last few times, which happened incidentally in one day, I thought I'm probably done for life. But someone texted me and said, "Hey, I'm coming to town. I'm going to be serving that medicine if you know anyone, door's open." I was like, "Oh, that's nice. I'll keep it in mind if I know someone who's curious about that and wants to lean in." And ever since I got that text, there's been a little tingly feeling in my awareness. It's like, hmm, that's a maybe for me, but it's got to go from a maybe to a yes, to a hell yes, to an F yes, before I'm going to walk in that door. And I might even walk in the door, hypothetically speaking, sit on the mat, and if I get a maybe then, I'm walking out.

Dave:

I actually have done that. Actually, specifically with Ayahuasca.

Luke:

Smart.

Dave:

I've done it twice in 23 years. And there would've been a time in the middle, but when I was there, I'm like, I am absolutely not called to this. And I was getting a hell no from my nervous system. So I said, "No." I don't think the spirit of Ayahuasca liked that very much, but I had some interesting things happen after that. But that's how you have to roll. And you said something that's really precious for people listening to the show. You've also been an addict. Tell me the difference between that tingly feeling, that's you in my world, that's you tuning into your operating system, your innate knowing and being able to hear that signal out of all the noise. But you also have a signal in your operating system that is the addiction signal. And if I was to sit here and I don't want to be mean and if there's too much somebody to go myself fuck myself, but if I was here with some heroin, how would the tingle you would get from that differ from a hell yes. This is a major teaching moment for people listening. How do you know intuition versus urge?

Luke:

Yeah, that's a great question. And it's interesting because I've just had this freedom from those substances that were so problematic, it's where I don't even have an aversion to it.

Dave:

So, you're really free of it then. No aversion, no attraction.

Luke:

No, it's a neutrality. So, it's like a lot of people use cannabis recreationally, and that was my number one drug. I mean, just the smell of that would just send me into a frenzy when I was a kid. And people will be smoking weed just when I'm out and about, for example, and I'll take a whiff and I go, that smells really nice. And there's just no part of me that says, that smells nice, therefore I need to put it in my lungs. And it's the difference between alignment and infatuation. When there's a medicine opportunity that I'm feeling into that feels like it could be a yes, I'm waiting for the will of nature and my will to line up. And there's a lock and key that go click, and it's a different feeling than the addiction, which is an infatuation and obsession. It's a thinking about when you're going to get it, who has it, how are you going to get more, where are you going to get the money. You're anticipating the relief that's going to come once you get it.

Dave:

And that's lacking from say and desire to devour something.

Luke:

The anticipation I have around psychedelics is like, oh, shit, my ego's not going to like this. It's an anticipation of, oh, man, we're going to be treading in some deep water here, are you ready for this? It's an alignment. And if the alignment is out of alignment, then it's a no. With addiction, there's no capacity to even think of saying no because it's based in a visceral desire and a craving this. There's a craving, there's a wanting and a longing to it. There isn't an inspiration. When my friend texts me about the 5-MeO, it's like, Ooh, that's an interesting idea. It's not a, oh, God, I got to have that idea.

Dave:

Got it. That's the difference.

Luke:

It's pretty neutral. If anything, it's like, oh, just a little subtle sense of charm. But when something addictive was placed in front of me when I was addicted, there was literally no option to say no. It was actually impossible to not do it because my willpower would be overcome by the need to anesthetize myself. And I think now I also don't have the need to be anesthetized. Sometimes I wonder, we're going to go grab a bite, we waste a lot of time, but we could sit down and it's possible that I could have a half a glass of red wine and go live my life and never be an alcoholic again.

Dave:

I actually think it's likely, but you shouldn't try.

Luke:

Yeah. But the consequences if I'm wrong are dire and literally speaking, possibly deadly.

Dave:

You know what we could do if you wanted to try it?

Luke:

What?

Dave:

I'll have a stun gun. If you drink the wine, I'll zap you a few times on the balls and your body will be like, never again, never again. So, we'll associate a relapse with electrical shock. What do you think? Should we try it?

Luke:

Maybe it works for some. I mean, they used to use electroshock therapy on alcoholics back in the day.

Dave:

For a different way, not for aversion. I'm thinking of the padlock, where for nicotine addiction, it works well, but it turns out the body hates electrical shocks. So, if you give it a little thing it likes followed by a shock, you'd be like, nevermind. But let's not try it. I don't think you should ever have any alcohol again.

Luke:

And the difference there, Dave, is there's nothing that I need to numb from in my experience of myself. So, I'm not overtaken by the curiosity to see if I could have a glass of wine. I don't need a glass of wine, I feel fine. I mean, maybe I have, I don't know, some cava or something, just if I want to relax. I mean, there's things I can use that don't have any consequences, that aren't addictive, that relax me, take CBD or something like that. But it's a really good question that you pose. How do you know the difference between a curious intrigue or an intuitive thought or a craving and a need and a want? And they're so easy to tell apart because of how your nervous system feels in assessing that decision.

Dave:

Yeah. It's because you've learned through your practice to tune in into your nervous system to know how it feels. Something else that I found is helpful for those things. If there's something that you're considering and without mentioning it, it just comes up three times in a short period of time over the course of a couple days. Just random people mentioning it. Maybe the universe is just random, but I don't think so. It doesn't appear to be.

Luke:

It wasn't for me.

Dave:

No. And so, that's a good thing. Pay attention. I don't care if it's a book you should read, an episode of a show you'd listen to, if three people tell you to do it, they're getting a message from somewhere, especially if they don't know each other. Something's going on there. So, you just take note and then you tune in. And what I find is both with 40 years of Zen or plant ceremonies, if you feel a little bit of fear, that's a good thing, because that's your animal operating system. Your meat OS saying, don't you dare hack into me and be in charge, you will be afraid if you hack into me. I'm in charge, not you. And another name for that, at least portions or parts of your operating system are your ego. The ego's in there to drive the operating system. And the ego doesn't like it that you're in there too. It's like God dammit, why does this guy keep messing with my operating system?

Luke:

And it doesn't like to let go of its role at all.

Dave:

No. So, people feel that the day before they go to a transformative experience, whether it's Aya, whether it's 40 years of Zen, whether it's a deep holotropic breath work, there's like anticipation a little bit of. And then sometimes in the middle of it, as you know from doing 40 years, there's usually a time when you hit this wall and you're just really angry. And that's when you're about to pop a bubble in your ego and you're really going to hack into your nervous system and your operating system. And that's where all the forgiveness and the letting go and all that works.

My experience has been that if you do holotropic breathing, you do EMDR, you do internal family systems therapy like Gabby Bernstein talks about, I think and Mastin Kipp probably on the show, if you do those things first and then you say, well, maybe I shouldn't learn tantric sex or act BDSM, it doesn't matter. Do those things, which all are reliable paths to altered states. Do holotropic breathing or something else, learn some yoga. And if that still doesn't work, then you could start light with ketamine, which is legal and easily available, then do ketamine, then maybe mushrooms, and then maybe 5-MeO.

Luke:

Say advice.

Dave:

Is that a good order of operations? What would you add in there?

Luke:

God, I think it's so individual. I mean, I've met people for whom their first experience was 5-MeO, which is by far, far, far, far, way far more intense.

Dave:

It can be a destabilizer now.

Luke:

And life changing. And I've met people that did that as their first thing and then way down the road ended up doing some ketamine therapy. So, I don't know, but I think you have a point there.

Dave:

I mean, for a virgin who has no clue.

Luke:

The safety and legality, I think what you said about the holotropic breath work, I mean, you can achieve some deep states of healing. And I did it essentially in Kundalini yoga. And I mean, I would see visuals and have all kinds of-

Dave:

I saw past lives on that stuff.

Luke:

Really?

Dave:

Yeah.

Luke:

Like spontaneous tears and trauma healing or just ecstatic laughter. I mean, you can do a lot within your own system, but I think your sequence there is pretty good. I did had another friend who was also sober and he was having some anxiety and depression and just blocks he still couldn't overcome after many years. And he went and did clinical ketamine therapy and healed his anxiety and depression. And then later on went and very deliberately and intentionally started exploring some of the other medicines that were not legal in the United States and potentially more intense and whatnot. So, I think that's a good starting point. And even microdosing, I mean, there's a lot of benefit in my experience to be had even in just sub perceptual doses of different substances that-

Dave:

But not Ibogaine. Microdosing Ibogaine is a bad idea.

Luke:

I've never heard of that. Doesn't sound like-

Dave:

Tim Ferris talked about doing that when I interviewed him last on the show. And since then I just learned more about the neurobiology of that. I'm like, I don't think that's a microdose kind of thing. Kudos, Tim, for trying.

Luke:

Yeah. That wouldn't be my first go-to. I enjoy microdosing LSD and psilocybin and also sometimes Kanna, which is a really beautiful... It's actually legal. It's a South African shrub, a really ancient plant medicine. And it in large doses is similar to MDMA. But in microdose, it's a really good mood elevator and heart opener. Sort of like if you ate a crap-load of chocolate, that kind of theobromine sort of feeling.

Dave:

I haven't tried Kanna. I'll have to give it a shot.

Luke:

It's really nice. And it's legal. So, there are ways for people to dip their toe in the water safely if they feel called. And many people don't and never will, and they're going to have a great life too.

Dave:

I also want to point out, I'm on Daniel Amen's board of directors, and his neuroimaging work absolutely saved my career. And it was actually part of the birth of biohacking. And that I'm going to business school and I'm failing, and I don't know why, and I feel like maybe I'm just stupid. And I did one of his early spec scans and I was like, oh, look, you have a broken brain, you have a harder problem. So, he's been very consistent with his work, and I believe it wholeheartedly, otherwise I wouldn't be on his board. And he talks about and shows you pictures of what alcohol and cannabis do to your brain. They're bad for you. That's not to say that there isn't a case for taking oral cannabis in certain circumstances where it may be beneficial, but for the average person, it's not helping even if it feels like it is. But it is recreationally fun. Maybe do it on occasion, you're probably fine, but alcohol turns out isn't that good.

But when it comes to things like regular use of ketamine and other things like that, he'll show you picture after picture of people's brains where the metabolism is harmed by doing this. And even Ayahuasca, he's like, "Dave, even a single dose, it is not good for the brain. It takes a long time for the brain to recover." And the lesson beyond all this is, A, you probably should be following Daniel Amen's work, Doc Amen, I think is his handle on most things, if you're considering any of this kind of work, because you need to understand what it may do to your brain. And it's also the reminder that says, this is an occasional practice at best with a long recovery and integration period. This is not a regular, I'm going to do it every two weeks because I live in Austin practice. I think that's harmful.

Luke:

Yeah, no, good advice. He did a brain scan for me and it was alarming to say the least. So much so that I immediately went out and bought a hyperbaric chamber and probably did 200 sessions in that thing.

Dave:

Did it help?

Luke:

Very much so. Yeah. Yeah. I haven't done a follow-up scan, but what I found interesting with the hyperbaric that I actually really enjoyed was, because I would just meditate in there, essentially. There's not much else to do depending on the style that you have. Mine was the lay down kind, so you're going to lay down. So, I kind of meditate, take a nap, but I would go in there and microdose ketamine, like a ketamine trophy, and listen to a Joe Dispenza meditation on New Calm or something like that. And I had some really just deeply restorative, beautiful experiences doing that. There's something about the sensory deprivation element of a chamber. You're in there, no one can get in, you can't get out, at least not quickly. And also just the blood flow to the brain of whatever you happen to be taking. Now, Amen would probably really hate that.

Dave:

He would support the ketamine part.

Luke:

Because I remember asking him, I think about Ayahuasca, psilocybin or something, he was like, "Never do it. It destroys your brain." I said, okay, noted. I'll be mindful.

Dave:

I actually trust him quite a lot there. And there is a case for microdosing psilocybin because it increases BDNF and it increases neuroplasticity. And I've never asked him about microdosing. Next time I talk to him, I will.

Luke:

Yeah, I'll be curious to see what he has to say. And I respect his point of view, but then there's also this-

Dave:

He's a master. Yeah.

Luke:

There's also subjective experience where you've read a list of all these things I've done in the last four years and my brain's never worked better. No, I don't know what it would look like under a scan.

Dave:

You also did hyperbaric, which may be mitigating. And I mean I've had an Oxy Health hyperbaric chamber for 15 years at my house, including a hard chamber, as well as a soft chamber for much of that time. And I just think there's a case where they're expensive and I'm actually working with them on a way of making this much more affordable for people.

Luke:

Oh, good. I just actually sold mine begrudgingly because I'm experiencing a bout of tinnitus that's gotten really bad. And I noticed that when I would do chamber sessions, it would get worse. And so, I reached out to Dr. Scott Schur, who's a big H-bot guy, and I was like, does this hurt your ears? And he said, no, it's fine for your ears, except if you have the specific type of inner ear damage to those nerve cells, it can make it worse. And I thought, I must have that because I would track it and just say, oh, maybe it's just a

one-off. And it would happen again. And eventually I just had to go, I can't do anything that's going to irritate my ears, sadly, because I love that chamber.

Dave:

Did you say irritate your ears?

Luke:

Irritate my ears.

Dave:

I saw you did there.

Luke:

Yeah, irritate. It's a new term, irritate.

Dave:

We could go down a whole path of biohacking that, but it is time for us to wind up the show and go grab some grass-fed something. Thanks for coming on the show. Your website, Luke Storey, S-T-O-R-E-Y. You've got a show. Let's see what else you doing. And you've got an EMF home safety masterclass, which is actually really cool. And guys, you want to check that out, because EMFs have been a part of biohacking since the first conference where I talked about grounding and earthing as being a part of it. And if you go to Upgrade Labs today, you'll see that there's an earthing area there where we have it wired in because it's actually important. So, again, lukestorey.com and you've got stuff on EMF and a bunch of other cool stuff you're working on. You're a cool dude.

Luke:

Thanks brother. I appreciate you having me on. And I'm glad you moved to Austin. We need more good people here. It seems like everyone I know in the world that's really making a difference has moved here and I just feel so lucky. There's just so much going on at this particular place on earth at the moment, and you're a great addition. So, welcome.

Dave:

I was happy to find you'd moved here. I moved here, look at all these people I know who used to be in LA and everyone's like, everyone cools. Not everyone, but many cool people here. So, I found there were more people I knew here than I even imagined. So, glad we got to hang out. And I'm sad you're this far outside of town.

Luke:

I live in the boonies.

Dave:

But it's kind of fun.

Luke:

And it's nice, it's quiet and it's lower EMF.

Dave:

Well, I just live next to a military base.

Luke:

Really?

Dave:

Well, kind of. My EMFs aren't that high in my house, though.

Luke:

Yeah, military bases make me nervous because of all the radar.

Dave:

This is a national guard, I don't think they have so much trader. It was a full on Air Force base, no, just no. I actually think that the toxic mold is worse near Air Force bases because we know that EMFs irritate mold to make more toxins. That's why San Diego is kind of like a mold bomb.

Luke:

Isn't that crazy? I heard that a while back. It makes a lot of sense, because the mold is fighting for its survival and it's sensing that threat. So, it's trying to make more mold.

Dave:

Nice. Well, thanks again, Luke. I'm sure I'll see you at some events in Austin. If not, I'll come back on the show or vice versa. Guys, again, this was Luke Storey. You've heard him before, but he's a longtime biohacker with a metaphysical bent and his show is awesome as well.

Luke:

Thank you, man. I appreciate it.