

*Clarity, Healing & Purpose is Less Than a Minute Away, the Power of Awe with Jake Eagle (213) - Transcripts*

Ann Kelley (00:02.178)

Hi everyone, welcome back to Therapist Uncensored. I'm here with a guest, Jake Eagle, and super excited to be talking to you, Jake. Welcome to the show.

Jake (00:12.11)

Thank you. Great to connect.

Ann Kelley (00:14.282)

So you have co-authored a book called *The Power of All, Overcome Burnout and Anxiety, Ease Chronic Pain, Find Clarity and Purpose in Less Than One Minute a Day*. That's a tall order, very impressive, but a lot to unpack.

Jake (00:32.042)

Yeah, and you can hear it in my voice. I find the subtitle a little embarrassing. It sounds like we're promising the world in less than a minute a day, but there's a lot of evidence to support the claim we're making. And you and I will explore that in this podcast.

Ann Kelley (00:50.954)

No, it's really true. It really is true. And I kind of like the concept versus like, wait, but what you're supporting and advocating for has that much of a powerful effect.

Jake (01:03.53)

Yeah, that's right. It's a practice that we call microdosing mindfulness. So you're practicing mindfulness, but you're doing it in very brief 15, 20 second experiences, hopefully throughout the day. We say at least do it three times a day, but you can do it as many times as you want because it takes so little time. And it seems to have a significant cumulative effect.

Ann Kelley (01:30.07)

Well, it's kind of perfect. Sue and I on this podcast talk a lot about how to activate, to be aware of your protection system and to be aware of those parts of you that keep you blocked from yourself and defended. And I know we'll get more into that today. And then how to open up your more connection system, the vitality. And we've talked a lot about meditation and how important mindfulness is. But the reality is, and that's one thing I loved how you approach that in your book, the reality of us being able to actually activate that in our everyday lives is not that easy. It's optimistic and it's inspirational, but it's hard to do, isn't it?

Jake (02:11.254)

I'm going to start off by disagreeing. So I actually think it's easy to do, but we don't know that it's easy and we don't take the time to do it. So when people traditionally talk about meditation, they're saying, you know, do this 10 minutes a day or for 20 minutes a day. And shockingly people, me included, feel like we don't have 10 or 20 minutes to sit on a cushion. Of course, some people do, but the majority of people who want to meditate find it's hard to fit it into their busy lives. So what we've done is we've developed a way where people can get significant benefits of meditation and mindfulness, but doing it in these 10, 20, 30 second little bites throughout the day. And that actually does make it quite easy.

Ann Kelley (03:01.034)

No, that's what I loved about your concept is like taking it from a 15, 20 minutes. Let's put it in the schedule and then actualizing it. And I know we'll talk about some details about this as we go along. Um, but, but I love the concepts of the one minute and we'll talk about the process and we have been very inspired because we talk so much on our podcast about threat and I mentioned that the nervous system. We've been extremely inspired by all the recent research on awe and the idea of what it can bring out and counteract our protection system and bring us more open to people and have loved all the recent research. And in fact, we interviewed just a few weeks ago, Dacher Keltner, I think you described him, I loved it as the, what did you say? The granddaddy of Awe.. I loved that and it was awesome.

Jake (03:49.198)

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The grandfather, the granddaddy of all, right? Right.

Ann Kelley (03:55.19)

And so for those, we will consider this an independent. So we wanna talk about awe in case somebody's just jumping in. But I loved how you referred to him as that. And I noticed throughout your book how well y'all work together. So can you tell us a little bit about your connection to him and how your book stands out as different in your research?

Jake (04:15.434)

Yeah, I'm happy to. So I was teaching an online course before the pandemic. I think it was 2018 or 19. I don't remember dates all that well. And I was asking people to meditate 10 minutes a day. And about half the people said they just didn't have time. And so I introduced this idea without really knowing what I was doing. I just said, well, just meditate for 30 seconds or a minute. Find something that you really love to pay attention to. Pay attention to that for, again, 30 seconds and see what happens. And when I was teaching that course, my co-author, Dr. Michael Amster, joined me. I've known Michael for about 15 years. He was curious to see what I was doing, so he joined that course. And at the end of it, I shared with him the results were that the people who did these microdoses we're getting the same benefit as the people who were meditating 10 minutes a day. When I teach a course, I always do a pre-course survey and a post-course survey. So I'm able to detect, is this course helpful? Are people benefiting from it? So Michael and I are really fascinated and we decided to run our own pilot projects. He ran one with his chronic pain patients and I ran one with my clients, a group of clients. And at the end of 21 days, we did the assessment. And one more time, we were seeing significant improvement in wellbeing and decreases in negative symptoms, depression, anxiety, pain, et cetera. So Michael reached out to Dacher Keltner because we sensed that we were onto something, but our studies were really very small and not thoroughly designed. So Michael went to Dacher and he showed him our results and Dacher was just astounded. He said, I think you guys have tapped into something important. And I think this could actually be the future of mindfulness because we live in an age where people are hesitant to spend 10 or 20 minutes, but if spending 30 seconds will accomplish it, this is really valuable. So he then helped us put together a study that we did at UC Berkeley. And...

Jake (06:28.514)

We designed the study and just when we were getting ready to do it, COVID took off. So we ended up doing a study with about 200 healthcare workers, doctors, nurses, administrators, during the height of the pandemic. And we also had another cohort, about 300 patients and family members. And this was a very well-designed study. We used Dacher and his research team to put it all together. It was a in-depth exploration to understand the benefits of this practice. And what we saw at the end were the same results Michael and I had been getting, but now they were really much more validated. We saw decreases in depression, anxiety, loneliness, burnout, chronic pain. We saw improvements in well-being and mindfulness. And really, we were very surprised. I mean, when Michael and I started this, we had no idea what we were tapping into. It just is something that evolved in a very organic way. As a result of that study, we ended up with publishers wanting us to write a book, which we never planned to do. And we then took the next year and a half, and we wrote our book, which actually came out the same day as Dacher's book. And Dacher's book is a much broader view of the emotion of awe. It talks about the history, and it goes into a great deal of detail about awe. Our book is more of a prescriptive story about how do you access and apply awe in your life on a daily basis. And I think they're actually, they work really well together. I think they complement one another nicely. So it was a great opportunity to work with Dacher because he, as we said, he was kind

Ann Kelley (08:11.222)

Yeah, no, I would completely agree.

Jake (08:16.27)

the granddaddy of all, he really had done the most significant research on it for the longest period of time.

Ann Kelley (08:24.418)

Well, for those listeners out there that haven't read his book and are not familiar with the concept of all, can you describe what all what you're referring to when you talk about the experience of all?

Jake (08:34.178)

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Ken, I think what I'm going to do is I'm going to actually read you a short description because I think it's better than our own. It comes from David Elkins, who's a clinical psychologist. He actually studied with Viktor Frankl, and Viktor Frankl has a relationship to awe that you and I may talk about. David says that awe is the most important transformative experiences of life. Awe is a lightning bolt that marks in memory those moments when the doors of perception are cleansed and we see with startling clarity what is truly important in life. And I am going to just repeat part of that. Awe is a lightning bolt that marks in memory those moments when the doors of perception are cleansed and we see with startling clarity what is truly important in life. Now, when David wrote that, I think he was talking about some of the most significant moments of awe in our lives. What Michael and I did is we found a way to access awe in the ordinary. So instead of the birth of a child or someone passing in the death process, which are actually moments of awe, we're standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon. These are experiences that are absolutely memorable. They make a huge imprint on us. What Michael and I did is we found a way to tap into awe in the ordinary, when you're waking up in the morning, when you're taking a shower, when you're taking your first sip of coffee, when you're cooking the meal, when you're petting your dog or your cat, when you're holding hands with your partner. And the idea here is that awe is available to us all the time. It surrounds us because beauty surrounds us. And when we can tap into the beauty, that's when we experience awe.

Ann Kelley (10:40.674)

So the everyday part of tapping into beauty does what into our body? How does it impact us?

Jake (10:49.29)

It alters our nervous system. It's a reset. The metaphor that I've been using recently is that I think of my nervous system as a spring, and it's a spring that has a lot of looseness when I wake up in the morning. I'm fairly relaxed. But then over the course of the day, every event that happens compresses my spring or my nervous system a little bit more. By the end of the day, my nervous system is wound very tightly. And I'm more reactive, I'm more tired, not as resourceful. What happens when we practice awe is that we release the tension in the spring. We release the tension in our nervous system. We go from being in what is too often, inappropriately the sympathetic nervous system where we're activated, whether it's fight flight, and we shift ourselves into the parasympathetic rest and repair or rest and digest state. However, And this is really, to me, kind of fascinating. When we were researching the book, we joined a group that was run by two doctors, Dr. David Hanscom and Dr. Stephen Porges. Dr. Porges developed polyvagal theory. And what he said about awe is that it's a very unique place within the nervous system. So yes, it's predominantly parasympathetic. In other words, we're primarily relaxed when we access awe. but it has a little bit of a sympathetic tone. It has, it's energized. So it's not just the deep relaxation that people experience when they meditate. It's more akin to what happens when we're playing. Think of kids playing. They're completely relaxed, right? They're having a joyful, wonderful time. They're usually connected to the people they're playing with, which means that it's pro-social. And they're slightly energized.

Ann Kelley (12:34.03)

Mm-hmm.

Jake (12:49.462)

So it's this very, I call it the sweet spot in our nervous system. And that's what's happening each time we access the emotion of awe.

Ann Kelley (12:58.782)

It's this awake state. I love the distinction that you're making and to get such a clarity, because Porges sometimes is a very complicated speaker, isn't he? But I love that. Like it's that the experience of the awakesness, we're in parasympathetic, we're calm, we're aware, but there's an alertness to it. That is, that our body can see ourselves as being safe and calm, but connected and alive.

Jake (13:00.619)

Yes. And the key, Dr. Porges says the key to healing is safety. We have to feel safe to fully heal. And what's so fascinating about the emotion of awe, again, think of kids playing, is that they have a great capacity to connect with the people they're playing with, right? It's this pro-social emotion that affects the quality of our voice, it affects the facial expressions we have. It actually...

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You know, it act, it, when we enter into this state, we're activating the vagus nerve. And when we do that, we're affecting all sorts of things, including our voice, our facial expression, our digestion, our breathing. And we're shifting ourselves into a healthy state that's based on feeling safe. And it's because we feel safe that we're better able to connect with other people. And Dr. Porges has this, as the foundation.

in terms of people doing their personal work. We have to help people get to a place where they feel safe.

Ann Kelley (14:32.074)

Yeah, opening the ventral vagal to the experience of connectedness too, right? Like the feeling of safety. I love how you're describing the play with other individuals where we can feel our body in a safe enough place to have a connection to the outside world. And how inspiring.

Jake (14:37.145)

Yes.

Jake (14:47.894)

Yes, and think of other examples are things like singing. When we're singing, particularly in a choir with a group of people, when people are making love, they typically enter this state that you and I are describing. It has this slight activation to it, and yet there's also a relaxation and a profound connection if it's a healthy relationship.

Ann Kelley (14:52.194)

Mm-hmm.

Ann Kelley (15:11.138)

Yeah, and that's harder than we think in our everyday world, isn't it? Because our mind and our body stays on alert so much and that we have our system, you know, we think of, we talk quite a bit about the default mode on our podcast. And when our body just is not, it's just active, our mind either it's ruminating or it's trying to figure something out or it's thinking about our next step or catching the bus. There's so much chatter in there.

and finding a place that can be focused and calm, but open, right? Not just task oriented and diving into something, coming our default mode, but an ability to stay open and calm those parts of our mind.

Jake (15:56.714)

Yes, and one of the steps in what we call the aw method actually helps quiet the default mode network, quiet all the internal chatter. And maybe I should take a moment and just walk through those steps. Would this be a good time to do that? Okay, yeah. So we took the word aw, we turned it into an acronym, AWE, and we used those as the three steps in the process. So the A stands for attention.

Ann Kelley (16:10.602)

Yeah, you yes, listen, would you?

Jake (16:24.246)

And the idea here is to place your full and undivided attention on something that you appreciate, value, or find to be amazing. And so we're starting off, you'll kind of notice, we're starting off with something that's positive in nature, right? Which is a little bit atypical of most forms of mindfulness. They generally start with neutrality. In other words, just come back to your breath. Come back to your breath.

Ann Kelley (16:48.822)

Mm-hmm.

Jake (16:49.75)

What we're doing is we're saying, come back to something that you value, appreciate or find to be amazing.

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Ann Kelley (16:56.002)

Was there a reason why you picked the positive valence to start with? Like.

Jake (17:00.01)

Well, when we first did this and we experienced that reticence on people's part to meditate, asking them to focus on something that they found to be positive overcame many resistance they had to doing it. If we said, focus on your breath, people seemed to find that to be not terribly motivating.

But I said to people, find something that you love to look at or find something that you want to hold in your hand that just feels wonderful to you. And it doesn't have to be a physical object. It could be a memory. Do you have a wonderful memory of your grandparent or of your child being born or when you first got your first puppy? Doesn't matter what it is. And people like that idea, which actually I don't want to go off too far on attention, but the reason it helps to start with something that's positive.

is because people are more inclined to do it, which then turns it from being a temporary trait into a state over time. It becomes part of us if we do this frequently enough. So we...

Ann Kelley (18:04.59)

You start training yourself then to, if you stop to do it, you're gonna start inevitably training yourself to look for something positive instead of, and it turns it, I love it, because it also turns it away from a sense of, I should meditate, I should be mindful, to this sense of something you should be doing to help yourself, like eating healthy, to let's stop for a moment in this craziness and focus on something that's actually gonna bring some positive experience to me. Yeah.

Jake (18:11.059)

Exactly.

Jake (18:30.134)

Yeah, have you ever seen that game, Where's Waldo? So I don't know it exactly, but you're looking for something in this photograph or this image that's very complex. And what you're looking for is Waldo. Well, this is similar in that we're looking out at the world, and we're asking you, find something beautiful. Look around and find something that just moves you in a profound way.

Ann Kelley (18:33.846)

Yes, yeah.

Jake (18:56.53)

And it really becomes a fun way to go through the world.

Ann Kelley (19:01.39)

For the listeners out there, as we walk through, and this is, again, we're talking about his sort of scientific step of awe, the three-step process of experiencing this. And as the listeners out there, think about it. Why don't we do it together, as Jake starts to describe the systems. Think of something in your environment, and let's walk through the steps with it.

Jake (19:24.146)

What I'll suggest is that I tell you the three steps, then I'll come back and I'll walk everybody through it so that it's done in the proper timeframe, because it takes me longer than 20 seconds to explain it. So the first step is the A, find something that you're going to place your attention on that you appreciate value or is amazing to you. And then is the W. Now the W is when you're just going to wait. And the idea with the wait is that you have placed...

Ann Kelley (19:35.518)

Okay, I love that. Okay.

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Jake (19:51.85)

Let's say you've placed 100% of your attention on something. Turn that up and make it 110%. Just let everything else go and give all of your attention to whatever it is that's the source of awe. And you're only going to do this for two, three seconds. So you've placed your attention. Now you're waiting. You're being with the source of awe. And now you're going to wrap this up.

with the E, which is exhale and expand. And so this is where you exhale, but the exhalation will be a little bit longer than a typical exhalation, because at the end of the exhalation is when you activate the vagus nerve, which is what we're encouraging you to do. When you activate the vagus nerve, two things happen. You tend to relax, you shift from sympathetic to parasympathetic, and you amplify whatever sensations are in your body.

Now, because we started with you focusing on something positive, the sensations in your body are going to be enjoyable, they're going to be positive. So those will be amplified. And when that happens, people will experience a range of awe that can be subtle and sweet, kind of pleasant, or it can be what we call orgasmic, which is where you actually feel the energy rising up your spine. And oftentimes when I do it, I'll have a release in my neck.

And it's quite dramatic. It's sort of like having a shiver up your spine. That's my experience. Now, that doesn't happen every time. And if that doesn't happen, it doesn't mean it didn't work. There's a spectrum that awe occurs on. So those are the three steps. The whole thing typically occurs in a breath cycle or two. So what I mean by that is that

You find something to focus on and when you have found it, that's when you would be doing the inhalation. And then at the peak of the inhalation is where you might wait for one, two, three seconds. And then you have the longer than normal exhalation. Sometimes people are so captivated by what they're looking at or thinking about that they'll actually have more than one breath cycle. They'll just sort of stay there, but at the very end is this longer than normal exhalation.

Jake (22:12.946)

Those are the steps, and I'm happy to walk us all through it now. If you're driving a car, of course, that would be my only caveat. Either you don't do it or pull over and do it. You can do it with your eyes open, by the way. Yeah, open or closed.

Ann Kelley (22:23.874)

So the.

Ann Kelley (22:27.458)

You can, okay. And do you ever, do you have individuals that like, when you say you don't always have the shiver, that would make sense, right? If you think about seeing something, you can really relate to the experience of all by thinking about standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon or something really powerful that's hit you at some point in time. But I really love that we're bringing it to the everyday moments. Do you find that the more one practices this,

the more that you have access to that kind of an experience.

Jake (22:58.166)

Yeah, absolutely. It's called the dose response. And we saw this in our study. We asked people to do it three times a day, but some people did this more. And the people who did it more had more significant results, better results. And so what we do is we say, at least do it three times a day. But what happens after a while, I've been doing this now for, I think, three years, this happened spontaneously to me. I always do this in the morning when I wake up.

And then this morning I got up and I was in the living room and my wife, Hannah came in. And when I saw her, it was just had a spontaneous moment of awe. I was taking an extra moment to just appreciate who she is and the fact that she's here and that we're together. And this is what's happening more and more in my life. I just have these moments of awe that arise and I can identify it. I can go, oh, I'm shifting something and my physiology is shifting.

Ann Kelley (23:37.718)

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Uh...

Jake (23:54.134)

And I believe what really happens is that we're altering our state of consciousness. And maybe you and I will have a chance to talk about that. But I don't think I walked everybody through this, did I? Okay, okay. All right.

Ann Kelley (24:05.31)

Yeah, let's do that. Let's take it that way as we talk about it. Everybody can kind of have a frame of reference. And I guess if you're driving, you could pull over or it's also a state. Can one use one's imagination in, in what they kind of develop or kind of start to bring forward for themselves?

Jake (24:18.559)

Yes, yes.

Jake (24:23.53)

Yes, right. You could imagine something that you wish would happen, and if it did happen, it would inspire you to experience awe. So yeah, there's a lot of flexibility and different, there are different realms in which awe arises, but I think we won't go into that right now. Those details are in our book. Right now, I'll just walk people through this. So to begin, just take something in your surroundings, and it can be a memory if there's nothing in your physical surroundings.

Ann Kelley (24:28.792)

Mm-hmm.

Ann Kelley (24:46.606)

All right, ready.

Jake (24:52.942)

but find something that you appreciate, value, or find to be absolutely amazing. And you're going to give that your full undivided attention. And as you do that, just have a natural cycle of inhalation. Give that your full undivided attention. And then be with that and just wait. You can just keep breathing naturally. Just be with that where you're waiting, but your intention is completely focused on the source of awe.

And then allow yourself on the next exhalation to have it be a little bit longer than normal, longer than normal, a little bit. Don't push too hard. And that is the Awe Method. And just notice if you detected a shift in your physiology or your emotional state as a result of doing that, what was probably 15 second practice.

Ann Kelley (25:48.182)

I could feel it. I'm wondering if the listeners out there, if they could feel even a difference in sort of the breathing and the connection to the self and the connection to the moment.

Jake (25:57.886)

And for those people who have it, I have a heart rate variability monitor. And I will put that on when I do moments of awe. And I can just watch my heart rate variability increase at the end of that process. Yeah, yeah. Now, I'll say two things. In a way, that's not a great idea, because it's OK for me as a researcher. But it's not great, because it distracts you from the experience, right? And that's what I want to also say is,

Ann Kelley (26:10.594)

Is that right?

Jake (26:26.466)

Don't try too hard. Don't work at this. You'll probably do it maybe three or four times following these instructions. And then it's so simple you don't need to think about it. If you're thinking about the steps, you're not experiencing awe. So these are like training wheels.

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Ann Kelley (26:43.798)

It becomes, I would imagine it becomes almost too goal directed, like I need to do the steps. You're trying to say, soft focus it.

Jake (26:51.03)

Right. Soft focus it. Don't try hard. If it's not working, don't step into it. Step back. Allow it to be very natural and organic. It's the most natural thing in the world to experience a moment of awe. We do it all the time, but we're not aware that we're doing it.

Ann Kelley (27:14.03)

So if you were to encourage people in their everyday lives as they're going throughout the day, what are some different practices that people might notice or kind of start to take in?

Jake (27:27.15)

I'll tell you the routine that I started with, and then I'll tell you my favorite way to use this. And in our book, we have 30 different practices that get a little bit more advanced, where you have what are called extended moments of awe. We also have those on our website or some of them. But the way I like to do this is I do it first thing in the morning when I wake up. After I wake up and do my basic routine, wash my face, brush my teeth, whatever it is,

I go outside and I just take a moment to experience awe. And it's easy for me, I live in Hawaii, and I just connect with the beauty that's around me. But I believe we can do that anywhere, no matter where we are, there is beauty if we look for it. Then in the middle of the day, I always have a moment of awe that's a reset, just to reset my nervous system, come back to some baseline. And then when I go to bed at night, I go outside and I look at the stars.

And I end my day with a moment of awe. So that's kind of my formula to at least do those three. I then have found that there's many other opportunities throughout the day. And

Ann Kelley (28:21.87)

Mmm.

Ann Kelley (28:34.966)

So you kind of mark it in your day as a process of like, as part of your routine, part of your schedule, like something to add to you, yes. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Jake (28:41.01)

Exactly. Yeah. It's become habituated for me, as you say, it's part of my routine. Now, my favorite practice is to use this proactively. And I just love this, which is, and I'll do this as a therapist with my clients. The client will come in, they'll sit down, they'll tell me something. And oftentimes they'll start with something that's disturbing, tell me a story about something that happened in the last month that they're upset about. And

Instead of going into that, I'll say, and most of my clients know about moments of awe, say, let's take a moment and have a moment of awe. And what's happening is they're shifting their level of consciousness so that after they have the moment of awe, we come back and we revisit the topic, but they're in a different place. Their perspective has shifted, and they're in a much healthier place to talk about whatever it is.

So if they came in and they were feeling victimized and we take a moment of awe, they're more resourceful. And another place that I use this is doing couples counseling, but I also do this with my wife, which is if we have to have a conversation that we kind of think it may be difficult, may be tense, at the very least, I will go and have a moment of awe before I enter a conversation like that. Now, in my case, because my wife knows this, we both do it.

Ann Kelley (29:46.094)

Hmm.



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Jake (30:08.514)

We both do it. Now, we do it individually, and we don't talk about it. Because when you take a moment of awe and you translate it into words, you're reducing the experience. It's not really that helpful to talk about or try and describe the moment. It's a very personal thing. So Hannah and I will both do this. You can just feel the shift in the tone of our voices and the quality of connection we have. So we're.

Having our moment of awe, which then makes us better able to co-regulate, which then of course, as you know, increases coherence and our ability to connect with one another. And the conversation that was going to potentially be difficult starts off in a completely different place.

Ann Kelley (30:53.966)

there's so much signaling going on both to you and to her, right? You're signaling to you instead of just sitting there in this dread and rumination or your anticipation. Oh God, this is going to, I know she's going to say this. When I say this, I know this is what's going to happen. Where your, where your body's arming up. It sounds like taking the experience and kind of shifting your whole nervous system as we would put it in our language, you're opening up to your connection system. You're opening up.

this like this is going to be a safe space. I love it.

Jake (31:24.83)

Exactly. And the way I think about it is you're shifting out of defense physiology. Yeah.

Ann Kelley (31:30.134)

Yeah, yeah, and it's kind of a short conscious way to do it to also imagine then when you approach her for whatever the difficult conversation is, then your eyes are softer. Your, your ventral vagal system being activated, it allows you to be more receptive and she's going to signal that isn't it? She's going to pick up that signal. The whole conversation can shift. Yeah, that's one.

Jake (31:50.106)

Exactly, yeah. And so as a therapist, I encourage you to play with it. Because the other thing about this that's so valuable is it's empowering for a client. It's empowering to know that I can shift my nervous system. I don't necessarily need some external resource to do that for me.

Ann Kelley (32:14.126)

I think too, it's an element of connection between you and your client for that moment as well, right? Like it's like, I'm gonna be here for you. We're gonna get our bodies ready. Cause sometimes people can come in and they're so into, I need to tell you about this to catch you up. And they're almost in this explaining mode rather than they're in the moment of the activation. And it seems like that signal to them, come into the present, I'm here with you. And then.

Jake (32:18.882)

Definitely.

Jake (32:33.944)

Yes.

Ann Kelley (32:40.294)

as they describe whatever it is, they're more ready to receive it and kind of see it from a more meta view, I guess, if you would. Yeah.

Jake (32:47.926)

Yes, from a meta view from a different state of consciousness. I don't know where you want to go, but I'd love to just share with you this idea of different levels of consciousness. Is that? Great. So...

Ann Kelley (32:53.215)

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Great.

Ann Kelley (33:01.47)

It was one of my questions, so jump in.

Jake (33:06.062)

For about 30 years, I've been a therapist, and much of that time, my wife and I have been leading retreats. And what we've noticed is that when we, and this will be no surprise to you, but when we create an environment where people feel safe and open-hearted, the work they do is much deeper and much more profound. We see much greater change. And we developed a model where we identified three different levels of consciousness that people go in and out of.

The first level is what we call a safety consciousness. And this is where most of us spend most of our time doing things to help ourselves feel safe. But we don't always realize that when we're trying to help ourselves feel safe, we're often actually relying on defense mechanisms. So it looks like we're trying to help ourselves feel safe, but we're actually putting ourselves in a defensive posture. We spend a lot of time there.

Ann Kelley (33:59.778)

Can you give an example of that? I mean, I think that's incredibly true, but would you give an example of that?

Jake (34:05.438)

Yeah, so I think that, let's use that example of wanting to connect with our partner. And to make myself feel safe before I knew the Awe method, I would rehearse my argument. I would rehearse my position. I would come in with a certain, with a certainty with maybe even

Jake (34:33.75)

because I was really stuck. I was frozen in my own agenda. And it actually doesn't create safety.

Ann Kelley (34:38.806)

And I think I'm making it, yeah, you think you're making it safe, right? Because you're like, wait, if she understands whatever I'm about to tell her, she won't be mad anymore. Or like, let me explain it. And then she's going to listen and then things will go great. So you think you're setting safety by thinking you're stepping into clarity for her.

Jake (34:48.419)

That's right.

Jake (34:58.518)

And really what I'm doing is I'm self-justifying whatever I'm feeling, right? So I think we spend more time in that state than we realize. And I don't want people to think there's something wrong with it. Safety consciousness is a place where we can be very productive. We get things done. We address our to-do list. We take care of business. And that's all necessary and it's a valuable part of life. If we could learn to do it without being in defense physiology, it would be much healthier.

Ann Kelley (35:01.299)

Exactly.

Jake (35:29.214)

And one way to do that is to learn to shift our level of consciousness. The next level of consciousness is called heart consciousness, which is when we're in a state of gratitude or appreciation. Most everybody, when I talk about this, they nod their head. They're familiar with it. They go, yeah, I love to be in a state of gratitude. And I definitely feel healthier and more relaxed. And if people are curious about this, I think HeartMath has done great work. The HeartMath Institute, they have a lot of great research about

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how to enter a state of heart consciousness. The next level, which isn't talked about as much, we call spacious consciousness. And it's a state that's traditionally been accessed through a contemplative practice, like meditation or qigong, prayer.

chanting. There are many ways of accessing spacious consciousness, but generally they take a lot of time and practice to get good at them. And oftentimes people never actually get good at it. They just want to experience it, but it's too much work. What we found is that awe is actually a shortcut. It's a shortcut to this transcendent state of spacious consciousness. When we enter it, what happens is we lose track of time.

time disappears. We're no longer thinking in terms of time. We're actually no longer thinking. We have no words to describe being in that state. It's this remarkable place of presence and a release of all tension and all internal mental chatter. We can't live there. We can't stay there all the time, but we can go in and out.

We can go in and out. And that's what happens with awe as we take ourselves into spacious consciousness. We get a perspective that's profoundly expansive. And as our perspective expands, interestingly, our sense of self and attachment to ego diminishes. Because we see the magnificence of life and the world and the vast beauty that surrounds us, the miracle of being alive.

Jake (37:45.514)

And as we connect with that, we're no longer preoccupied with self or whatever our particular concerns and problems are. So we go there and now we come back into either heart or safety with a completely different perspective and a significantly altered physiology.

Ann Kelley (38:06.914)

That's really powerful. It makes me think of, and I think you mentioned this in the book too, the kind of the work on psychedelics and that is like, we can't know what we don't know. Right. And if we are almost always in our protection system and going and going and going, we don't necessarily know any different. And what I hear you saying by being able to go into this state of, ah, this transcendence, you actually start to experience something in your body. And a completely more.

mind opening, more aware state that's very, very powerful. Without doing it, you don't have that experience.

Jake (38:42.306)

That's right. And I think it does relate to the psychedelic research. In Michael Pollan's book, which I think was called *How to Change Your Mind*, he mentions the word awe 40 times. It's a yeah, it's a significant part of what people are experiencing are these moments and maybe some of them are longer extended moments of awe. And it shifts a person's perspective of the world. And in the research that was done, it's referred to as

Ann Kelley (38:49.768)

Mm-hmm

Ann Kelley (38:54.071)

Desi?

Jake (39:10.734)

cognitive accommodation. And the idea is that I have a cognitive frame about the world, but when I have a moment of awe, my frame cannot accommodate what I'm experiencing. So my frame opens up and it's, as you said, I experienced something that I didn't know. And this is why I say it's not always helpful to try and explain or describe your moments of awe.

Just allow them to reside within you. Don't necessarily try and reduce them to words because when you do, and it's not forbidden, it's certainly okay to do, but when you do reduce them to words, you also reduce the experience.

Ann Kelley (39:55.014)

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Imagine.

Jake (39:55.882)

It's as if I can't capture it. Words aren't sufficient.

Ann Kelley (40:00.906)

And you almost lose something, right? And you're trying to change it to almost a different part of your brain to try to capture it and explain it, right? You're gonna move it out of the experience of the felt sense and into the linguistic sense, right?

Jake (40:08.193)

Exactly.

Jake (40:13.834)

Right, right, right. And we want to let this be a felt sense experience. Yeah, yeah.

Ann Kelley (40:19.566)

Absolutely, yeah. I imagine too, the more one allows themselves to go into that more of a transcendent experience. You talked about having gratitude for Hannah as you went along. So there was like these stages that you went to from finding safety and then feeling that sense of gratitude and then going into this more awe experience. You can really feel sort of the process of landing there. And what I love is how rewarding it feels.

Like instead of, okay, you know that you read, you know, try to think of gratitudes about your spouse, but it's really hard to do that sometimes and it can still be a should, right? But as you described it, doing it the other day, you could just sort of feel what of a gratifying experience it was, something that you were experiencing, yet also incredibly giving.

Jake (40:48.471)

Yeah, exactly.

Jake (41:09.234)

Right. And the distinction, and I think this is really crucial, the distinction between gratitude and awe is that in gratitude, I'm still thinking. I'm reciting. What is it I appreciate about you? What is it that I deeply acknowledge in our relationship that I find so helpful? I'm working to find the things that I'm grateful for. And there's nothing wrong with that.

Ann Kelley (41:20.534)

Mmm.

Ann Kelley (41:33.594)

And it's kind of about you, right? I am grateful and it's about me, right? Yeah.

Jake (41:35.09)

It, yep, right, right. And then when I pass this barrier and I enter into awe, I'm not thinking I am having an experience of profound connection. And the connection may be with you, it may be in my example, it may be with my wife, Hannah, or it may be with the universe. That's why our results were so significant

decreasing loneliness. We were dealing with people who were locked inside. This is during the pandemic. People were restricted to their homes. But they still experienced a decrease in loneliness because they were connecting with something beyond themselves. And so it's not as if they needed to have another person. They could still experience a profound sense of connection.

And this goes back to what you and I spoke about earlier, connection leading to an experience of safety. I belong, I belong. I'm part of something.

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Ann Kelley (42:46.678)

meaning making of it all. All of a sudden, it's not just a, it's this, I belong to this collective. There's just this more experience of a profound sense of something bigger than us, something more meaningful than us.

Jake (42:59.358)

Yes, and meaning making is probably my favorite conversation. Maybe someday we'll have a conversation about that. But what I find so intriguing about awe is that I actually go beyond any effort to make meaning. Now, as therapists, you and I both have training and experience helping people shift the way they make meaning. That's the only reason therapy works, is because we can change the meaning of things.

Ann Kelley (43:12.779)

Yeah.

Jake (43:27.266)

When we go into awe, we're not even trying to alter the meaning, we're going beyond meaning.

Ann Kelley (43:34.846)

Yeah, it's just a sense of meaning rather than like, so often when we think of meaning, we think of goals and purpose and what is our purpose. And this kind of meaning makes a sense of meaning. It's a sense of an experience of.

Jake (43:46.774)

Right, right. And what is that experience, right? Yeah, yeah.

Ann Kelley (43:48.406)

Em, em.

Mm-hmm. Yeah, I love that. When we spoke with Dacher, we talked about some of the research that he's done that shows that when awe is activated, that our sense of self becomes much smaller in the spectrum of the world, but in this much more grander way, like the world became bigger than ourselves. Yeah.

Jake (44:16.674)

That's right. And that's this idea that as our perception of the world, life, connection expands in relationship to that, our sense of self becomes smaller.

Ann Kelley (44:25.55)

Mm-hmm.

Ann Kelley (44:32.01)

We just did a whole series about trying to find a sense of self when the world is so powerfully insecure and activating and threatening. And we talked about climate crisis. We talked about racial oppression. And in that process, we ended it actually with a concept of awe about how do we engage our sense

of safety more in ourselves and our sense of connection and our desire to connect to other people. That is really a must right now, our sense of something bigger than us that we can connect across the divides. And using awe on a daily basis, that's one reason why I was excited to have you on because there's this way that we can talk conceptually about it. And you are talking about like, how do we actually engage in it in these little ways every day?

Jake (45:29.438)

Yes, and I want to mention the idea we have a chapter in our book about awe in times of strife. And you're talking about serious strife in terms of climate change and social justice and so many other things. And what we point out to people is that even in those times,

Ann Kelley (45:38.315)

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Yes.

Jake (45:52.534)

awe is still available to us. The only reason that we suffer when we experience a loss, say a loss of a loved one or a loss of a species, the reason we suffer is because on the other side of that is our love. It's the preciousness that we are losing or missing, and that's what creates the despair. But if we are willing to go through the emotion

Ann Kelley (46:08.299)

Mm.

Jake (46:21.95)

of loss or despair, on the other side of it, we can reconnect with what was precious, what we love, which changes the context, because then we come back to a place where we may feel more empowered to do what we can. And there actually is a lot that we can do in terms of most of these issues. It's not, I believe it's fair to say that in none of these issues are we victims.

Ann Kelley (46:28.436)

you

Ann Kelley (46:49.71)

Right.

Jake (46:50.062)

that each one of us can do something related to the different struggles that you mentioned. Each one of us can do something.

Ann Kelley (46:58.23)

Absolutely. Could you know that we're going to be back? Would you talk about the five patterns of strife? I thought in your book you really covered that well so that people can sort of relate to where we can get stuck in a way.

Jake (47:11.218)

I can do that, but I don't know if you've.

Ann Kelley (47:14.338)

You talked about like. One of the ways it's interesting is you mentioned attachment, but in the process of attachment, it's that we can get out of. I'd love how you put that out of the fear of the despair we can hold to the ideal to the to a place that could make us rigid, right? Like we I don't want this despair, so I'm going to hold what the way it should be and we can get caught in that sense of strife of holding too tight.

Jake (47:40.778)

Right, and that's happening in safety consciousness. It's in safety consciousness that attachment forms and we're holding on often inappropriately, often holding on in ways that cause us to suffer more. And if we can...

allow ourselves to have that experience. I don't want anybody to repress or suppress that, but if we can allow ourselves to have that experience and go through that and reconnect with what's on the other side, which is again, it's the love, it's the preciousness, it's the joy, then we basically have re-empowered ourselves and reconnected with what is really meaningful to us in our lives.

Ann Kelley (48:23.446)

Right, it's going to go into the wave.

Jake (48:23.502)

I'm happy to talk about the five patterns, but it's always embarrassing as an author not to remember what you wrote.

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Ann Kelley (48:29.642)

Oh, I can relate to that 100%. So what you had talked about with the stripe, and I think for all of us, we can probably recognize and getting stuck in any of those, the one we're talking about, sort of the idealized point where we sort of hold rigidly to what should be. And so we can't actually experience the despair of what isn't. You talked about resisting, catastrophizing, victimizing and withdrawing.

Jake (48:50.618)

Thanks for watching!

Jake (48:57.546)

Yeah, and so the victimizing is very effectively minimized when we have the ability to access awe because we are re-empowering ourselves again. We no longer feel like the world is doing things to us because we have the capacity to access a higher state of consciousness. And that is a very important point.

Ann Kelley (49:11.868)

Mm-hmm.

Jake (49:22.602)

At the heart of this, I think what's happening is that we're shifting both our state of consciousness as well as our physiology.

Ann Kelley (49:29.454)

Well, and the experience of catastrophizing too, once we have that rumination in our head where we're going over and over and over something, in the worst case that could happen, our whole nervous system gets jammed up. It gets stuck in the sense of rigid fear protection.

Jake (49:48.19)

Yes, and that's that you and I talked about earlier, the default mode network becomes very active. We start imagining all of these possible scenarios. And if we can give ourselves a reset, which is what Awe does, we have a break. We have a temporary break. And every time we have that break, we come back to a choice.

Ann Kelley (49:50.826)

Mm-hmm. Right.

Jake (50:08.75)

Do I want to return to that internal dialogue I was having? Or do I want to think about this in a different way? Do I want to create a different narrative?

Ann Kelley (50:19.466)

I love that. And it really highlights your idea about doing this with clients, but also doing it before a difficult conversation. Because as we activate that part that we have a choice, as we activate that part that can enliven us, we feel less fearful or hopeless that whatever is happening around us is going to be the dictator of what goes on inside of us. It's going to, it's a very empowering place to be. I know that we're going to have to wrap up. I have one second.

One other question, if we can dive in, and I think it could be really quick, but I want to read the subtitle of your book. And so I know when we started out, it's like, wow, that's a big tall order. But the reason I said that is I really do feel like you're addressing it. And so that's what was exciting. Let's go back in. And now that people have really heard what you're speaking about by using these practices, you're overcoming burnout, anxiety, easing chronic pain.

Finding clarity and purpose in less than one minute. What we haven't talked about, but very briefly, is inflammation, and that's the part related to pain. Could you tap on that just a second? I know it has to be quick, but.

Jake (51:21.078)

Yes.

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Jake (51:24.974)

Yeah, it's a really significant part of this. There was research, we didn't do this research. It was done in 2015 by Stellar, and I think it was published in the Journal of Emotion. I'm not absolutely sure, but I'm pretty sure that's right. And in that study, what they did is they assessed the impact that positive emotions have on inflammation. And they determined that positive emotions do reduce inflammation, but most significantly...

Ann Kelley (51:27.107)

Yeah.

Jake (51:52.778)

is the emotion of awe. Awe had the greatest reduction in interleukin-6, which is one of the causes of inflammation. And we saw a decrease in the study. They saw a decrease in the markers that reduced inflammation, which has huge implications in terms of chronic disease, as well as emotional, mental challenges.

I want to make a distinction which is inflammation isn't always bad. In other words, if it's an acute situation, inflammation serves a very valuable purpose. But what's happened in our culture, in our society, is we've stepped into a world of chronic inflammation. And this is absolutely a serious problem. And so if we can find a way to break that cycle of inflammation, then we're moving ourselves back in the direction of a health, but also safety.

Ann Kelley (52:27.574)

Right.

Jake (52:51.042)

When our body is inflamed, we're less inclined to be able to step into the experience of safety. And so if the most powerful emotion that has been detected is awe in terms of reducing inflammation, it's another reason why I would encourage people to do this three times a day. It's sort of like, it's along the lines of taking a vitamin or doing something that's really good for you. But the thing to remember is it only takes 10 or 15 seconds.

Ann Kelley (52:58.324)

Right.

Jake (53:21.514)

It's free and it has no negative side effects.

Ann Kelley (53:21.986)

Yeah.

Ann Kelley (53:26.478)

That's very powerful. Well, Jake, how could people find you if they wanted to reach out?

Jake (53:27.594)

Yeah.

Jake (53:32.354)

Yeah, we have a website, the same as our book title. It's [thepowerofod.com](http://thepowerofod.com). On the website, there are links to the book, although the book's available everywhere. If people have questions and they send them to info at [thepowerofod.com](http://thepowerofod.com), either I or Michael will respond. If it's related to chronic pain, physical issues, Michael will respond. If it's more on the emotional front, then I will respond. We usually get back to people within three, four days.

Yeah, I think that's probably the best way to contact us. And we'll be adding new things to the site over time. Eventually, we'll be offering some more courses. But right now, we're just finishing up a research project at UC Davis, where we did teach the Awe method to people suffering from long COVID. And yeah. We just concluded the actual delivery. And we're waiting.



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Ann Kelley (54:24.37)

Oh really? And you're in the middle of researching it right now?

Jake (54:31.37)

Yeah. We're excited about it because these are people who are really, they're kind of in a state of despair. There's not a lot of good answers. We don't know what they are yet. And so we were trying to give people some way, and this connects to what you and I were talking about. We were giving people some way to empower themselves to move through the despair.

Ann Kelley (54:35.903)

We might have to jump back on once you get those results. Wow, well, to think about your primary research that you did, where it was during the heart of COVID and the shutdown and the loneliness and with the frontline workers. I don't think you could have found a more distressed, stressed population to do your original study on. So to show an effect on that was pretty remarkable. So more power to you, keep the research going. It's very helpful, very meaningful.

Jake (55:24.938)

Yes, I agree. Good. Well, I enjoyed this a great deal. And maybe we'll have another conversation in the future.

Ann Kelley (55:35.122)

I would enjoy that. And in our show notes, we will include all sorts of his site and all the references that were brought up today. We'll include that in our show notes. So for those of you that found this powerful, but please take the time to rate, review, and send it on to somebody who might really benefit from it. And thanks for joining us and we'll see you around the bend.