

Tapping through your relationship triggers

Guest: Dawson Church

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Alex Howard - [00:00:09]

So, welcome everyone to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Dawson Church. Firstly, Dawson, welcome and thank you for joining me.

Dawson Church

It's such a delight to be here, and relationship is one of the key ways in which we either make ourselves really happy or really unhappy. So I'm delighted to be here.

Alex Howard

They really can be the greatest source of misery alongside the greatest source of joy.

Just to give people Dawson's background, Dawson Church, PhD, is an award winning science writer with three bestselling books to his credit. Dawson has conducted dozens of clinical trials and founded The National Institute for Integrative Healthcare to promote groundbreaking new treatments.

Its largest program, The Veterans Stress Project, has offered free treatment to over 200 veterans with PTSD over the past decade. Dawson shares how to apply these health and performance breakthroughs through EFT Universe, one of the largest alternative medicine sites on the web.

So, Dawson, before we dive into this area of relationships, maybe we should just say a few brief words for those that may not be familiar. When we're talking about tapping, what are we talking about? Just a few of the key principles of what tapping is.

Dawson Church

Tapping is one of the two skills I teach most actively. So there are a lot of stress reduction skills, and use the ones that work for you. And in my book *Mind to Matter*, I talk about roughly 30 of them, time in nature, grounding, heart coherence, there are a lot of them, but tapping is one of the two I focus on. The second one is meditation.

Because tapping is a way of quickly regulating the body's energy system. And what we think about is negative emotions. I'm upset, I'm angry, I'm outraged, I'm offended, I'm resentful. All that negative emotion shows up in your body. I've done many, many clinical trials of this. What we see is a rise in cortisol, a rise in adrenaline, your heart rate variability gets dysregulated, your breathing. All kinds of negative things happen in your body, including the deposit of Alzheimer's parts in your brain. Our brain functions much less effectively. We trigger a lot of chronic diseases by stress.

So what EFT does is it very quickly regulates the body. And the way that shows up in MRI studies or EEG studies is that when we're upset, our emotional brain gets all lit up. If you look at an MRI of somebody having a panic attack or an EEG of somebody who's highly anxious, you see a big

activation of the emotional brain and a lot of the brain waves of stress, which is in the span we call beta, beta brain waves.

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And it's absolutely amazing, Alex, when you have them just tap like I'm doing right now on acupuncture points in their body. There are 13 of them that we train people on how to use, and you just tap these points and these are on acupuncture meridians, and it regulates the body's energy systems. And we see that emotional midbrain just quieten down.

So people still have all the stimulus, all the triggers, all the negative thoughts they used to have, but now they regulate their body's energy, and there was also a shutdown of the emotional brain. And so now those triggers are still there but you're calm and you're far more resourceful in terms of what you can access by way of skills to actually meet those challenges.

So tapping is simply tapping on these 13 acupuncture points. It only takes a minute or two to do, and it produces an immediate calming effect on the body. We also see those stress neurochemicals like cortisol and adrenaline dropping rapidly.

So tapping regulates energies, shifts the emotional functioning of the brain and then that shows up as these changes in the neurochemistry of the body.

Alex Howard

Fantastic. And of course, people listening to us are thinking, well, I can't see how that could be helpful at all in relationships.

Because, of course, one of the challenges in relationship, that you and I were just touching on before we started recording, is that often what stops us being really present and really in vulnerable contact with those that we love, is our triggers and the ways that we may react to certain things they might say, certain things they might not say, certain events that might happen within our relationship with them.

And often those triggers, they're not just triggers in our mind, they're triggers in our body and our nervous system that can consume us and take over us in a sense.

Say a little bit about how those triggers, how they happen and why they happen. And then we can get in some of the ways that we can learn to work with them.

Dawson Church

So the way to not react to your triggers is to believe they're real and they're about your current relationship partner. And the creative way, the effective way to work with your triggers is to make them about you and about your past.

Why am I upset with my partner right now? Why am I triggered by my partner? It almost always has nothing to do with your partner and everything to do with you.

And so, when I met my wife and I was with my wife for the first few months and years, one of the things that would trigger me is when my wife didn't listen to me. And there were times when, say, after a day at work, we'd come together, we were sharing about our days, and she was distracted, she was not listening, not paying attention. And I would get so triggered by that.

So two possibilities here. We go to a therapist and we tell our stories, and I say, my wife's not listening to me. And the therapist helps us work on the issue of my wife not listening to me. That's possibility number one.

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Possibility number two is I look at myself and ask myself why I'm getting triggered. And I did that. And I discovered exactly why I was getting triggered. And that was because when I was 3 years old and 4 years old and 5 years old, I'm little right now, not even 6ft 3 but back then I was 3ft 3, and this little guy toddling around and there were big adults up there. I was talking to them and trying to express myself and try to share whatever I was trying to share, and they were ignoring me. They weren't listening to me.

So I found that I wasn't being heard. My needs weren't being met. And I had that pattern when I was 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 years old. Now I'm in my 60s and I'm projecting that onto my wife and I'm being triggered. And these old body memories, we don't lay things down as conceptual memories of that age. We lay them down as body memories, physical feelings and not feeling good. And so those are all being triggered. And if I were to project those onto my wife, I lose my opportunity to heal.

So you have to use your triggers as an opportunity to go back into your past, figure out, did you not get hurt? Did your needs not get met? Did you learn the world was an unsafe place? And deal with your own childhood. Use these things as an opportunity to explore your childhood. Figure out why am I triggered by that?

I did that with my wife. I did that in my own life. I really tapped, meditated, got therapy, and released all the emotional energy of those early times when I was 3, 4 and 5 years old. There was nothing actually bad happening back then. My parents were busy and stressed and distracted and they weren't listening but hey, stuff happens.

And then you reduce the triggering around all of that, and suddenly your partner maybe occasionally still doesn't listen to you, and you realize, oh, that's about my past and me, not about the present and them.

So whatever trigger you're faced with, whenever you find yourself being triggered, ask yourself that key question. Not, is it about them and how can I change them? Because you can't change them usually, but how about me?

Alex Howard

But don't say that.

It's interesting, though, because on one hand, I think it's a hard thing for people to hear, but it's also, I think, a very empowering thing for people to hear.

Because in a sense, often the frustration that we have is we have these... Sometimes we can go from one relationship to another, and we have the same issue, which is always about the other person. And if we can recognize we're having those triggers, that doesn't always mean that the other person's behavior is impeccable or there isn't something to be addressed in the relationship dynamics, but what you're actually saying is that it can, in its own way, be a gift. It can be an invitation to discover something important about ourselves.

Dawson Church

The more you try to make it about the other person and about now, the more you distract yourself, and that old wounded pattern continues.

My wife and I have a virtual relationship class, and we teach people 12 skills we think are important. Things like active listening and nonviolent communication and tapping, meditation. We guide people through this course over 12 weeks.

And so one woman who took the course came into it and said, "It's not about my past. It's about my husband. It's about now". And she said that, "We're retired, we have a big piece of property and my

husband is just a layabout. Now he's retired he does nothing. He doesn't help with our farm, he doesn't help with our property". And she was so insistent that I work with her husband and get him to change.

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Now I knew I couldn't work with her husband. Her husband hadn't even signed up for the course.

Alex Howard

Knock on the door one day and say "Excuse me, your wife has sent me. I'm your new therapist".

Dawson Church

He didn't give a flip about all this stuff, so it's just her and the course. And so she was angry at him about that as well.

So I said, we're going to work with you. We're going to work with your triggers and your childhood. We did that. We found all kinds of ways when she wasn't heard and her needs weren't met as a child. And as she tapped, all those relationship issues from her early childhood diminished. And again, her brain became calm. Her body became calm. She shifted all of that.

She had posted in the course, after that, she posted this hysterical story. And she said, "It was a Saturday morning. I slept late. I woke up. I looked out the window, and we've had 32 fruit trees sitting out there in our yard for months, waiting for my husband to plant them. And guess what? My husband got up early this morning and he dug 32 holes and planted all 32 trees. When I woke up and looked out the window, there he was planting the last few trees. What happened?".

And what happened, of course, Alex, is that she dealt with her own childhood distress. She's no longer seeing her husband through this veil of her own issues. She's dealt with her own past. Now she sees the present very differently.

And it's interesting how over and over again people say, "My husband changed". Maybe your husband changed, but she certainly did. And the filter in which she saw her husband was healed.

Alex Howard

One of the things you said a little bit earlier that I think is also really important here, you talked about the stress response that happens in our body when we're being triggered, that we have an excess of adrenaline and cortisol.

And in a sense, in that place we're not responding to the facts in front of us. We're responding through this heightened response which is designed to fight tigers or to run away from dangers. And maybe you can say a little bit about the problem of trying to address sensitive and intimate things from such a hyper aroused state.

Dawson Church

You can't do it. If you look at MRI scans of people in a hyper aroused state, this part of the brain goes offline. The prefrontal cortex, especially the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. That's the brain region right over here behind our temples.

Now, normally, if you're calm your dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is active, you can make wise decisions. It's the most executive part of the executive brain. So you can make wise choices. I'm going to use nonviolent communication. I'm going to take a deep breath. I'm going to take a walk rather than screaming and yelling at my kids.

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If that part of the brain is online, when we're upset that part of the brain just gets turned off and we're in our emotional brain, and then you can't get access to all the wonderful skills that you have in your thinking brain.

And so it really is deleterious to our relationships to be acting from that part of our function. We then actually see our partner as a tiger. We're now reacting to them as though they're a threat to our survival. And then once we do that and see our partner as the threat, as the stressor, then we're totally miswiring our brain's response system and we're inappropriately responding to them as the threat.

We need to turn our relationships, we mentioned before the call, we were chatting about this, that relationships can be heaven or hell. And if you are in a relationship and you've turned your partner into the tiger and you're reacting that way, you're probably going to live in hell, at least in the part of your life that's to do with the relationship.

But I've got to tell you, if you are able to use these skills and shift into a loving relationship and you're able to deal with your childhood triggers and destress yourself, relationships are absolute heaven. The love, the intimacy, the chance for play.

My wife and I, most people our age are retired and they're doing things, they're playing golf or they're taking world cruises. We're doing charity work, we're meditating, we're going on hikes, we're going to beautiful parts of the world, we're playing. And we plan to spend decades in the future, as long as we live, we just want to play. So you then get a playmate. And that's wonderful to have your relationship be that source of joy.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful.

Also, it comes to my mind, Dawson, as you're speaking, that in that stress response place where our beloved is the threat, is the danger, one of the things that also happens is we have this sense of urgency like, I must deal with this now. And often there's a sense of I need them to know that I'm right and they're wrong. There's a winning or losing, particularly in that fight or flight state where, in a sense, what we're trying to do is to make ourselves feel better by destroying that which we love. It's an odd thing, isn't it?

Dawson Church

It's a paradox.

That feeling of urgency, Alex, that I want to prove myself right. I need to convince them right now. I need to win the argument. I need to set them straight. I need to set the record right. That sense is simply high cortisol. It's simply high cortisol.

I've done several randomized controlled trials of cortisol, and we find that cortisol rises in people who are stressed, adrenaline rises. But you look at the half life of cortisol. So these are big, complex molecules, and our bodies need instructions to build them in our genes, our bodies build them under stress. But when we stop being stressed, our bodies disintegrate those and return them to their component parts.

And so it takes only about 20 seconds for adrenaline or epinephrine to disintegrate. 20 seconds after you go and you just breathe a few breaths, breathe 10 deep breaths, and that stress response goes down. That feeling of urgency goes down because your adrenaline is dropping.

Cortisol takes 20 minutes max for all those cortisol molecules to dissolve. You feel the difference in about 5 minutes. You feel the cortisol going down. That urgency is simply biochemistry. And if you realize it's just a rise in cortisol, and if you just wait 10/20 minutes, all of those stress molecules are

gone, then understanding that is a key leverage point in relationships. You then just wait for that 10 to 20 minutes, you feel calm again, you approach the person.

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So if you treat that feeling of urgency, I've got to make myself understood, got to prove I'm right, got to set the record straight. If you realize, oh, it's just stress biochemistry. If I do nothing, if I go for a walk, if I tap, if I meditate, if I just leave the situation for a few moments and take some deep breaths, those neurochemicals will dissipate, and I'll feel calm again. And I can then relate to this person with presence, with love, and with all the resources of my wise mind. So treat that urgency as a biochemical event. Let it dissipate, and then you can react constructively.

Alex Howard

So in a minute I think it would be helpful to talk a little bit more about how we can use tapping in these situations. But also, in what you're saying, what strikes me is that almost before we can get to that point, there needs to be a level of self awareness in terms of what's happening. Like the recognition, psycho-emotionally, but also physiologically, that I'm being triggered and I'm in a state which actually is almost literally the exact opposite of where I need to be to cultivate the connection and the intimacy which ultimately I'm craving.

What helps us develop that self awareness? What helps us be able to recognize that we're being triggered or that we're entering an unresourceful state?

Dawson Church

Not your mind. You can't think yourself out of it. You have to work the level of the body and the physiology.

I remember before I learned tapping, I was really into nonviolent communication and co-counselling and several other techniques, gestalt therapy, cognitive therapy. And when I was triggered with my partner back then, many decades ago, when I was triggered back then, you're overwhelmed.

And again, your thinking brain, your dorsolateral prefrontal cortex is offline. It's like I'm talking now through a computer and the computer, it has a hard drive and has all this great information on it. If I unplug the computer, everything on my hard drive still exists. It's all still there. There's no power supply, though. I don't have access to any of it.

Same thing that stress does with our dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. We don't have access. I couldn't remember how to do nonviolent communication. I couldn't remember how to do all these wonderful techniques I learned in therapy and taking training courses when I was stressed. Because our bodies, when they're stressed, are meant to do one of two things, fight or flight. That's all meant to do. So it hijacks every other part of our functioning, including our prefrontal cortex.

Up to 70% of the blood drains out of your prefrontal cortex into your muscles when you're in fight or flight. So your muscles are getting all this blood supply. They don't need it if it's just an emotional stressor, but they're getting it. And the thinking part of your brain... I have a little movie on my website and it shows capillaries in your cells. This is a live, real time microphotography of these capillaries in your brain and they're big because they're carrying all these nutrients to your nerve cells. When cortisol hits, they shrink by up to 70%.

And so now that's like pulling the plug out of your computer. Your thinking brain has no oxygen, has no nutrients. You can't think, but you can tap.

So we focus on physiological stuff. Just breathe, breathe and tap. Don't try and figure it out. Later on, when you've calmed yourself, it's like plugging the computer in again, you're giving your prefrontal cortex oxygen and nutrients again. Now I can think. So after half an hour later I can then start to do

nonviolent communication and these kinds of wonderful techniques we teach. But when you're in stress mode and you pull the plug, just tap. Do only that one thing.

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My wife and I have a rule, ironclad rule in our marriage: if we have a stressful conversation, do not speak. Do not say anything before you start tapping. Start tapping first, then start talking.

So we have things we have to talk about that are stressful sometimes. Maybe there's something going wrong with one of our kids or grandkids, or we have to talk about some kind of big financial choice we have to make and there's stress and tension in the conversation. Maybe she wants to go to one location, I want to go to another. So we have some emotional tension in the relationship. Every relationship has that. We first start tapping. It's a pact. We first start tapping, then we start talking. If you start talking when you're stressed before you start tapping, you get yourself into a huge amount of trouble.

Alex Howard

So in a sense, what you're saying is that it's not awareness about content or history, it's simply awareness that you're emotionally charged, that you're having a reaction, and that's really all that needs to be seen to be able to do something with it.

I noticed that as we're talking, you were tapping on the karate chop point. Maybe just say a little bit about that. And if someone's watching this and they're recognizing, wow, this completely makes sense. I can see that if I'm being triggered, that's the most unresourceful place from which to communicate. They're going to start tapping. Give a little bit of guidance on how they might do that.

Dawson Church

Okay, so there are 13 points and they're on the end points of the meridians in our body. And these meridians have been studied for thousands of years. They're in Chinese medicine. We can also measure them on modern scientific equipment, like a galvanometer, which measures the charge on your skin. Very easy to detect on a galvanometer. They're actual physical points. And the points are very, very high conductance. So low resistance, high conductance around these points.

And you just tap on them in turn. One of them is here. There's one on your governing meridian which runs along the back of your body, one on the central meridian, which runs along the front of your body. There's one on the stomach meridian under the pupils of your eyes, one on the kidney meridian over here.

You just tap on each of the points while you're talking. When you do that, I did this with, actually I was on an earlier call today and there was this woman there whose husband had just died recently and had a huge amount of grief about that. And so, again, we just began tapping immediately. And then as she was able to get back into her body, as she reversed those energy flows in her meridians, as she was able to calm herself, suddenly she began to shift.

So you want to think about the bad thing, talk about the bad thing, be dealing with the issues in your life, back tapping while you're doing it.

Alex Howard

And to say just a few more specifics for people, they just can keep tapping while they're talking? There is not a set number of times they need to do it. I know there's also more sequences people can go into, but you're saying even just keeping it simple as just tapping on one point can help with that regulation.

Dawson Church - [00:25:14]

When you're in a crisis, just tap. And there is a lot more to EFT. I mean, there are 48 techniques. There's something we call clinical EFT, which we've studied in clinical trials, and there's a lot of research on that. And my book, *The EFT Manual*, outlines what clinical EFT is and how to use it. But just simply tapping on all points while you're triggered, whatever you're thinking about, whatever you're saying, is usually enough to shift you into a much calmer state.

Alex Howard

And of course, in some ways, the opposite of this stress response and relating from that place is a place of openness and a place of vulnerability and a place of sensitivity. And maybe you could say a bit about the impact of relating from that place.

Dawson Church

We have all had the experience of somebody relating from that vulnerable present state. And the way this works in the brain is very interesting.

Our brains default to functioning with two areas being active, the mid prefrontal cortex and the posterior cingulate cortex in the back. And those parts of the brain have a lot to do with processing our sense of self, who we are. And they're very focused on the past, especially the problems of the past and the potential problems of the future.

So we have these two brain regions, we default to those, they're a default mode network, and they're very focused on past and future. They're not in the present. And when you're talking to somebody who's all focused on stuff that happened in the past, stuff that might happen in the future, they aren't really there. You want to be there in your relationship, you want to be showing up and be present in your relationship.

So you have to shift out of default mode network functioning, but that's your brain's default setting. How do you do that? Tapping does it. Meditation does it. They both quiet the brain's default mode network and return us to the present moment.

Another thing we recommend doing is heart breathing. So just shifting your attention back into your body and then be in your heart.

My wife is an art teacher and an artist and when she gets back from work and when she gets back from her art classes and things she does, I've usually spent a day in my pretty high intensity life, training people, doing research, and I'm really in my head. If I relate to her in my head, if I'm at that thing about all these projects we did and what we have to have planned for the future, I'm not able to relate to her in the present moment.

So I practice breathing. I just slow myself down, breathe, imagine a heart bridge between me and her, feel myself on the heart, and then speak from the heart. So which do you think she'd rather have? The scientist who's all in his head babbling on about all his projects or a husband, a real person in his heart, listening to her deeply, sharing deeply, and being in that space. And so we want to use these techniques.

And they're also not just metaphors. When we shift into our heart and feel that type of function, our heart rate variability changes, our heart rate goes down, and all kinds of beneficial things happen in our bodies.

So being in the heart will help put you in the present moment, then you're relating in the present moment, person to person, being to being. And that is absolutely delicious.

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And that doesn't say there isn't a role for thinking, for planning, for analyzing, for dealing with all the past issues. We need to have that capability, too. But when we're with people, when we're relating to people, when we relate to people you love, we want to be in our hearts.

Like babies, I have a 1 year old granddaughter right now. We take care of her every week. I've got some other grandkids who are older. And then when I'm with them, I just sit there and listen to them and be in my heart. They don't need my head. They need physical security, comfort, and somebody to really relate to them, be with them at that level.

And so giving our loved ones the gift of dropping out of our heads and into our hearts is as simple as feeling that physical sensation in your chest. Imagine your breathing coming from there, imagine a connection coming from there, and that dramatically shifts your physiology and the way you pay attention.

Alex Howard

And in a sense that's a skill that we can practice and get better at. And what's coming to my mind as you're talking, as well, is going back to where we started around talking about triggers, that if we're in relationship with someone that's been triggered by something and our response to their being triggered as we become triggered by them being triggered, of course the whole thing is escalating up.

But if someone has been triggered, and it's not always an easy thing to do, but if we're able to meet that from a place of open heartedness and sensitivity and care, although we can't change the other person, we can often have an impact on helping, calming those triggers in them.

Dawson Church

Yes. And this is the whole area of human energy fields and how they interact. And so our energy fields are measurable about 3m away from our bodies. So when we're 6m away from another person, we're starting to interact with their energy field, and we definitely affect each other.

Research shows, for example, that if you have a client or a patient who is emotionally dysregulated, that if you bring them into the presence of a calm healer, that their heart will slow down, their breathing will deepen as they're affected by the energy field of another person. They don't even have to touch for this to happen. So that's what you want to be doing is being this peaceful human being who then helps other people around you move into that peaceful space as well.

There's one other thing, you mentioned it's a skill, and one of the things that I wanted to emphasize here is that these are simply learned skills. They aren't mysterious, they aren't metaphysical, they aren't immaterial. They're simply skills. If you were going to learn to fly a plane, you would take flight training courses, pass exams, a lot of practical hours you have to put in, and you learn a whole bunch of skills so in an emergency, you know what to do. It's powerful to have those skills. If you don't have those skills, you can't fly the plane.

And yet people go fly relationships, and they don't spend a moment thinking about what are the skills required to do this? They're not hard. I mean, thinking about your heart and breathing through your heart isn't hard to do. Tapping is super easy. These are just mechanical skills and yet many people go from relationship to relationship or spend years or decades of relationships never learning a single skill to do with this part of their life that can make them either happy or miserable.

So it's really important just to learn fundamental skills on how to do this. They're not difficult to learn. They're not really elaborate. They're just basic things. And if you master these skills, you get there behind the wheel of a car and you can drive across the country because you've learned the skills to make that happen. I'm passionate about this. It's not metaphysical. It's actually a set of learnable measurable skills.

Alex Howard - [00:32:46]

Well, also, what I'm hearing you say is that in a sense, it's going from having skills that you can use to be reactive because you're being triggered, to actually being proactive and actually recognizing that if we want to have a loving and a connected and a nurturing and holding relationship, that we might actually need to invest some energy and some time in getting better at that.

Dawson Church

Say, going for a high stakes job and it involved learning, involved taking some courses, maybe getting a degree, you put in the time to learn those skills. And so it's absolutely worth investing the same amount of energy into relationships.

And you're going to be in a relationship with people your whole life long. If you have children or grandchildren, if you have parents, which you definitely do have, and you're in a partnership with somebody, you definitely want to have relationship skills. If you're working with a team, you want relationship skills.

One of the cool things I've been doing for the last 3 years is I'm gathering data on flow, flow space. And it's so cool when you are in flow and then you're in flow with your partner, your partner's in flow. And then if you're on a team, you go into group flow. And we're showing that these skills, like tapping, like meditation, help put you in those flow states. So then you have a really great ability to enter flow and then enter group flow.

Alex Howard

What's the potential of that? We started with this frame that I like, that relationships can be our greatest source of misery, but also our greatest source of joy and happiness. And we then went on a journey talking about triggers and how to work with those. And we're talking now about how do we be more proactive in terms of our state. But what's the potential, particularly for those watching that might have had a difficult history with relationships, what's the ultimate gift and potential here?

Dawson Church

I think working on yourself first. I had a young man in my men's group come to me and he said, "Dawson, I'm thinking about breaking up with my girlfriend and these are the issues". He outlined them for me. And he then said to me, "Do you think, Dawson, that this is her? This is because of her, or is it me?".

I thought that was a great question for a young man to ask about this relationship and his difficulties he's facing and thinking about breaking up and saying is it her or is it me?

I thought for a long moment about that, and I actually said to him, "If you had that problem, that same pattern in your previous relationship and the one before that and the one before that, it's probably you. If this is the first time it's ever happened, it may be her". So that's a really good frame to see it.

And if we do treat it as something that we can heal, then we start to live healed lives, we start to attract people with healed lives. Before I did a lot of my own healing, I attracted people into my life who were chaotic, and they were me unconsciously trying to heal my mother. So I'd be attracted to these women who were full of drama. They're really exciting. I had a lot of very exciting relationships before I got married to my wife, but they were just dysfunctional.

In fact, when I read people posting ads and saying, "I look for chemistry", what chemistry they're referring to unconsciously, they don't know it, they're looking for high cortisol, high stress chemistry. And they feel that high stress is magic.

I had one friend, and she went through a series of chaotic relationships like that. And I saw her have all these ups and downs and boyfriends who abused her and stole from her and cheated on her. And

she always had some story about the man she was with and how he was doing these things. And then she met somebody new. And I happened to be on a long bus ride with the new guy she was seeing, and I got to know him on this bus ride.

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And when we got to our destination, I was chatting with her. I said, "Wow, you met this new guy. He's fabulous. He's emotionally centered. He is solvent". A long list of positive attributes. And she said, "He is boring". She said there's no chemistry. And what she meant was there's no stress chemistry. And people are often looking for stress chemistry. And if they aren't getting their fix of cortisol, he's boring. And they break up with them.

So that's the pattern people enact over and over and over again, and then they wind up in the next relationship hell. So we want to really deal with our triggers. We want to deal with our stressors. We want to no longer be relating in using that chemistry of stress. We want to really experience the biochemistry of inner peace and stillness, and we attract people like that into our lives.

And you find yourself attracting people who are having elevated mental and emotional states. Now, when you do that, that is its own set of chemistry. And in my newest book, *Bliss Brain*, I talk about this chemical called anandamide. It's also triggered by higher states which are feeling a sense of love and connection with the universe in meditation.

Anandamide is called a bliss molecule because it triggers enormous senses of ecstatic wellbeing, and it ducts to the same receptor sites in your brain as THC, which is the active molecule in marijuana. So you're having a flood of all these chemicals, now you're getting chemistry. But you're not getting stress chemistry. You're getting the chemistry of love and connection. And then your relationships are wonderful.

A lot of my friends and I, when we hug, we don't just hug each other and let go. We hug each other and we hold each other for 2 or 3 minutes because it feels so good to settle in, drop into the body, drop into the heart and feel the energy of this wonderful, loving being. And so if you surround yourself with this, after a while you may have dozens of people like that in your life.

I feel very blessed because I travel quite a bit and I meet people like this, and I spend time with people like this, and we just hold each other, we hug each other, we relate to each other, we're in the heart. And then you have this community of love, and suddenly the world is a very loving place. And there's all the chaos going on in the world as well, and yet you know that you fundamentally have chosen this place of inner peace and that you have all these people, this whole community of people who is there with you. So that's the kind of chemistry you want.

Alex Howard

It's beautiful. It's funny, as you were talking about the kind of courting element in relationships, I was thinking about when I first met my wife, and I was going from one chaotic relationship to another, and we became friends and she was the friend who was soothing me through these ups and downs and these dramas.

And I did a lot of inner work at this time and I realized the toxicity of these dynamics I was in. And I was just like, who do I want to hang out with? Who do I enjoy being with? And then it was a crazy moment, I was like, oh my God, the person I've been looking for has been there all the time whilst I've been off chasing this cortisol high. But actually, then when the healing was happening, there's a sense of actually what I truly want is intimacy and connection.

So it's very interesting that sometimes what we most need is already there. We don't see it because of how we're wired and what we're looking for.

Dawson Church - [00:40:56]

It's already there, and we don't see it, and we literally don't see it.

There is a story I tell in our relationship course about a therapist called Pat Carrington, who is a professor at a medical school in New Jersey in the US. And she had a woman come to her for relationship therapy. And the woman had this belief that there are no good men out there, all good men are taken.

So my therapist friend tapped with her in several sessions on that belief that all the good men are taken. And then after a few sessions, this woman, this client bounded into my friend Pat Carrington's office and said, I think I found the ideal person. And so Pat had her describe the guy, and it looked indeed as though he had many of the characteristics that she wanted in a relationship.

And so Pat was asking her more about this man, and she said, "Well, where did you meet him?". And the client said, "Oh, I met him at work". And Pat said, "How close to you in the office? Where is he in the office?". She said, "Oh, he works two cubicles down for me". And Pat said, "How long have the two of you worked two cubicles away from each other?". And the woman said, "A couple of years".

And Pat writes about this, she says, Mr. Wright had been working two cubicles away from her for 2 years, and she couldn't see him because she had this belief that all the good men are taken. When she tapped away her belief, she could see what became her future husband, two cubicles away from her.

So we literally can't see stuff when our cortisol, our adrenaline is high. When our prefrontal cortex is shut down, we can't see what's right in front of us. We have to learn to modify our beliefs, believe in the positive. In the absence of evidence, we don't know yet that they are good or the perfect person is there for us, but we believe it, we fill ourselves with joy, we change our signal, we change our biochemistry, we change the field around us and then you start to attract people who are in the same vibrational state, a much healthier vibrational state that you have practiced now putting yourself into.

Alex Howard

That's beautiful.

Dawson, I'm mindful we're running out of time but I'd love you to say a little bit about how people can find out more about you and your work. And you mentioned a course earlier so say a bit about what people can find.

Dawson Church

So go ahead and you can get a discount on that course if you go to the website dawsongift.com. My name, Dawson, dawsongift.com.

What you'll get there is you'll get a couple of things, you'll get an immunity meditation that we've shown in clinical trials lowers your cortisol, also boosts your immune system.

There's also the EFT mini manual for free there. There are also a couple of our most popular courses including this one called Tapping Deep Intimacy, this 12 week relationship skills course, all of at dawsongift.com.

I encourage you to just learn those skills. I mean when you finished high school and you were first getting into relationships and seeing other people and forming your first big adult connections, no one gave you a course in relationships. This is the course. It's called Tapping Deep Intimacy. You want to learn these 12 skills and then have them available to you. You will basically clear a whole bunch of your childhood trauma and then be able to be present and be loving and attract people who are in the same frame of mind.

Alex Howard - [00:44:36]

Fantastic. Dawson, thank you so much. I enjoyed our time together. I really appreciate this interview. Thank you.

Dawson Church

Well, those were really specific questions, Alex. I'm so glad you're offering this to other people. Thank you.