



## **Plant Medicine for Healing Trauma**

**Guest: Jason Prall**

**Alex Howard:** So welcome to this session and I want to welcome Jason Prall. Jason, thank you for joining me.

**Jason Prall:** Absolutely. Glad to be here.

**Alex Howard:** So just to give people a bit of your background before we jump in. Jason is a health educator, practitioner, author, speaker and filmmaker that's a bit of a mouthful. And in 2018, his independent research experience led him to create the *Human Longevity Project*, a nine part film series that uncovers the true nature of chronic disease in our modern world.

He's currently finishing his first book titled *The Longevity Equation*, as well as his next film series that explores ancient methods of healing, mind body and soul from indigenous cultures around the world.

Jason, I'm super interested to jump into this topic together. And as I mentioned to you before we started recording, I really appreciate some of the nuance and sophistication that I think you're going to bring to this topic. And I think probably a good starting point before we get into some of the specifics here is just to get a bit of your journey to this area.

How did you become interested in plant medicines and psychedelics and indigenous cultures?

**Jason Prall:** Well, I think part of it is just in who I am, it's in my makeup so there's that. I first came across Ayahuasca, I think maybe 12 or 15 years ago in passing when I was reading about it, I said, "oh, that looks interesting." Back then it was a little more difficult to access it. But I still remember feeling that draw, this could be cool, wonder what that is? But ultimately, how I wound up there had to do with my own healing journey.

I had healing that I needed to do from basically the age of 13, I had chronic knee issues, I had skin conditions at 20 and my path of resolving those led me to eventually becoming a practitioner myself.

Once I figured out some of what was going on and how to work with this stuff, I realized I wanted to share that with others, and help them in their journey because it was difficult for me to find the help that I needed. And in that process, I found some success, I found some failure and ultimately I kept pushing and pushing to figure out what I was missing? What's going on here? Why can't I help some of these people get better? What's going on?

And ultimately, I was forced to recognize that there was traumas, there was things that happened, perhaps by some cultures past life, perhaps it was inherited through our ancestry, perhaps it was in the womb, perhaps it was from childbirth itself and perhaps there was traumas that occurred in childhood and beyond. And as I started to explore those arenas, I realized that that was probably the most important factor for everybody that I was working with, that, yes, of course there were lifestyle measures that we needed to address.

And of course, there were some practitioner things we could do. We could clean up the gut, we could influence biochemical pathways, we could start to bring things back into balance. And along with that, there were other things going on that were impacting the nervous system, the fascia, the soft tissues. And the reality was that traumas and experiences primarily in childhood and before that do set the stage for the programs that are running. And these end up in our thoughts, our feelings, our emotions, our subconscious behaviors and patterns and our belief systems.

So as I uncovered that and understood that, I figured, okay, how do I deal with this? How do I help these people even if I'm not the one doing the work, how can I guide them? And, I explored many, many arenas and there's great models out there.

There's EMDR, there's I mean, you've talked about them all this summit, right? There's so many therapies that we can use, a lot of them are somatic and one of them has to do with plant medicines.

These plants and these medicines that have been developed thousands and thousands of years ago and have been used for as long as we can even recall in ancient indigenous cultures they've been used. And they've been used for healing, they have been used as medicines. If people are sick, the medicine man or the curandero in South America and in some of these areas that people are familiar with, they would use these as a way to heal.

And there was also another use and there was a use that really went beyond the healing, the traditional healing that we'd like to think of. And so as I got to explore those intellectually, I became more and more curious and eventually, honestly, I didn't even chase it, it sort of showed up and I was more than happy to take that journey. And that began my exploration with these things, and I think from that initial experience and probably even before that, I had a reverence for the stuff.

There was something intuitive in me that recognized that there was a way to do this and it's not something to be messed around without any concern. There's people that have been working with these for thousands of years, they know how to do it. Why don't I work with them and understand it from their perspective? Because I think that is where you gain the most understanding for these things.

That began my journey and then from there, it morphed into working with the medicines and to truly understanding their perspective on healing. And that to me was the ultimate gift, was learning this wisdom from the indigenous cultures, from the ancient cultures like Ayurveda and Chinese medicine, and Buddhism, and shamanism. The wisdom that they carry in those traditions are really the medicines that I needed.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah. One of the things I like in what you're saying is that there's an intellectual element to what you're describing, but there's also an experiential element. And what can happen is people can be too far down the intellectual and it's all a theory and it's all living in books and science. And they're not really taking the steps to have the experience, but others are.

So in the experience that just kind of goes, "oh, that sounds like fun, let's try some of that." Without really being aware that there is, there are risks if things are not done in safe containers and with careful consideration. We'll come to some of that a little bit later on.

Maybe just say a little bit as well around, when we talk about plant medicines and psychedelics, what are we actually talking about? You mentioned Ayahuasca, for example. What are some of the substances and what are some of the current state of what's available, and what's out there that people might come across?

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. I mean, I think the most traditional plant medicines that have been used for thousands of years, this is the Ayahuasca, this is San Pedro or Huachuma as they might call it in South America. It is a Peyote, which is more the northern Native American traditions. It is Iboga which is an African tradition, and mushrooms, the psilocybin containing mushrooms and Fly Agarics. So there's other kinds of mushrooms too, but these would be traditionally used and there's some other versions of other psychedelic or mind altering plants.

And so those have been used for thousands of years. Those are what I would call plant medicines and technically a mushroom is not a plant, but it's still in that category. The natural medicines that come from the earth. Then we have these other ones that we're using now more in the west, LSD, Ketamine, MDMA, these are now being explored a little bit in the west and I don't diminish them, I think they have value in a therapeutic setting. They're certainly better than pharmaceutical drugs and traditional talk therapy.

However, for me, there is a distinct difference in how they function and the way that they're being used. So I like to put those LSD, MDMA, Ketamine, those types of things in the psychedelic category. Technically they're all psychedelics, but for me it's just an easier way to separate them and say those are psychedelics and these are plant medicines, and so that's kind of how I like to think about them.

**Alex Howard:** And it strikes me that there's been some different evolutions and different stages of development of awareness around some of these things. So, for example, there seemed to be a surge of research and interest in the 60s and then some of these things became banned, and some of these things sort of went underground. And then it appears that in the past, I guess it's probably been 15 years or so that I've been aware of people doing Ayahuasca ceremonies in the west; in London, for example, there have been various groups that people go to. And then it seems, in more recent years there's also been a surge of interest in using psychedelics, for example, alongside talking therapies and in the containers of more traditional psychotherapeutic approaches but that being a tool that's used within that, so it seems that there's been different.

Would you see that as well, different stages to the evolution and the understanding of these things, at least in a Western context?

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. I mean, I think at the end of the day in the West, we realize that we're sick, we're psychologically sick, we're emotionally sick, spiritually sick. And that's not demeaning, it's just that we've lost our way.

We went down the path of getting a lot of stuff and it didn't really work out for us and it's continuing to not work out for us. So a lot of people have been seeking something to wake them up, and this has been yoga, it's been meditation, it's been all these other spiritual practices as well but plant medicines and psychedelics seem to play a huge role and there's something about the wave that is unstoppable at this point. I don't think that there's any way to stop this.

People are gonna be exploring this and I think a lot of it has to do with the Internet. The information is out there that the fear porn and the dangers of this stuff coming down from government, top down oppressive ways is no longer holding. The new generations are waking up. We have the children of the 60s are now in positions of power and so I think there's just a lot of momentum. There's a lot of ways these things are gonna be used and there's gonna be a lot of mistakes that we make along the way.

Now, ultimately, I think all of the stuff that is coming and is ongoing now is better than the pharmaceutical path that we were on. So I am pleased to see this happening. That said, there are pitfalls and I think we can stand to benefit from the wisdoms that have been used, that have been available for thousands of years.

So there's gonna be backyard Ayahuasca ceremonies for sure. There's gonna be people making their own LSD and selling it on the black market.

There's gonna be sassafras and MDMA available for people and then there's gonna be clinical uses for these things.

Now, I think the fact that the clinical application is there for us and this is developing, I think is a very, very good thing. Now, I do think that it's going to come with constraints, you're going to see people that are working in that field and there's going to be licenses and restrictions, and I think that is valuable, I think that can be there too.

So I don't think there's gonna be one way that this ends up unfolding, I think there's gonna be so many paths. And I think for each individual, depending on their risk tolerance and who they are, and who they know, and these types of things, I think they're gonna find their own path and I think it's all okay. What I want to do with this stuff is share at least my experiences and perspectives and some of the wisdoms that I've gained and borrowed from the indigenous cultures, so that we can shortcut some of these experiences.

We can learn either from pain or we can learn through love and so learning through love is so much easier. And it's an option, we can learn through pain too, I learn from pain all the time. In fact I'm notoriously learning through pain, I'm trying to get out of that mode. And so I think it's just gonna be interesting and I don't think that's something to be afraid of and I don't think it's something that we need to do, we don't have to go to South America anymore

to get this traditional Ayahuasca experience. I'm just gonna use Ayahuasca as the main talking point here. But I see people that want to go down to Peru and I want to drink in the jungle and I want it to be authentic. And that's great, but at the end of the day, I don't know that they really understand what they're talking about. To do it truly, authentically, you're gonna have to basically take a boat into the Amazon a few hours or at the very least be sitting on a jungle floor with all kinds of insects all over the place, and you're gonna be defecating in a hole and it's not that comfortable.

**Alex Howard:** It's not the fantasy people have in their minds of Tarzan in the forest.

**Jason Prall:** And it's that same mentality. I want to get through the pain, it's like this desire to struggle to succeed. And so I think what's cool is that there's now opportunities to, and by the way, the truly authentic experience for something like Ayahuasca, you're gonna go with a random tribe that doesn't have reviews, nobody knows about it. So you're taking a risk in that in that light too, even if you heard from a friend of a friend who said it was amazing, you just don't know. And so there's now these centers that you can go to in places like Costa Rica or even in South America that have reviews and have basically some backlash if something goes wrong, they have some accountability. So this is beautiful. This is like the combination in the indigenous cultures, this prophecy called the Condor and the Eagle, and this is a perfect representation.

This prophecy has to do with the old traditional indigenous ways, meeting up with these new Western ways and sharing the skies together and blending this culture in a beautiful way. And so that's what I'm seeing, that's the opportunity that we have because they need us as much as we need them.

**Alex Howard:** What is interesting, what you say about Westerners going into indigenous cultures and wanting to have that authentic experience.

A friend of mine's daughter was very deeply into that kind of world, in fact married a Brazilian shaman and then her brother was like, I want to experience some of this. So goes off with her to do multiple Ayahuasca ceremonies in Brazil and comes back and basically has a psychological breakdown, which took six months of re-scaffolding his personality to be able to recover from. And I think it's that thing of people realizing that they have limits and we will have edges, and some of us need really safe containers, and need to stop at a point where doing a ceremony day after day, for example, is just too obliterating sometimes to someone's personality.

I really like what you're saying about having spaces that are used to working with crazy Westerners that have a different set of challenges perhaps sometimes to some of the indigenous folks that have grown up around these practices.

**Jason Prall:** Absolutely. And so there's cultural things that need to be understood with regard to plant medicine because in the indigenous ways, in terms of integration and the post ceremony time that was sort of their whole life was integrated. It's much easier to integrate in that type of environment, so it's a little different.

And also, I think one thing I see over and over again in this plant medicine world is people want to experience plant medicine to heal something. They want to heal a trauma, they want to heal something in them, and it's the energy or the motive behind it is very akin to taking a pill or a supplement. Saying, "I'm going to take this and it's gonna fix me" and "I'm going to do Ayahuasca and it's gonna fix me."

Well, these people and the traditions that drink Ayahuasca and they drink San Pedro and some of these other things, they're taking it dozens, and dozens, and dozens of times. This isn't something that they do once and they're fixed. Now, that can happen.

Just like anything you can do one time of anything and be something, sort of miraculously heals or rebalances. That's for sure, that's a reality but for most of us, that one time is just opening the door. That is just opening the door to a new reality and it can be powerful. And also, it may not at all be enough for somebody in terms of what their ultimate goal is to bring themselves back into a mental emotional balance, or even a physical balance because these medicines, particularly the plant medicines, are healing on the physical level, too. And so it takes multiple times, and so I hate to see people just go do it once in L.A. or even twice over a weekend and say, I did it, and it was OK and it helped, but it didn't really cure whatever. And it's the wrong approach.

**Alex Howard:** Before we come into a bit more about how to work with these medicines in a way which is safe and thought through. Let's just talk about some of the ways that they can help with healing and transforming trauma. So you just made the point, which I think is very valid, that this is not like a once or twice miracle thing. And there are some powerful ways that you mentioned physical healing, but they can also play a role in neural rewiring, impacting the subconscious.

So say a bit about some of the ways that both plant medicines and psychedelics can have an impact on actually supporting the process of healing trauma.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. And this is something, this is the new science we're still uncovering this. So from a scientific perspective, we don't fully understand a lot about this. We do know that we can see neural rewiring happening. So these sort of neural grooves that we get from childhood and through our daily life, those can be disrupted and we can create new neural pathways. We can see new neurons actually being grown. So we have neurogenesis just from taking these substances, which is fascinating.

So when we think about things like Alzheimer's and Dementia and these neurodegenerative diseases, this is something that if taken maybe somewhat consistently in adulthood, may be able to prevent that and push that off. So there's all kinds of things happening at the neuronal level.

Now, we also need to remember that we are not just, the neurons that we have in our body, not just in our brain, in our spinal cord. We have neurons everywhere. So these tap into the fascia all over the place, so there's a network, an electrical network that is getting totally rebooted, or rewired, or pushed and stressed and moved and influenced in ways that we don't fully understand.

So on a neural level, it's happening in a powerful way. And I've experienced it at both from a heart level, so there's lots of neurons in the heart. I've drunk Ayahuascas that are really, really heart centered and I can feel it impacting the heart. And it's removing traumas from the heart, it's activating the heart.

You can think about it as a heart chakra or actually the physical heart, too. And I felt it and I've experienced it and I've experienced some that have really been in the brain, and been really, really, really psychedelic, if you want to think about it that way, have been really, really impactful there. And I felt the neuronal shifts in the body, I've had different medicines that affected the body. And then I've had other medicines that affect the gut neurons, the enteric nervous system.

So there's a traditional Colombian drink called Yage, which is a type of Ayahuasca, uses slightly different plants than the Brazilian or Peruvian types of Ayahuasca. And that is a very strong purgative and it affects the enteric nervous system.

So it's fascinating, there's just very subtle differences of how some of these medicines can impact us on the neural level, but it also has to do with the subconscious. So subconscious remapping or repatriating can definitely occur. So in these experiences, which are very real, it's not a trip that you're imagining. It's not a dream, I mean, it's sort of like a dream state, but you're very aware in a way.

So these are very real experiences that we're getting into sort of the subconscious mind and the greater collective mind, if you want to get into some of Jung's work in that kind of thing, we're accessing those states, and in that state, we can start to see things from a different perspective. You can step away from our own perspective. We can see things that happened to us in the birth canal, in the womb, in childhood before we have a memory.

So I talked to many people. I've had my own experiences. I mean, I've been around this stuff so much it becomes the norm. So it may sound fantastical for somebody who hasn't experienced it, but this is quite the norm that you can actually experience.

So by experiencing them as a more adult version of you, now you can understand them, you can see them. And it's not even a mental, visual type of experience it's an actual cathartic or very real experience in the body, you feel the emotions, you feel compassion.

Even somebody that maybe had experienced some sexual trauma as a child, they can, not necessarily re-experience that, but they can watch or observe or experience that in a way, and that sounds bizarre, but they can immediately find compassion for the person that did them wrong. There is some insight of why they're doing that. Maybe they were abused in the same way. So it's like an immediate physical, emotional understanding. It's not just a mental cognitive understanding, it's a real thing and so this is powerful.

If I can go back and I can experience that, we can even get forgiveness in that experience. We can have an exchange with that person. So it's quite magical in that sense and just by doing that, even if we don't want to fully accept that that's a real experience. Even if we call it an imagined or a dream experience, it doesn't matter.

So it's very real when it comes to coming out of that experience.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah. One of the things that also a number of people have said to me have had these sorts of experiences, is that one of the greatest sources of our suffering and one of the greatest drives of our trying to, you mentioned the failure of materialism in a sense, our kind of constant trying to get something, our sense of separation, and our sense of aloneness and when people have these experiences of unity, consciousness, or they really remember who they are, which is not the separate self.

That even if that's a sort of peak experience and they go back to experiencing the world in the way that's been familiar. Some things that once experienced can't be unexperienced in a sense.

I've noticed that it can fundamentally change people's sense of, it's a little like some of the astronauts that went to space and saw the earth and realized that actually we're all connected, we're not the United States and Europe and China, there's something that shifts in people's awareness that doesn't really shift back sometimes.

**Jason Prall:** Absolutely. And this is the case with a lot of things that we don't even really think about. If you watch those videos where a blind person will put on these new glasses that are developed now, not a blind person but a color blind person and they've never seen color. And they put on these glasses and all of a sudden they can see color and get tears.

**Alex Howard:** Or deaf people that hear for the first time.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah, exactly. I mean, when you see these babies that hear. I mean, it just melts you and it's a magical experience. So for that person going from a colorblind state to now seeing the color purple, instantly they will never forget that, they have a reference point that is new. So this is the case and this is the case for me, the first time I experienced these things, the magic came back because I immediately touched something that I didn't recall before, a new state, a new experience. And it's not visual like everybody gets caught up in the visuals of things like Ayahuasca. It is so much more than visual, I mean, it's laughable.

In fact, I don't really have a huge visual experience with these things. I mean, I can, but it's more to me in the body. I get lots of insights and downloads and intuitive understanding, and the experiential aspect of the oneness or this sense of no separation or even emptiness, no-thingness as they might refer to in Zen or Buddhism. It's amazing, and once you have that, even though it's a blip, it's still enough to shift you to say, wow, that's worth chasing. I want to get back to that.

Now, some people go back to that and chase that state with Ayahuasca and some other things, they just keep chasing the state. So state chasing is not really valuable in that sense. To really ground those things and to solidify those experiences, I think is the goal. And this is what happens in meditative practices, Zen, Zo Chen, all these other practices. That's what they're trying to do, they are trying to stabilize these states.

So they're glimpsing, they're glimpsing now they're glimpsing for longer, now they're glimpsing more often. And then eventually as things get stabilized and this is what we might refer to as body or Zen or Satori; these enlightenment experiences, that's what people are doing in the meditative practices and yoga and these type things.



So that's really cool when you can access that for the first time or the first time, you at least remember it. And it changes your world when you come back to the physical reality because there's something in you that remembers, oh yeah, we're not all separate. There is compassion and love at the basis of all.

**Alex Howard:** And if we're talking about, for example, developmental trauma, let's say, where we've grown up as a child, where we just didn't feel we got the love and the holding and the support that we needed, we might not consciously see it that way, but energetically or emotionally, we didn't get that. So we have glimpses like this, be it through deep meditation or through deep emotional release workers or through plant medicine.

I think it does shift something in that history sometimes. And also, if there have been significant, you mentioned, for example, sexual abuse, or physical abuse, or events like that, we end up feeling like the world is a dangerous place that is there to harm us. And sometimes having these state experiences, even if they're not fully stabilized and may take many years to integrate. It gives that kind of flavor and it gives that taste of something that's different.

And you put something in the notes that you sent me that I wanted to ask you about that I really liked, you said "the difference between healing and remembering", and just what you were saying just now struck me about, there's something about remembering who we are, which is not the egoic, a sort of conditioned self. So maybe just touch on that a bit.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. I mean, this goes back to a lot of the ancient eastern traditions. That's the point that they're remembering the truth of your capital S self, the big you, not this little egoic self that we all get wrapped up in so often.

And so the process of a lot of those traditions is to remember who we are, and what we are, and what this all is, and what it all isn't, maybe. And this is no different than the shamanic traditions that I've encountered.

So they involve things like, when these shamans and curanderos talk, at least the good ones that I've sat with, they're always talking about remembering, you're not healing, you're not here to heal, you're here to remember. And in this sort of awakening remembering process the body, the mind and the soul heal. It happens as an after effect, it happens as a result but that's not the main goal for a lot of these healers.

And so if you can take that approach into that experience, I think it just sets you on a more realistic and beneficial trajectory to remember who I am. And because the big question that we, most of us have, who am I? What is this?

**Alex Howard:** And what strikes me and what you're saying as well is sometimes it's the self with a small S, like the egoic self which is, I'm broken and I need to be fixed. I need to get rid of this issue of anxiety or self-esteem and when we remember who we are that is so much more than that, often these issues either drop away or we shift in our relationship with these issues in such a way that we're able to therefore work with them differently.

**Jason Prall:** That's the big one. To me, that's really what it is. Yes, these things can heal. And I want to interject here quickly that the role of the healer in something like Ayahuasca is very, very important. These shamans are not just there to make sure you don't cause harm to yourself. They're there healing, performing. They are doing work on you and on the group. Yes, holding space in protection, there's lots of things, but they're there as a healer.

This is why the good shamans work so hard to continue to perfect their craft, if you will. The more that they remember who they are, the more that they have access to a way to help influence the healing. So there's very real healing.

Now, they're just influencing the process. You are the one that's healing yourself always, but they can help guide and influence. So I think that's important to note and sorry ask your question again because I completely forgot it.

**Alex Howard:** I want to respond to what you're saying there, actually. That role of the shaman or the facilitator, I think sometimes people. I want to really just reinforce the point you just made that, I think people can underestimate the importance of that role.

**Jason Prall:** Massively.

**Alex Howard:** They can also underestimate the level of skill that goes into doing that. I think about it more in my work working as a therapist, let's say, for example, someone goes into a place where some very vulnerable and sensitive emotion comes up and it may appear to someone on the outside all you're doing is sitting quietly and allowing that to happen. But actually, the level of attention that you're bringing and almost the tone of the silence and the space, and then when you do respond, the place from which that comes, all of that can be critical in creating the holding and the safety for that person to really be witness to the seen in that place.

And it strikes me it must be the same thing in plant medicine, that it may appear to the uneducated that the shaman is not really doing much apart from just guiding a ceremony. But I imagine there's a great deal of depth of skill that goes into actually doing that.

**Alex Howard:** Well, it's like somebody that's never heard of the game of basketball, never seen it and I tell them I play basketball. This is true, this is not this is not a lie. But there's a great difference between me playing basketball and LeBron James playing basketball. We both are essentially doing the same thing.

**Alex Howard:** You are both throwing a ball at a net.

**Jason Prall:** Right. We're dribbling, we're doing these things, but he's drastically better and more skilled and more nuanced and more understanding of it than I am. And it's a good analogy, because there seems to be some inherent differential qualities in the shaman's.

So it's like everybody has the potential to be a shaman, if you think about it that way, or the potential to be a piano player. But why are some better than others? I don't know, it's just the way it is. So some are just inherently gifted, some are inherently practiced, some are

inherently skilled in other ways that others aren't. So it's very different, I am glad we paused on this because it's very, very important to understand that it's a critical nature. And yes, as a beginner, you don't really know what to look for.

How do you even assess whether this curandero or shaman or whoever is good? It's very difficult. But as you get experience with it, then you start feeling out, oh, wow there's a drastic difference in these healers.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah. And I think particularly where there's a history of trauma, people that have experienced trauma often have learned to be with themselves in a way that perpetuates trauma.

So, for example, if the world was overly imposing and part of that trauma was the world not being responsive. They may have learned, you've just gotta make stuff happen and push through and they're looking for an environment that's kind of a high pressure environment. It's probably the opposite of what they actually need.

And it's having a facilitator or a shaman that is trauma informed in a sense that can actually see that, and can encourage them to go slower for example, if that's what's needed to build the safety, to allow something to happen in a safe and healthy way.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah, I think any healer or guide, no matter what you're doing or even just an individual in any relationship, there's a level of attunement. How hard do I push? How much do I pull back? What can this person handle? And sometimes when to push through, there's always that moment as a guide or a healer. It's like, okay we're at a critical point here, we need to push, not pull back.

So this is very, very nuanced and skillful on an energetic level, on a psychological level. So these healers and shamans that I've worked with, they understand this. They're just doing it in a different way. They're working on an energetic plane, a spiritual plane maybe that we don't fully understand here in the west, they're doing it with different tools and so it's very, very different.

**Alex Howard:** It may be that they're doing it very intuitively, they don't know it, they couldn't articulate what it is they're doing. They've just got that instinct of when, and I love what you just said, that sometimes you're on the edge and you need that firm hand to give you that little push. And that moment could be terrifying.

**Jason Prall:** It sucks.

**Alex Howard:** It's like it's fucking awful sometimes, but it's like you need enough trust in that person and sometimes you get the push on your whole body braces and it's the worst thing they could have done and the trust is broken. And that sensitivity of that practitioner is, I think some people are gonna love what you said, "some people, they just have it." Why is it that Mozart sat down and could play the piano? And my mother was a piano teacher and I was drilled at the piano for years and I still suck, maybe it's just grace.

**Jason Prall:** Is that your path?

**Alex Howard:** Exactly.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. And in the Ayahuasca world and some of these, Iboga is in the same way, there's experiences that are quite scary and they're really the death scenario, it's an ego death, but it's a death. And it feels like you're dying, it feels like you're actually dying. There's an aspect of yourself that recognizes where you are, yes, I'm drinking Ayahuasca. So you're not hallucinating, you're not losing it. You're very aware of where you are and you're convinced you're dying.

And I've had that multiple times and each time it sucks, but it has gotten easier. And part of that, and in that process, the shaman is doing the work. They're not with me, they're not near me, they're over across the room. But they're still working on me and working with me and helping me through that process and so it's very real.

And I asked one of the shamans one time, I said, "I've died a few times and it does get easier and I'm starting to learn how to die," so to speak. "It seems to me that this is a practice of dying well, so that when we come to the real death, we understand what is happening and we can die gracefully, peacefully and we can sort of consciously transition." And he said "kind of."

He said "Ayahuasca and this path is a study of life and death as a part of life." And I was like, oh, of course, how do I fall into that trap? But it was so beautifully stated and it was so powerful for me because it really is the study of life. So it's remembering who we are in the study of life and death is, of course, a part of that life.

So there's very, very real and scary experiences and it's not always fun. I don't say that to scare people.

**Alex Howard:** I think that's very important.

**Jason Prall:** It's very real and it's important, and having that death experience, it was one of the most healing experiences I've ever had.

And I want to address your earlier question. Because what I tend to find with things like plant medicines is that, yes, there's healing that happens, and more importantly, the experiences that you have during the ceremonies and during the plant medicine journeys, they're showing you something that you can now take back with you to work on.

So now you know where to go, now you know what path to take, now you have a direction.

So many of us, when we're feeling ill or were lost or depressed or anxious or whatever it is that is making us feel like we're out of balance. Or we just know we have some things to clean up and work on. We don't know what to do. We don't know where to go. We're so lost in the process. And sometimes we don't even know that there's things to do.

And so in the plant medicine experiences, I've had realizations. I've had experiences that now show me, oh, wow, I've been operating this way the whole time, I've been thinking and believing this for my whole life and it's wrong.

Now, I don't know exactly what to do from here, but I know where I don't want to go and I don't need to go and so now the path can start to unfold.

So it's almost like walking through a door so that you have 20 other doors to explore.

Now you're still lost, but you now have more paths; you now have, or maybe you're in a room with 100 doors and walking through one now narrows it down so that you only have 10.

So it just makes your path easier and things just seem to sort of magically unfold for you, I've noticed. And this is not just for me this is many, many people. I gave people this advice and they came back to me and said "you won't believe what happened." It's just like you said, things are just like falling into my lap.

Yeah, it's weird when you operate in that energy that things just start to happen gracefully, at least in more grace.

**Alex Howard:** Yes, totally and I think there are different ways, and plant medicine is a powerful way, and there are other ways also of reaching that place where we loosen the grip of how we hold our personality and we hold our perception of the world. Anything that allows us, even if it's temporarily, to loosen that and see things a different way. There's the potential for something new and something else to happen.

It reminds me of something else I wanted to ask you about, that often our trauma and often also our beliefs and our identity and our ego, there are layers to that.

Sometimes this sort of work is a peeling off of those layers, and I think that perhaps speaks to what you were saying earlier, that it's not one experience, it's a journey of multiple experiences. So maybe say a bit more about that.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. I mean, the reality is from my perspective and from my journey in all this and digging deeper into myself is that; we have these sort of parts of ourselves, these protectors, if you will.

Now you can think about the un-integrate itself as somebody that has fractured pieces, the over a thinker, over the worker is one. The one that always relies on somebody might be another, the one that just backs down from all confrontation. There's all these aspects and you may have some and you may not have others. But we develop these strategies, these parts and protectors, and they're going to step up to the plate when needed. And so these are ego defense strategies, if you will.

These ego structures that we've got layered within us and they're beautiful because they've protected us since we were very, very young and they were required. We developed these skills to help us navigate the world because for whatever reason, we perceived a lack of safety. We didn't feel like we were safe, we might have been perfectly safe. But as a one year old or a six month old, we didn't perceive that to be the case. And so, or even a three year old, so we develop these strategies.

One of the things that happened to me when I was young was and I love my mom to death. But I remember her saying "stop being so sensitive, don't be so sensitive." And she may have only said a handful times. I don't know, but it's in my memory.

So there was some emotional thing that's attached to that. And then later on in life, I play a lot of sports, and I was often the captain or the leader of the team and one of the things that was drilled into me was, you can't lose your emotional grip, you got to stay center. So you can't get too excited and you can't get too overwhelmed or defeated. So I learned to shut down emotion as a way to cope, because it wasn't safe for me. I was told not to, it was drilled into me.

So we develop these things and these are things that they will peel off one by one as we find safety as an adult, as we integrate these parts and pieces of ourselves. We don't get rid of them. We don't toss them away. We don't hate them. We love them because they're such important parts of ourselves, we just want to integrate them so that they're in balance.

And as those parts, the two year old part, the six year old part, the eight year old part, whatever, there's dozens and dozens of parts and pieces, often, as those feel safe, then they can relax and they can grow up. But there are a lot of these parts and pieces are stuck in that two year old self.

So I have lots of three year olds in me and in five year olds and they're still there. And some of them are integrated and some of them are still fractured, I'm still working on them.

So as we peel back the layers and integrate these, new layers will reveal themselves and again, it's more work. So what I find personally is that the more work that I do, the more work I find that there is to do. These aspects start to show up.

**Alex Howard:** That's my experience too.

**Jason Prall:** And it's the same thing with plant medicines. The more I do plant medicines, the more I understand how to work with them and the deeper I go. And I just start realizing, oh, my God, this hole is infinite, it never stops and we just keep going, and this is to me what I think the soul evolution is from a lot of these traditions.

**Alex Howard:** Well, again, one of the things you put in your notes to me, which really jumps out, in fact I emailed you straight back and was like, I'm really excited that we're using this as part of the context here. Is that, I think this is, I don't know if this is the source that you were quoting it from, but I think the original source was Ken Wilber's work around some of this.

This idea of there's not just waking up, but there can be sometimes this fixation, particularly if there's been a lot of trauma where we feel like our path is to get away from that trauma. And if I could wake up and I can become realized, I can escape from and get away from that trauma. But the importance of not just waking up, but also growing up and also cleaning up.

Say a bit more about what you mean by that and why that's so important.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah, a lot of this does come from Ken Wilber, he's a modern day genius. He's pulled a lot of pieces together and helped me start to think about these things in a new way. And I'll do my best to sum up his very basic understanding.

But I think waking up is an obvious one, this is the idea that if I meditate and I can access different states, it deals with ultimate reality, the big capital S self and this is the stepping beyond sort of the dual nature of reality. These are beautiful experiences and the deeper you go with those practices, again, these are yoga meditations, in Sufism they spin and they twirl.

So plant medicine has to do with this waking up process.

That's a beautiful process and I think that can offer a lot of healing benefits just in that process, but we need to understand and we have an opportunity to understand that that's not all there is. There's growing up as well.

Growing up has to do with this human experience. That's more of the egoic self. If you watch a child, I actually have an infant, and it's funny. He thinks he's me. He can't separate this idea that there's another, everything is self, everything is me.

So he can only see from his perspective. He cannot pretend to think from my perspective and a child, even at one years old will do this. If you have a block and on his side of the block, it's red and on my side of the block, it's green. And you ask him, what color do you see? He'll say red. And then he'll say, what color do I see? If I ask him what color I see? He's gonna say red, too.

He doesn't have an understanding that there's possibly something else. And you actually see this with a lot of adults, they have a perspective on the world.

**Alex Howard:** Yep.

**Jason Prall:** And they can't imagine... I mean the political arena.

**Alex Howard:** I was just going to say, you get to politics, it's a great example.

**Jason Prall:** And we can't somehow figure out how that person thinks that way? That's crazy. And what Ken Wilber's really brought to light is that there are stages of development in our understanding of how to think about this. And we're all at different stages and sometimes we're at a more integral or connected or holistic state, and sometimes we drop back down into a different stage.

I mean, it is very complex. I don't want to go too deep into that, but there is this sort of ego mind ego consciousness development that we can start to think more globally.

We can start to think more holistically.

I can now see why this other person thinks that way that they do, even if I disagree with them. I can say, oh yeah, that's their thinking from this angle and that makes sense and I have compassion for that. I not only have compassion, but I understand, it makes sense, and there's another level.

So it's his idea of growing up is, you go from one level and then you transcend that level and you go to another level, but you include the components of that previous level and then you transcend, and include and transcend into include.

So it's this growing up process from an ego based consciousness. And then cleaning up is a very different process in itself. This is kind of what we were just talking about, this is the shadow work. This is the stuff that's within me that I don't know is there. It's sort of hanging out in the unconscious or subconscious and it's repressed.

So what we tend to see is that people will project this stuff. He's so this way or she's so that way, I can't stand.... And they're always projecting the aspects of themselves that they don't like or that they've been trained not to like. They've been told it is not good.

So whether it has to do with money, whether it has to do with selfishness or sharing too much or being lazy or whatever it is, there's parts of themselves that they're not really in touch with or they don't like about themselves and they're projecting it onto others. I do this all the time, I project all my crap onto other people and we all have a shadow, and when you start to understand at least the idea of cleaning up, then we can start to look for where is my shadow? Oh, I do judge this way a lot. So what in myself am I judging or what am I looking at? What am I not really wanting to see?

So these are three aspects and they are all connected and they're all separate. So you can have somebody that's gone through the waking up process and is completely hit by Satori and these most enlightened states. And then they could be molesting somebody at the same time because they haven't grown up. And this is what you see in the spiritual community. It exists. And you can have somebody who's very, very grown up, somebody that comes to mind is, again, Ken Wilber, Jordan Peterson, maybe as a famous person that we might think of that is really radically taking responsibility. He's an integral thinker and yet I don't know that he's had a ton of waking up experiences.

So you can be on one track and excel really far and none on the other. And the idea is that as you go through, let's say you have a Satori, a very high level waking up experience, an enlightened state that you can stabilize; as you grow up and you access those states again they change, there's something different, there's something unique. And so there's this beautiful way that if we advance all of these aspects of ourselves now we're getting a holistic sort of bigger picture grasp on who we are, and how we can not only get away from this world, but operate in this world as an enlightened being, if you will; or somebody that is a little bit more grounded and gone through greater waking up experiences and done the cleaning up. And then the fourth one is showing up. And that's sort of making sure that you're here for others and really putting this work out into the world.

So it's really important, again, I really didn't do a tremendous job at outlining them, but hopefully I did enough so that they can go explore it. Because it's really, really in-depth and it's really cool when you start to explore these ideas and figure out, maybe a haven't done any waking up, or maybe I've been on a waking up path, and I've been spiritually bypassing all my growing up, and I need to get in there and do some real growing up work.

**Alex Howard:** And that's certainly one of the tendencies I think can happen when there's been a lot of trauma is we just want to escape from the pain of that. And when we do that, we spend our whole time chasing more of the waking up and realizing that that's not ultimately going to provide the healing that we need, when we also need to deal with some of the personality issues.



And I love that you brought in some of the shadow stuff as well. Because sometimes we've gone from being the abused to unintentionally and unconsciously on a subtle level, being the abuser because we haven't processed that part of what's happening inside of us.

**Jason Prall:** And then there's so much work to do. And I just want to give an analogy to what you just said and what we've been talking about. It's like the person at the gym that all they do is bicep curls and they're not going to create balance that way.

We tend to favor things that we are good at or that we like or that gives us a better experience. But oftentimes it's the things that we don't like, the things that we don't tend to do, that really are the things that are going to drive healing and balance.

**Alex Howard:** It's interesting. It's often the people, for example, that least want to do meditation and just want to do loads of psychotherapy who get the most from meditation. And those that only want to do meditation, don't want to do psychotherapy to get the most growth at that point from doing the psychotherapy.

The place we're most resistant is often the place with the greatest potential, I think, for things to grow.

**Jason Prall:** Absolutely. And it's a good place to look, it's a good place to say, what is that? Why am I resisting this? And just in that exploration, you don't necessarily have to go do the thing if you explore why you are avoiding the thing that can often be where the healing is. And then naturally you start doing the thing. You don't have to fight anymore, it's just happening.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah, I want to be respectful of your time, but I also wanted to touch on a little bit around why integration is so important around this. That also people can have these big kind of personality blowing experiences sometimes, and then they come back and it's like, how do you integrate that into your life?

Jack Kornfield wrote a great book, I particularly love the title of the book, which is *After the Ecstasy Then the Laundry*. So it's like after the big awakening, it's like you still got to do your laundry

Maybe just say a bit about why integrating these experiences is as important, if not more important than having these experiences.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah. The old adage from Buddhism is, before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water after enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.

So it's beautiful, I think I even like Jack's better. But I see it all the time and I fall victim to it myself. Where you have these amazing experiences and you make the mistake of the experience, the understanding and the recognition that you have and the awareness that you have. Just after that, within the first week or few days, you think that that's stabilized and it's going to stick. Seriously you come out and you're like, there's no way I'm going to go back to doing this, there's no way I'm going to go back to doing that, or I'm going to change

this, I'm going to do this. And it's so easy to fall into that because it feels so powerful that there's just not a chance that you're not gonna do it.

And when you don't actively take steps to integrate and to implement the things that you've learned or understood or that you want to change, they don't stick oftentimes. And then what happens is, is that you're not doing the things that you told yourself you were going to do. So now you've gone back on your word to yourself.

So now oftentimes, and this isn't always the case, but this is what can happen. You beat yourself up now because you know what to do now. There's no longer the excuse, I don't know what to do. You know exactly what to do and you're not doing it.

So you beat yourself up and you beat yourself up and yet you lost the momentum from that experience. And there's a lot of other things that can happen, too. So it's really just the integration is a way to stabilize those states, those experiences, those understandings so that they stick. And it really just takes maybe three weeks of a full implementation.

If it deals with something like plant medicines, this is often taking a walk in nature, meditation, prayer, setting intention, gratitude practice, eating healthy. It's all the ways that we can treat ourselves with respect and start to implement some of these things. And as you do that, especially after that plant medicine experience, that's when they can really take hold.

So not only is it a risk of not doing it, but there's such an opportunity that you're missing if you don't do it, because the state that you're in. The shamans say that you're still in the field of the medicine for weeks after, the medicine's still working inside you, the spirit of the medicine is still alive.

So it's an opportunity more than anything and that's really the chance. Because if we don't stabilize these things, if we don't take that opportunity, it's so easy for them to go away. And then we got to go back and do it again and try to implement, because again, we lost the momentum and it's like starting a car when it's stopped, it's so hard to get it going, but when you're rolling, it's easy.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah. There're so many areas I'd love to go in this conversation, but just as a kind of final point. One of things that seems to be happening increasingly now is the integration of plant medicines with other trauma based work.

For example, with psychotherapeutic work within different containers really to the traditional just doing plant medicine on its own. Do you have any thoughts on that?

**Jason Prall:** This is what I'm really excited about, honestly, is for integrative thinkers to come together and work together to combine things like plant medicines, or even psychedelics with something, some kind of somatic experiencing or EMDR work or Rolfing, you name it, hypnotherapy.

There's so many, and I don't mean at the same time, I just mean back to back. Because in these states you're now freeing up resources in the system. There's an adult attachment

repair model, we didn't get into any of that, which I think is at least we're saying that some of the plant medicine experiences, I feel like they don't do a good job of, there's limitations in these plant medicines because these things that require relationship work when we're young, these experiences that we that we ideally will have, if we've missed an experience because mom and dad get divorced, somebody's got incarcerated, whatever the case; these missed experiences, they need to be re-attuned with another person and they need to be experienced in a somatic way oftentimes to fill those gaps. So I don't feel like plant medicine does a good job of that, but there's opportunity.

So that's a perfect example of the state that if you do something like an adult attachment repair model, and you do these somatic experiences building things from a relationship standpoint to fix attachment traumas. That combined with something that plant medicine would be a fantastic combination.

So there's ways to do this and I think in the West, I think that's what we're going to see eventually. I don't know how it's going to unfold, but I do feel like we have so much trauma, if you want to call it that, to resolve. We have so many emotional wounds, spiritual wounds, psychological wounds that we can address. And I think we're going to start to see these things come together in new ways and it's going to be tremendous.

I mean, I've seen so much energy type work being done. And I know at the beginning when you're first introduced to this concept of energy healing it sounds a little woo, it sounds kind of crazy. I think people are warming up to it now. But as you experience it and export more and more, it starts to become ho-hum. It's like oh yeah, of course, everything's energy, we all feel energy, we all can move energy and there's just a way to use it effectively and it gets really cool when you start to enter that world because you stop relying so much on the pills and the physical healing mechanisms - those can be beneficial, but it also can be influenced on so many other layers and when you start to experience that again, for me, the magic comes back to life and it's like, this is not just a physical reality we're playing in.

We get to have so much fun exploring these other realms and these modalities in a very grounded and authentic way and it's not kind of just out there woo-woo stuff.

**Alex Howard:** Yeah. I really love that you're talking about this as part of an integration of different pieces because I think sometimes people can go, oh my God, on this summit, conference there's all, do I do this, or that, or that. And what to me is really important is people finding their own path and going, well, actually, the things that feel like they're going to resonate for me might be, I want to do some plant medicine with some good trauma informed somatic experiencing, psychotherapeutic work. And I also want to do some work on nutrition and taking care of my body.

And it's that integration which is different for different people. But having, again, I really appreciate the way that you, sometimes people can come out, go "this is the answer to everything." As opposed to going, "there's some really amazing things in this path and there are some potential issues and challenges." And I really appreciate Jason, the way you steered us through that.

So thank you so much.

**Jason Prall:** Yeah, absolutely. If there's anything I can offer as a final word, it's that all of these modalities that you've likely heard about in this summit and that you'll likely hear about going forward are beneficial in their own right. And they tend to have strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others.

Rolfing is a physical way to release traumas and stored energies in the, primarily the fascia, but the soft tissue in the nervous system and it's just a physical type of massage but it's special in the way it does it. Osteopathy and the osteopathic adjustment, same thing.

So you start where you start. I don't think there's a right way to do this. Everybody's got a different experience in life. Every day is a different age. So it's your own path and I think the idea here that I would like to convey is that you start somewhere and recognize that wherever you're starting is probably not the finish line as well. That's your starting line and I would encourage people not to think about it as work.

I've learned to think about it is not something that ends. So I don't think about it as work and I don't think about it as something that ends.

So for me, it's exploratory, I come at it from a beginner's mind, a curious, childlike state. What can I uncover here? What's going to happen here? And I keep looking for and more than from a cognitive standpoint I'm trying to feel out what's best for me next? Where am I going next? Maybe I stick with something and I go deep in it. Maybe, one thing I just kind of scratch the surface and then I move on. But there's so many areas that you can explore with this.

Even Ayurveda talks about traumas and working with herbs and other modalities like Marmot Therapy, which is a touching therapy to release things. So there's just so many things that we can do and you can explore and so you don't feel overwhelmed with all these options and don't feel like you have to go get the biggest thing that sounds the most exuberant.

Just start where you start and in that process, the next step will reveal itself. And that is the magic is that the steps reveal themselves and you have no clue where it's leading, not a clue. But then when you look back, you go, oh, wow, that path is laid out perfectly for me, holy smokes, I couldn't have laid it out better myself.

So it's just about starting and the next step will reveal itself in good time and just have faith and trust, have fun with it. Explore it from a beginner's mind and try not to think about it as an end. Sure, there's an objective. We all want to get to a certain point in our mental or physical or emotional states that we feel like it's going to be better. But just start and the miracles will reveal themselves and you'll undoubtedly get what you're looking for in the process as long as you keep going.

**Alex Howard:** That's awesome. Jason, thank you so much.

For people who want to find out more do you have a publication date on the book and the doc series?

**Jason Prall:** I wish I did. I'm still working with the publisher on the book date, it's probably gonna be at the end of 2020 or early 2021.

The next film series, we're actually still in the process of filming some of the episodes and looking for distribution. So we're not sure if we're gonna go a Netflix route or if we're gonna launch it online. But the working title is *The Return of the Wisdom Keepers* so perhaps that will resurface in somebody's mind in the future date.

But for now, they can follow us at [humanlongevityfilm.com](http://humanlongevityfilm.com) and we'll let them know when any of these things are coming up next.

I'm super excited about the next film series, I mean, we go to the Himalayas where at thirteen thousand feet with Buddhist monks, working with healing up there, some crazy healing methods.

We do Ayurveda in India.

I'm actually scheduled to go to Columbia here in three weeks' time to work with some shamans there. We've been to Peru, New Zealand is on our calendar to work with the Maori.

So it's really, really cool and the ways that they're using healing and the philosophies that they have are tremendous. And I think they augment this type of the things that you're doing very, very well because it will work, starting to get outside of this physical body healing and as you unlock that door, it's quite the map to follow.

**Alex Howard:** That's really cool. I'm really excited to see it and thank you again for your time Jason, really appreciate it.

**Jason Prall:** Thank you so much for doing this.