



Conscious Life presents

Mycotherapy for Trauma Healing

Guest: Hania Opienski

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[00:00:09] Jaï Bristow

Hello, and welcome back to this conference. My name is Jaï Bristow, and I'm one of your hosts. Today I am delighted to be welcoming back the wonderful Hania Opienski. Welcome, Hania.

Hania Opienski

Thanks, Jaï. Good to be here.

Jaï Bristow

Good to have you here. You are the founder of Super Natural Health, a holistic healer, and someone who brings in lots of different approaches to your holistic healing. You are a naturopathic nutritionist, a traditional Chinese medicine acupuncturist, a Life Alignment healing practitioner and teacher, and a HeartMath coach and mentor.

You also work a lot with mushrooms, which is what we're going to be starting today's conversation with. Could you tell me a little bit about mycotherapy? Now I must admit, I know nothing about this topic, so could you introduce what is mycotherapy? How does it work, and how is it supportive to trauma healing?

Hania Opienski

Certainly, mycotherapy, first let's start with the term, myco is for mushroom, therapy we know that means the application as a therapeutic, or medicinal, tool. It is just the name that has been coined for what could either be considered a branch of nutrition, or a branch of herbal medicine. Because mushrooms are one of those things that sit in both camps, where they have been used in traditional herbal medicines for millennia.

In traditional Chinese Medicine, they're one of the herbs that is mentioned in the earliest treaties from thousands of years ago. They're also something that is a functional food, so as a nutritionist it's something that you can use for a number of its different benefits.

[00:01:52] Hania Opienski

Then it's more recently that mycotherapy was coined as a term, just in the last century. It's looking at using mushrooms as a standalone, or in parallel with other healing therapies, techniques.

So mycotherapy, the use of mushrooms to support health and well-being. That's the basic introduction to what mycotherapy is. There is also a crossover with culinary mushrooms and what we'd consider medicinal or functional mushrooms.

It's also important to note that when we're talking about mycotherapy, we're talking about these functional mushrooms, or medicinal mushrooms, not talking about psychedelic mushrooms. That is something that may be included in mycotherapy in the future, but at the moment, that would be considered a separate branch of medicine.

The kind of mushrooms that we're talking about when we talk about mycotherapy, some that people might have heard of are things like reishi, or cordyceps, or lion's mane, turkey tail. It's this group of mushrooms that would be considered in this type of therapy.

Jai Bristow

Thank you for clarifying which mushrooms we were talking about, because that was going to be my next question. We have culinary mushrooms, and then the functional medicine, or functional medicinal mushrooms that you're referring to, which is the topic of today's conversation.

There's also psychedelic mushrooms, which I think we'll talk about in another conference, so people can keep an ear and an eye out for that.

We have these functional, medicinal mushrooms that you've named a few of, reishi, cordyceps, some other ones. How do they actually support the system?

I like what you said about how it's on the border, or brings together, dietary, nutritional stuff, and the more herbal medicine approach. Mushrooms are this exciting plant, which is on the line of both. How do they actually work? How do they support healing in general?

Hania Opienski

Mushrooms are really interesting, and actually they have their own whole kingdom. We have the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom, and then there's the fungal kingdom, which includes things like yeasts and fungus.

But medicinal mushrooms are a very particular type of mushrooms within that kingdom. There are hundreds that are going to have therapeutic, probably thousands, that have therapeutic benefits, but there's only hundreds that have been studied, then very few of those have either good historical use. Now they're becoming something that modern science is researching more.

I'd say probably the main thing that mushrooms are known for is modulating the immune system. What that means, and what's really key is this word of modulating, what that means is that there's a lot of herbs that you can use as immune stimulants, or maybe as immune suppressants to reduce

an overactive inflammatory situation. Whereas mushrooms have this amazing capacity that they will modulate.

[00:05:14] Hania Opienski

The same mushroom can be used in an inflammatory condition, or a condition where there is a suppressed immune system and there isn't enough of a healthy inflammatory response. The same mushroom could be used in these two opposing conditions.

Also in the same person, say someone has an autoimmune condition, which means that their immune system is overactive, and they get cold, which means there's this overreaction of the immune system. The mushroom could have the modulating effect of, it could be used for someone who needs support with a cold, but also has an autoimmune condition.

Whereas there's a lot of herbs that you could only use in one case or the other, because it's going to have a counterbalancing effect, whereas a mushroom is going to modulate. It's going to suppress an overactive immune system in an appropriate way, or increase it in an appropriate way, dependent on the person who's taking it, and what their state of health is. That's probably the main area.

The area where it gets interesting when we're thinking about trauma, is that a lot of mushrooms are adaptogenic as well. What that means is that they're modulating the stress response, and they're allowing the body to find that balance. It can either increase or reduce stress hormones as needed to create balance and harmony.

They're also very good at modulating inflammation. This is another key aspect on a physiological level that is involved with trauma, or the body's response to trauma. They have many other functions, but those are three areas that I would say are really relevant to this topic.

Jaï Bristow

That's so cool, it's amazing that the whole fungal is its own kingdom, its own species, as opposed to the animal kingdom, or the plant kingdom. That in itself is incredible. Then they have this amazing ability to modulate and to adapt. It's not like you have to figure out, oh, what's your system doing? And what can I do to get more of this, or less of that, or whatever, the mushrooms themselves are able to regulate and adapt.

Then everything you were saying about the immune system, the nervous system, the stress response, how it can adapt, and modulate, and regulate, it's fantastic. It's really exciting to hear about.

You have prescribed me some mushrooms in my own life, and it has been really helpful. Just recently, after being ill, I noticed I was having certain symptoms, so I went back on them. I had a special supply from last time.

I'm curious then, because they sound like the perfect solution. They sound like, oh, fantastic, they can do everything that the plants can do. So a) why are they not more common in nutritional

approaches, functional medicine approaches, in herbal medicine approaches? Also related to that question is, what are the limitations of mushrooms, particularly in this trauma-healing context?

[00:08:27] Hania Opienski

I'll take the first part of your question. If you use traditional Chinese medicine mushrooms have been used since the first herbal medicine treaties a few thousand years ago, and they're still currently used. It is something that, it's one of the toolkit that is used as much as a number of other herbs. A Chinese medicine practitioner is going to be assessing what is needed.

Chinese medicine is very much a combined approach, so it's like you might get a formula that has a mushroom in it, plus a number of other herbs, and then depending on the condition, you may or may not. But they are something that is used very widely.

It's only in the last few decades that people have actually started going, oh, well, let's look at mushrooms in isolation. What do they do? How can they be used? That's something that really a new area, and so it takes a number of years for something to become common usage. When I studied naturopathy, I'm trying to think, we only covered reishi and maybe cordyceps, I don't even know.

They were part of our herbal pharmacopoeia and it was like, these are a couple of things that you use as a tincture mixed with other herbs. I didn't really have a understanding of mycotherapy as mycotherapy until years later when I was working as a brand ambassador for a supplement company, and working in the big health food stores.

Then I saw there's all these mushroom products, I don't know much about this, that's when I started getting interested and researching it myself, and speaking to the brand ambassadors. Eventually ended up working for a mushroom supplement company where I got a lot of training, and I worked a lot with practitioners who were using it.

Now something that is happening is it's becoming something that a lot of practitioners are realizing this is really useful, so they are doing self-study to add on to what's offered in their courses. At the moment I'm writing a medicinal mushroom course, part of it's going to be in the degree program for College of Natural Medicine. It's going to be a standalone, and also a standalone mushroom course that is then going to be available to College of Natural Medicine students.

I believe that will be definitely for the naturopath, nutritionist, herbalists, but potentially for the acupuncturists as well. I feel like it's an area that is getting more and more popular, so now educational institutions are going, this is something we need to include in our curriculum, because the research is so strong that these are having really profound effects.

I think the whole pandemic also really raised the profile, particularly of reishi. Because in China it was one of the herbs that was included in their research, and in their protocols for helping people deal with modulating the immune system. Then Western researchers jumped on that and went, oh, actually, this is something that is showing results, let's research it. That then created a huge boost in research of medicinal mushrooms, and then being validated as, yes this is something that is really useful, and yes it's really good for immunity, but actually has all these other potentials. I think that's really brought mushrooms more into the public eye, and encouraged more research.

[00:11:49] Jai Bristow

That's fantastic, and I love to hear how they have been used for a long time, but maybe not so much in Western perspectives, but that they have been used in traditional Chinese medicine, and other approaches since a really long time.

It's fantastic to hear the work that you're doing around it, and how you're bringing it in, and developing these courses for the naturopathic approach, and in your own work, and combining these different modalities and approaches.

You said how in traditional Chinese medicine, mycotherapy gets a combined approach, they use mushrooms alongside other things. You're talking about combining naturopathy and herbal medicine, and all these elements. Could you maybe say a little bit more about that, about combining mycotherapy with other modalities, and other approaches to support the trauma healing.

Hania Opienski

Certainly, something that I've been reading a bit more about, this branch of research, and looking at how mushrooms can be used for trauma support. Something that is really interesting is that... And I hope that people take up the mantle and do more research in this area, because I'd say with something like lion's mane, it's known as being something that stimulates the regeneration of nervous tissue, and stimulates something in the body called nerve growth factor, which then creates the growth of new neurons.

One of the key areas that happens in is the hippocampus. We have this evidence of mushrooms have this physiological action, and that's normally applied, like the research is, in things like Alzheimer's, and dementia, and cognitive decline, and improving function. There's evidence, small but growing evidence that that happens.

Then if you look at research into the impact of trauma on the body, one of the things that can happen, particularly say with childhood trauma, is that there can actually be a lesser development, or a shrinking of the hippocampus. Then if you put those two things together, you're like, well, trauma has an impact on this part of the brain. And then there's a mushroom that has an impact on healing this part of the brain. It just feels like that's something that practitioners can be applying to be supporting.

It'd be great if there was some research that really demonstrated this rather than in other conditions, but there are conditions with that physiological mechanism. That's one thing, you're looking at, okay, well, how are we supporting the physiology that has been changed by trauma? Mushrooms are doing that.

There's also research linking how, particularly childhood trauma but any trauma, can increase the likelihood and the levels of inflammation in the body. High inflammation in the body, and also childhood trauma are often predisposing factors for later mental health issues, and higher chance of traumatic events creating PTSD.

[00:15:01] Hania Opienski

You have this inflammation link that goes through, and mushrooms are amazing at modulating inflammation. Reishi is one that is probably the one that most people think of for inflammation management. It's also known to modulate the HPA, which is the axis involved in the stress response and activating the sympathetic nervous system. Reishi is going to have a modulating effect on inflammation in the body, it's going to have a modulating effect on the stress response, and the hormones that are created.

You're thinking, okay, this is a really nice tool, and as you so well put, mushrooms have this because of this modulating capacity. It means that they are something that's very safe. It's something that someone who either has nutritional training, or herbal medicine training, or naturopathic training, or even Chinese medicine training can apply, and know that, unless someone is allergic to mushrooms, there's very little evidence of harm, or of there being negative effects, or side effects from using mushrooms.

They do have potent physiological effects. There are certain things where you'd think if someone has a blood clotting condition, and they're taking medications that create blood thinning, then reishi is a natural blood thinner. You'd have to think, okay, we've got to be careful because of the medication, you might not want to also recommend reishi. But if someone isn't taking medications, then basically there's something that is safe, they're safe.

They can be used in children. When I was working with the mushroom company, we worked with a few nutritionist herbalists who worked with children. The feedback that they gave about the use of, particularly reishi and lion's mane, in children who had developmental issues, or behavioral issues, as well as gut health issues, where lion's mane is most often known. They found that using those mushrooms actually helped, it helped regulate the dysbiosis, which is also something that can be correlated with trauma. It helped with mood and cognition, and brain development was improved.

It's something that works alongside, as part of a nutritional, or a herbal plan. What I found for me is that it is something that I think of as, it's like a support. In the same way helping someone get good sleep, making sure that someone is not having too many toxins in their diet, in their lifestyle, is having a good diet. Mushrooms is another one of those things that's creating a foundation of harmonizing the nervous system, harmonizing inflammation levels in the body.

What I found through my practice is that it's really useful to do all of these things that are working at a physiological level, to support and help the body to self-heal. Combining that with an approach that's also looking at the mental, emotional aspect, or even the energetic aspect, then it's going to get faster results, or better results.

I've certainly had clients where we've got them the right diet, the right supplements, they're doing all the right stuff, and it means that they can cope, but as soon as they stop any one of those things, their symptoms will just will come back again.

You're like, okay, it's not quite the same as suppressing the symptoms, but you're managing them by all of these things, but we haven't got to the root cause. I found that when I brought in the Life Alignment work, and helping get to the emotional mental root cause, and helping them metabolize

that, that then meant that all the good stuff that they were doing with supporting the body, that then actually really started working, or worked much better.

[00:18:44] Jaï Bristow

Interesting. Thank you for bringing in all these super-important elements. I can really hear how mushrooms are fantastic tool, and they are a tool with their limitations. It might help with the symptoms, but there's other things that can happen to work with the root causes, that can really support then the working together of the mushrooms and Life Alignment.

In our previous conversation on the Heal Toxic Relationship Super Conference, we were talking about things like Life Alignment, inquiry practices, and other things to heal ones relationship with oneself, and to find more balance and harmony in oneself. That there's different tools and approaches, and I guess as a holistic healer, that that's what you're doing, is taking a look at the whole being and all the different elements, looking at the root causes and the symptoms.

I really appreciate how you talk about them bringing in together. I think it's really interesting what you're saying about mushrooms, that unless someone's actually allergic to a mushroom, then of course it's going to have a negative effect, and that it can also potentially have negative effects alongside certain medications. So to be aware of that, but that most of the time, if the person's not taking anything else, then because it has that adaptive regulating effect, it sounds like people can't overdose on mushrooms. Is that true? Or at least in these functional medicinal mushrooms.

Hania Opienski

Certainly, I don't know that they've done tests on, as far as I'm aware, there hasn't been evidence of mega dosing with negative effects. Certainly in oncology, where medicinal mushrooms are used integratively, or exclusively, depending on the situation, but more often integratively, people are taking 100, 200 times what would be a regular maintenance dose, and then getting benefit from that.

Because mushrooms are something that we call dose-dependent, what that means is if you are... The healthier you are, and the lower body weight you are, the smaller dose of mushrooms that you need to have a benefit. The more severe the imbalance, or the illness, or the bigger the person, then of course you've got to increase the dose to meet that.

In autoimmune conditions, working integratively with oncology, there's a lot going on in the body, and there may be that there's a lot of medications and things that are suppressing the immune system, and creating lots of other side effects and issues. That's when mushrooms, and I would say work with a practitioner if you are dealing with any of these major things, but then mega dosing can be really beneficial, and really mitigate, and reduce side effects from other treatment that people might be getting.

Jaï Bristow

Interesting. I'd heard of the term micro-dosing before, especially around psychedelic mushrooms, but the term mega-dosing is new. I like knowing that mushrooms have this thing where you can go

from micro-dosing to mega-dosing depending on what's needed, on who the patient is, on what it's trying to treat, on all these different things.

[00:22:00] Jaï Bristow

It's important for people listening to work with the practitioner who knows about it, and not to just be, okay, I have some illness, you're saying mushrooms are great and regulate, there's nothing can go too wrong, let me just take loads of it. It's good to put in that disclaimer there, I think.

I'm curious, you've mentioned reishi mushrooms a lot, you touched upon, a little bit around lion's mane, and a little bit talked about cordyceps, and I think there was one or two others there. What are the differences between different types? Are they used to treat different... What are the differences and what are they used to treat?

Hania Opienski

Medicinal mushrooms have some core compounds that you find across the board. One of the main ones, that is one of the key immune modulating ones is something called beta-glucans. This is a particular type of polysaccharide, a complex sugar that has a specific side chain. People will talk about beta-glucans and polysaccharides from grains, and they have a certain benefit definitely.

The ones in mushrooms are slightly different in their structure, and that then allows them to actually fit into receptors on our cells. Very conveniently, we have cells that are designed to receive mushroom beta-glucans, which then means that they interact with the immune system more efficiently. That is one of the key things, all medicinal mushrooms have beta-glucans.

Culinary mushrooms have these, too. Even including culinary mushrooms, you're getting a little bit of this immune-modulating effect along with the fiber, and the protein, and a few other things.

Another one of the key compounds are terpenoid compounds, and these are ones that all mushrooms have them, but they tend to be differently structured in the different mushrooms. And those different structures, those different types of terpenoid compounds, terpenes, diterpenes, triterpenes, those tend to be ones that will then have different physiological effects in the body.

There'll be certain other, like a lot of mushrooms have some vitamins or some minerals, some forms of vitamin D, or precursor to vitamin D, also good for hormone modulating, and immune system modulating, and inflammation.

They also have some other plant chemicals, and different types of sugars, and sterols, they're a huge broad range of different compounds, and they'll be slightly different in the different mushrooms. It's originally from Chinese medicine, it was trial and error of you try this and you find, oh, well, this mushroom has this effect, and this one has this.

But now, of course Science... That's been done for thousands of years, it is quite detailed. Now scientists are going, okay why does this mushroom do this? And say something like reishi we've talked about, there are more than 400 active compounds, and only a few of those have been studied in detail.

[00:24:52] Hania Opienski

When looking at mushrooms, I would say use a whole mushroom product, or an extract that has the full spectrum of active compounds, rather than just getting a beta-glucan supplement. Because at the moment there's amazing synergy that's happening, and we don't necessarily know which bit is doing the good thing.

Or you might be taking it because you want the beta-glucans for your immune system, but because you have reishi, it's also going to be regulating your hormones, it's also going to be regulating your inflammation. It's also going to be doing all these other things, and why not have the extra benefit?

Jai Bristow

Fascinating. Reishi is the one I'm on at the moment after having had COVID again. And again I have dysregulated hormones with inflammation in the body, all of that, and it has been helping. It's been helping, I noticed regulate my sleep, it's been helping with inflammation. It's been helping.

Like I said at the beginning, I don't know very much about mushrooms, but I trust you, and your extensive knowledge. So when you recommended it to me a while back when, again, I'd had COVID and I was recovering, and it really helped with my symptoms then. Once I started getting better, I came off them, and I'm back on them now that I'm in that situation again.

I'm curious you've already talked about how it's dose-specific, but it sounds like mushrooms aren't something that you... They're a tool, and they're a supplement that can support the system when it's struggling, and that can help adapt, but that it's not necessarily something that you would take forever. Could you say more about how long usually? Is it like a specific course, take it for six weeks, or the duration of taking mushrooms as well as the dosages. I mean, you talked about the dosage, the duration.

Hania Opienski

Certainly, because they are a functional food, it is something that... There are certain mushrooms like reishi, or shiitake, or any of the ones that could also be culinary ones, there's maitake, oyster mushrooms, things like that. They are things that you can take regularly long term. But really, if you're healthy, then you only need to either be having them as culinary mushrooms, or having a dried powder that's not extracted or concentrated.

It's like saying, oh, well, I've eaten enough vegetables so I can stop eating them now, it's like no. Yes, you don't want to overdo the vegetables, but ideally you eat some every day, and that maintains your health.

I think mushrooms are another one of those food groups that aren't really given so much pride of place in the same way that we think, oh, we must get enough protein, mustn't overdo the carbs, get your essential fatty acids. Mushrooms are an amazing vegan protein source, a source of fiber, source of lots of trace nutrients, and all of these active compounds. They are certainly something that can be used long-term.

[00:27:46] Hania Opienski

But using something in an extracted form that's very concentrated, you probably only need to do that in order to address a particular condition, and that's going to be person-specific. It's going to depend on how weak the person is, or how developed or chronic their condition is, how long they've had the condition, and how responsive their system is. How many other factors are there in their environment.

If someone is recovering from trauma, but they're in an environment where they're still under a lot of stress, and they don't have a very good diet, and maybe they're a smoker, or they're doing something that's increasing the inflammation, or they're clinically obese. Because that creates a lot of inflammation in the body, then it might be that that person, it's going to be useful for them to take a mushroom extract for a number of years to support. Counter-balancing those other lifestyle, or dietary, or physiological issues.

But it might be that there's someone who is generally healthy and then they have a condition, and their system needs to come back into harmony. But they've got a decent lifestyle, they've got a decent diet, they don't have too many other compounding factors. Then it might be that it's just two to six months that they're taking something at an extract level, and then their body will get back into harmony.

It might be that they wait until the next thing, and then you try some mushrooms again, or they go, okay now I'm going to have some mushroom powder in a mushroom latte, or add it to when I make a soup, or have some culinary mushrooms a few times a week. And that's enough to be giving that immune system and modulating benefit. It's very individual.

Jaï Bristow

It's really interesting how mushroom can come in different forms as well as different doses. Different types of mushrooms can help different elements. That you can just have regular mushrooms in your meal, and I like that comparison to, do you ever just stop eating fruit and veg because you ate enough and you're feeling better? Kind of thing.

You can have it in your meal, you can have it fresh, dried, powdered, and then there's extracts, there's concentrated forms. It's really interesting that you're bringing in all these elements, and I really hear why it's important to speak to a practitioner before you start trying to incorporate mycotherapy into daily life, or into healing in general.

I have one more question about mushrooms, and then I also want to ask you a bit, because you talked about combining in your own practice, combining mycotherapy with Life Alignment. I'd like to ask you a bit about the Life Alignment.

But first I was curious, you talked at the beginning about how there's different types of fungi and mushrooms. There's the culinary ones, there's these medicinal, functional ones. I could really hear how you were bringing in the nutritional focus, as well as the herbal medicine focus, when you were talking then about the different forms, and the different ways it can help, and have maintaining and different conditions.

[00:30:49] Jaï Bristow

There's also the psychedelics that you mentioned. And there's also lots of toxic mushrooms we hear about, some mushrooms can be really poisonous. There's also, you said about yeast being also in the fungi family, and things like Candida, and yeast infections, and yeast in the system. How does that work? Because that's obviously an imbalance of fungi in the body already. How does mushrooms, or mushroom mycotherapy, how does that work alongside? Can it support healing that? How does it work, Hania?

Hania Opienski

Certainly, this is a really interesting area because I know that for me I had systemic Candida in my twenties, and the advice at that point... I did a voracious amount of reading, this is part of what then spurred me into going into studying natural medicine and taking this whole path. At that point the belief was mushrooms, fungus, Candida fungus, don't put them together because you're just going to feed the fungus, and it's all bad. That was the general way of thinking until just a couple of decades ago.

Yes, they are in the same group, but maybe an analogy of the animal kingdom, you have bears and you have salmon, they're both part of the animal kingdom, and they can coexist, but it's like a bear can eat a salmon, that's food for it. In that way, like with mushrooms and Candida, there are instances where say, shiitake is a particularly good mushroom for actually killing off Candida in the body, and bringing the immune system back into balance.

Even though they're from the same kingdom, they actually have very different functions and impacts on the body, and they can be competitive with each other. Or one can actually be used to balance and bring down the levels of... Because Candida is something that normally exists in the body, but at a low level, because there's other beneficial probiotics that are keeping it in check. It's often when say someone's had antibiotics, or they've eaten lots, certain foods, or chemicals that have killed off their good, the probiotics, then these yeasts can overgrow because there's nothing keeping them in check. Mushrooms can be useful for then balancing that, particularly shiitake.

There is a slight gray area because Candida feeds on sugars, and mushrooms are high in polysaccharides, that having at the early stages of Candida, when it's really full-on, to have a lot of whole mushrooms, or dried mushroom powder, that has a lot of this mushroom prebiotic fiber, there's a possibility that even though they have these active compounds that are fighting against the Candida, you're also feeding it at the same time.

You would then want to use an extract, you're taking out a lot of those polysaccharides and you're just having the beta-glucans, and the ones that are going to have a counterbalancing effect. They do work slightly differently.

Another question that I will often get is, what about mycotoxins and these other negative molds, and things like that? If I'm sensitive to mold, or mycotoxins can grow on foods, are mushrooms going to be bad for me? They are within the same kingdom, but very different. Medicinal mushrooms can strengthen the immune system if you are having an issue with household mold that is depleting the system. They are going to help the body fight against it.

[00:34:36] Hania Opienski

Like any food, it is possible for mycotoxins to grow on mushrooms if they haven't been stored or packaged properly. But good mushroom companies will do testing on their products, and check that there are no heavy metals, that there aren't any mycotoxins, that there isn't any contaminants. If you're getting a good quality mushroom product, then that's not something that you have to worry about. They're going to be helping the immune system to manage if you come into contact with those other things.

Jai Bristow

It's really interesting because I hear how it's important to have a practitioner, but also to make sure you source your mushrooms from the right source, so that there is that testing, and making sure that the quality is good, and that what you're putting in your body is supporting healing, and not creating more problems.

I really appreciate how you talk about, it's a full kingdom with a big range of different types of mushrooms. Within each category there's different types, and some can work together, and some attack each other, and eat each other. It's fascinating, and I've already learned so much, and I'm looking forward to learning more through your course when that's made available.

Could you tell us a little bit about Life Alignment? I'm aware of time, but could you tell us a little bit about Life Alignment, and how that works alongside mycotherapy? What it is, and how it works alongside mycotherapy?

Hania Opienski

Life Alignment is a healing system that has a number of branches, but the main one is working with an individual, it's an amazing modality. When I first experienced it, I was in a state where it was just post the Candida, I had chronic fatigue and I was really ill, and then I was having a very challenging relationship with my then-boyfriend, and my body was so weak. I had lots of digestive issues and insomnia, and was really hard to think clearly. I was dealing with all of this emotional stuff.

I was seeing a Chinese medicine practitioner, and I was getting herbs. I don't know, there may even have been some mushrooms in there, I'm not sure what the formulas were. It was making a huge difference in my recovery, but I was exhausted, and I just couldn't figure out my mind, and how I managed my relationship.

That was actually when I was then introduced to Life Alignment, when a peer of my mother's, who was a psychotherapist, also someone who had spent years in the Diamond Approach, and doing self-inquiry. She had retrained as a Life Alignment practitioner, because she'd come to a point in her therapeutic practice where she was like, I realize I can get so far with this, but I want to find something that can actually facilitate healing at a deeper level.

She offered me a session, and that first session I remember going in, being exhausted, and in pain, and really emotionally and mentally all over the place. She did this session, and she used muscle testing, you're checking in with the higher intelligence of the body, bypassing the client's brain, and also the practitioner is not diagnosing, they're just facilitating the process. And got straight to the root of the...

[00:38:02] Hania Opienski

It was actually childhood trauma that had then created an ego structure that then meant I was believing certain things, and behaving in a certain way in this current relationship, and sabotaging myself. It was completely unconscious, and she used this healing system to pinpoint what the issue was now, and the emotional pattern, and then the childhood pattern that had created this way of being in the world, that was making it really hard for me to see how damaging this relationship was to me.

Because of the position that I had put myself in, and the way that I was... I don't want to put any blame on him, allowing myself to be treated because of the expectations I had of myself, and what was okay, and how I should be, and how I should be people-pleasing. That one session, getting to the root of that, and doing the energy work that then helped release that from my body. I remember leaving the session, it was at her house, and walking down the street and being like, oh my God, this is the most energy that I've had in the last year and a half.

I also had this level of peace in my heart, and mental clarity. It gave me the realization of, oh I am ready to end this relationship, as much as I love him, I have created this dynamic that is really not healing for me. I've tried to reset the dynamic because we're two cogs, and now suddenly I'm a different shape and we just don't fit anymore. I've been trying to mold myself back into this small version of myself so that I can keep the relationship, but it doesn't serve me anymore, I can't change him, that's not my job.

But if I'm changing, I just need to extract myself from this. It gave me that clarity and that change, physical change as well, in terms of energy. So that opened me up to, okay this is really powerful, looking at something that really helps facilitate finding what is the root. The emotional root, the energetic root, the belief system, the trauma that you've experienced, or the developmental setting up of your ego structures, and your nervous system, and how you react and respond to things. Having a tool that allows you to check in with the client's body, and find those things that that person is ready to heal, and then facilitating that process.

For me it's been really powerful, although interestingly I then went back into going, no, I need to do something that's more substantial and credible, and spent years doing Chinese medicine, and naturopathy, and herbal medicine, and was thinking about going into functional medicine. It's like, no, I must understand the detail of the body, and testing, and all of that.

Then I suddenly went, wait a second, I want to step back out. If I look at Chinese medicine, you can elicit change in the body without any blood tests, without understanding the minutiae of what's going on in the body. When you look at someone as a whole system, you can then change the qi, and it starts the body to self-regulate.

I was like, well that's also what Life Alignment does by working at the mental, emotional, spiritual level, to find what's the key that is then somatizing all of this stuff in the body? You can make a change at this subtle level, and then everything just slots into place without you having to do much at the physical level.

[00:41:23] Hania Opienski

For me it took me 10-15 years to get back to it, but now I'm combining it with how I work with people. I see how much quicker things shift once you're working at the trauma, and that emotion, and memory, and belief that's stuck in the body. Once that clears, then all of the things that you do with supporting diet, and people being able to take the dietary advice, and do it without self-sabotaging, it then shifts that capacity. Now I really like that combined approach and I find it's most effective.

Jaï Bristow

Fantastic, thank you for sharing. Hania, thank you for today's conversation, I've learned so much. How can people find out more about you and your work? Your work around mushrooms and mycotherapy, but also your work around Life Alignment, around naturopathy, which I always struggle to say, and herbal medicine, and more about you, and how to heal holistically with you.

Hania Opienski

Oh, thank you. You can email me at info@supernaturalhealth.co. If you have any queries, or you're interested in what I'm doing. I'm going to be running an in-person retreat at Revivo in Bali next year, it's an opportunity for people to really look at that whole spectrum of mycotherapy, nutrition, energy medicine, self-care.

In the interim, I am going to be running some courses so look me up. I'm just starting the whole social media thing, email is probably the best way for now. Please do get in touch if you have questions.

Jaï Bristow

Fantastic, thank you so, so much for your time today.