



## Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 80 with Damiana Calvario

Serenading the Waters: Grandmother  
Medicine & Expanding the Parameters of  
Herbal Care

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[00:00:00]

*(Excerpt from today's show by Damiana Calvario)*

*It has been a huge teacher for me about love, you know, self love, and unconditional love; just a feeling of that deep knowing in your heart that you're worthy of love, that you are loved, and that you can give and receive love with ease.*

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*(Intro music: acoustic guitar, folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)*

[Intro]

[0:00:23]

Amber: Hi friends, welcome to the Medicine Stories podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth. I am Amber Magnolia Hill. This is Episode 80, and today I'm sharing my interview with Damiana Calvario.

I have been absent of late, as you might have noticed. This time of year fire season in Northern California is incredibly intense, distracting, hard to focus, hard to think. And that, along with everything else, everything else everyone is experiencing in the world, I've noticed, year after year, it gets very hard for me to work, to form a coherent thought, to put together creative projects during this time of year. But as it's cooling down, I'm feeling more myself and excited to release some more episodes coming up.

Let me tell you about Damiana first: she is a mixed woman of color, a daughter, sister, caregiver, community member, survivor, first generation immigrant. Born and raised in Mexico City to a large family, she inherited both her mother's and father's lineages. Currently living as a guest in Chumash

land, Greater LA area with her partner and two dog, her practice blends together her Mexican roots, mixed upbringing, food as medicine, curanderismo studies, Western herbal training, and mutual aid.

For this episode's Patreon offering — and this is going to be open to everyone, not just patrons. This will be [patreon.com/medicinstories](https://patreon.com/medicinstories) — Damiana is giving away five essences that she has made that we speak about in this episode. So this was created during an essence making circle that she hosted, and she says:

*During this circle, we worked with the living water of a cenote, blessed by blue dragonflies who came to the bowl to rest for a few moments.*

*Cenotes are openings on the land that expose water from the underground cave river system. The word "cenote" comes from Mayan, that may translate to depth or water cave. Cenotes our living altars for many offerings to this day and main sources of fresh water for many indigenous communities. Cenotes are also considered gates or portals into other worlds: they're liminal, in between spaces.*

*Dragonflies bring messages of hope, transformation, change, ancestors, beauty, presence, truth, authenticity, and more. There's a Mayan legend that talks about 400 of them holding and bringing back Ixchel to life after her physical body was shattered into pieces.*

So again, towards the end of this interview, Damiana shares more about the experience of making this essence and the surprise of these dragonflies landing on the essence-making bowls. And we get more into this myth, too, of Ixchel, among many other beautiful turns of this conversation takes, including the really incredible story of what happened when Damiana was held up at gunpoint and the change of heart that her perpetrator underwent during that hold up. She is a beautiful herbalist, a kind, wonderful soul who I am so happy to have crossed paths with in this life, and I'm thrilled to be sharing this conversation with you.

Well, let me quickly say as well that the last date to enter the giveaway to win one of the five essences that she's making available will be November 12. I will also let you know, since Damiana mentions our elderberry elixir, that we have started churning out our Fall 2021 batches; the first one has already sold out. When this releases, the second one will not yet be released, but will be pretty soon. So if you're not already signed up for our newsletter, go ahead and head over to [mythicmedicine.com](https://mythicmedicine.com) and take our fun quiz in order to be signed up, or you can also just scroll to the bottom of any page on the website and just sign up right away and skip the quiz.

Okay, that's it. I'm happy to be back and love doing this podcast. I don't plan to stop doing this podcast, but sometimes they'll be few and far between. Thank you to everyone who continues to support, both financially on Patreon and just through your loving presence out there in the world.

Alright, Damiana Calvario drops her wisdom now.

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*(Transitional Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)*

## [Interview Begins]

[0:05:24]

**Amber:** Okay, Damiana, so happy to finally be talking to you. I've been wanting to connect with you and have you on the podcast for a long time. Do you remember how we met?

**Damiana:** We made it! Yay! I can't believe we've been trying for so long. Like, I don't know. I feel like months now. Maybe?

**Amber:** Yes, I was looking back in our emails that were in the spring.

**Damiana:** *(Damiana laughs)* We're here now. I feel like we connected first at like this women's gathering called Spirit Weavers, maybe like, ooh, maybe like six years ago, now?

**Amber:** Yeah. Yes. So what I remember is at that gathering, when it was in Mendocino County, we had already met, and then later that day, or the next day or something, when I was teaching a class, and I had all these heavy materials to haul to, like, the other side of the land, and you helped me. You saw that I have all this stuff that I wasn't gonna be able to carry myself, and you grabbed some of it, and then we got to talk the whole walk and just saw what a, I don't know, just kind, and lovely, beautiful soul you are during that walk.

**Damiana:** Thank you. I didn't remember that. I don't know if it was the year we've met or the next one, but I remember you, like, super beautiful, pregnant with your belly. I think that maybe that was the second year that I saw you there. Yeah, just like, I don't know. You were one of those people that I'm always like, "Oh, pregnant people look so beautiful, and they carry themselves with, like, so much grace, and they can do anything they wanted. Like, they were like in the middle of nowhere, like teaching about oiling and all this amazing stuff." So yeah, you're always like that beautiful very image in my mind.

**Amber:** Oh, that's so sweet. I know what you mean. It's like big pregnant women and newborn babies are like these exalted beings in my mind. It's like, you know, you're close to something sacred.

**Damiana:** I've always being in their presence and yeah.

[0:07:29]

**Amber:** So I wanted to ask first about your Instagram bio. The first words in it are "Abuela in training." I love that, and I want to ask why that, for you, is like the most important first thing to put out in this, you know, public, social media space.

**Damiana:** Yeah, well, it's meant to be something funny. Sometimes people react to it as like, "Oh, are you, like, so focused on age or on aging?" Like now that I'm — I mean, I'm young, but I'm not like a young adult anymore. I'm in my mid-thirties. And yeah, and it has nothing to do with that.

I think one of my big identities is a granddaughter, and both of my grandmothers were very involved in raising me and my sister. So I've always just looked up to them so much, like my grandmothers have been like this huge figures in my life, and I've always wanted to be a grandma. And also that is kind of like a nickname when I'm with my friends, like, "Oh, you're such a grandma." Like always in the kitchen, or making all of this like kitchen remedies. So I just love that. I just love being a grandma.

And also a note on the side of, like, having kids and grandkids: in the Mexican tradition, "abuela" is also a title for her, like of respect on to your respective elder, or like a person that carries knowledge and word. And of course, I'm not there, but just an abuela-in-training. *(Damiana laughs)*

**Amber:** Yeah, it seems like caretaking, really, is the heart of that for you, and you are such a caregiving, caretaking, care-centered person.

**Damiana:** Oh thank you.

What do you have in the first line in your bio? Do you remember?

**Amber:** I don't.

**Damiana:** It was such a long time. *(Damiana laughs)* I haven't updated it.

**Amber:** I think it might be the podcast tagline, which is "remembering what it is to be human upon the earth."

**Damiana:** Oh, yeah. That's so beautiful.

[0:09:26]

**Amber:** What is the tradition that you just named?

**Damiana:** The Mexica. So the indigenous people from the center of Mexico, who founded Mexico and Tenochtitlán, so they are mostly from Náhua. Náhua, that is like the — it's also very complex. It's like many different groups of people that spoke the same language, which is Náhuatl. And then yeah, they were, like, on pilgrimage for a long time, they got to central Mexico, and then the myth says that they were looking for a sign, which was like an eagle eating a snake on top of a cactus — a nopal. So then they found it, and then they founded their city and their whole civilization there.

And, of course, everything's been mixed now, and it's hard to find, like, the pure knowledge, but I'm not really fixated on that. So yeah.

**Amber:** Yeah, I found that in trying to uncover my oldest daughter's indigenous, Mexican heritage, it's hard to like, find the threads, and figure out like what's what, and yeah, it seems like — that's comforting for me to hear that I'm not missing something; that it's kind of complex.

**Damiana:** Yeah, it's so complex. It's so complex. Does she have ancestry from Mexico City, or from like, the central valley of Mexico?

**Amber:** Her great grandmother on her father's side, he always said, Oaxacan, but I recently found her birth certificate, or some sort of birth declaration, and it wasn't in Oaxaca. I know what it is, but I'm forgetting it right now.

**Damiana:** Yeah, we can talk about it later. I mean, not that I'm an expert; there are so many different cultures and nations in Mexico. But yeah, we can just geek out about it.

**Amber:** I'd love to! And then that symbol, with the eagle and the snake and the cactus, that's, I mean, you see that on all sorts of Mexican...

**Damiana:** Yeah, it's still with the national symbol, like in the flag in or in the money like in our coins...

**Amber:** Yeah, so I didn't know that was an indigenous-rooted symbol.

**Damiana:** Yeah, and it's also of one specific group, right? So the one that was like an empire. So there's also a lot to be said about that, like, you know, like, why are we so fixated with this tradition in the center of the country, because now it's like such a centralized country, and it was a patriarchal society. So yeah, it's very complex, and it also has its, like, not-super-romantic side.

[0:12:03]

**Amber:** But you grew up in Mexico City, right?

**Damiana:** Yeah, I was born and raised in Mexico City. My parents were born and raised there, too. But then my grandparents immigrated from other parts of the country. So I know I have Yoeme in my blood — that comes from Sonora — and then Nahuatl — that comes from Jalisco, and I recently just this not discovered, but found out exactly the community where the last like indigenous elder, like fully indigenous elder, or at least the last birth certificate that we have registered as indigenous was from.

And then on my mom's side, I'm a quarter-Japanese. So there's also immigration from, like, other parts of the world, and then we know we have Iberian blood. We always thought, I don't know why, really, my family, they always did Portuguese, and I just grew up kind of assuming that. But then my dad just did one of those, like, DNA tests, and it said that it was actually Italy.

And then we went online, and then my last name is Calvario, and there is a mountain called Calvario in Portugal, so we always just assumed it was from that. But then from the blood test, we found this other mountain in Italy that's called Calvario. So we think our people came from there. So now I'm super excited to go on pilgrimage over there and just meet our ancestral mountain (*Damiana laughs*).

**Amber:** Wow! Yeah, that's amazing to have the name tied into the landscape like that.

**Damiana:** I always find it so interesting if people's last name is like "Smith" or, you know, like, what do they do? Like, what was their craft? But then knowing the place is also magical.

**Amber:** Yeah, like, or Hill is my last name, and as far as I can tell, the direct Hill lineage, they're just either Scottish or Irish. And so it's like, yeah, they're the "Hill folk," you know; that's what they called the fairies and the sort of mythical people.

And then in Appalachia, where they landed when they came over, they were called Hill people, too. They were the hillbillies, literally, and they were, you know, that line of my lineage.

**Damiana:** I never thought — I mean I've heard that expression But yeah, I know I never knew it came from that.

**Amber:** Yeah!

**Damiana:** It's so beautiful just... it changes, it shifts, like the whole perspective. Like, I think sometimes it's used in like a derogatory way.

**Amber:** Oh yeah.

**Damiana:** But yeah, like learning where it comes from just beautifies that; it reclaims it

**Amber:** Yes. In my interview with Farai, she talked about that because she's the "Hillbilly African," right, on Instagram. So we were talking about trying to kind of reclaim that.

**Damiana:** And her Dad is from, like Arkansas, I think. Right?

**Amber:** Yeah (*both laugh*).

[0:15:01]

**Amber:** So in your childhood — and you said you're close to both of your grandmothers — was herbalism or like a land-based way of life that so many people our age don't get incorporated into your life? And like what threads do you see that tie into what you're doing now?

**Damiana:** We were in the city. And if you've ever been there, it's very, very urban. Like, we don't have a lot of parks, we don't have — I mean, there's like this huge, kind of like Central Park area that is very green and sort of, like, protected, but we don't have, like, a lot of parks or green spaces inside the city.

So in my family, it was a lot about herbalism through the kitchen. So both of my grandmother's had like a small garden. One of my grandmother's was all just like container gardens, like literally like, "Oh, we finished our sour cream thing. Let's save it, and then we'll plant a little plant here or over there." And my other grandma had like a small, I don't even want to say "land," but like backyard. And she did manage to have, like, a pomegranate tree and a fig tree, and like, strawberry, roses. So it was a lot through the kitchen.

I think there's also, like a lot of my family was like hardcore Catholic, so there was also kind of like this, like, "Oh, yes to herbs, but not to herbalism," you know? Like, they would never call themselves herbalists, because I think that has a lot to do with, like the Catholic faith. So a lot of the ways in

which I started learning, and it took me a long time to realize like, “Oh, no, I actually know things from childhood,” I just learned through tea and making salsa and guacamole. And, you know, like, I probably didn't know how to make — well, I know, I didn't know how to make a tincture or a decoction — but like, they would always send us, like, “Go grab a handful of cilantro.” And we knew how to harvest like a piece of aloe because we needed to add it to this smoothie, or someone got burned. And yeah, it was just a lot of, like, kitchen medicine, I would say.

**Amber:** I love the sour cream container because it simplifies it even beyond the need to go to the garden store and buy a pot. If you're going to be doing container gardening, you know, like you just use what you have.

**Damiana:** And same with buckets, you know. Like after buckets were used for, like, cleaning the house and whenever they crack, they became pots.

[0:17:37]

**Amber:** So at what point did you move to the States? Because you live mostly in SoCal, right?

**Damiana:** Yeah.

**Amber:** But you do go back to Mexico a lot. And B) undertake some more formal, I don't know, study or life way of herbalism?

**Damiana:** Yeah, so I came to the US I think seven years ago, wow, which I don't know, feels like a lifetime now. And that feeling is like, it feels very recent. I don't feel like I went through like, since I came here as an adult, I don't feel like I ever really like assimilated aside from the language, of course, to like my day-to-day, I don't know, like, relating to random people. But I still go back, like every two or three months.

All of what we cook is Mexican, we only speak Spanish at home with my parents, with my family. The places we go, we're always searching for tacos or Mexican food (*Damiana laughs*). So I definitely feel, like, very connected to that. Yeah, I'm close to so-called LA, in Chumash Land. And so yes, sometimes people are like, “Oh, so tell me about a hype restaurant in LA,” and I'm like, “I have no idea. I never go to the city,” (*both laugh*) — well, also pandemic years.

And before that I was living in so-called San Diego, Kumeyaay Land, for five years, and I was living in a community called Chula Vista. I don't know if anyone has heard of that, but it's like, I want to say, 80% Mexican. Like, sometimes it would be like days, and I didn't have to speak English. Like everyone at the store was Mexican or Mexican descent or Chicanx. So yeah, yeah, I don't know. It still feels very Mexican in California (*Damiana laughs*).

And I first started studying, like, formal herbalism through urban agriculture, actually. I used to have a job for the Mexican government. And I was a sociologist, and I had a really cool boss that wanted to start green gardens in — they were not federal facilities, but I guess like state facilities. So clinics, they wanted to have like medicinal gardens in clinics, and then they wanted to have, like, little green gardens and bakers so the kids could have, like, organic food in their lunches.

So I was in charge of that project, and I fell in love completely with it, and I started getting more involved. I didn't know anything. So, of course, I was like outsourcing everything, but they were teaching me, and then I was just kind of like overviewing that project. And then I ended up, like, just quitting that job and devoting myself fully to great gardens in Mexico City.

I was attracted to permaculture and then yeah, and then I just started with herbs, kind of like, "Oh, neighbor companions," or "What should we do to, like, not have as many aphids in the garden?" and then, "Whoa, we have this abundance. So we might as well just start making pesto or something on our list because it's so overgrown."

And then when I changed to the States, I started working on a farm. So I was like living with the plants fully, like it was... Yeah, I always feel like container gardening in Mexico City for me was very like, kind of like playing — growing food and medicine. And then when I came here and I was exposed to, like, farming, I mean, it was completely, that just changed completely. And I got to know more herbs, and I started just like all-in for them. I was selling at markets, like being a marketeer. So I had to learn different recipes so I could sell things. And that was what really like triggered, "I want to go to herb school. Like I really want to check this out and go to herb school."

**Damiana:** And I did an immersion program for two years here. And then I think that was like the portal for me to say "Yes, this is awesome," because it was more of like a Western training. And I was like, "Oh, this is amazing. But then I want to find a teacher or a mentor to show me, like only my peoples ways because I know this is not." I mean, that is the way that is practiced in Mexico, but it's not all of it. And I'm mixed, too, you know, so I have this Western part of myself, and then I also have this native part.

So then I was very lucky to find curandera teachers in Mexico that I've been training on there for the past, I don't know, like three or four years now. And that is, I think, where I really landed on my practice and then just, oh, amazing. Like now I have all these different tools, and I can make my own. I can make, like, my own herbal remedies. And now when I take my medicines I'm okay. I feel proud of what it is because it feels very me; it feels very mixed, it feels very multicultural, it feels like more genuine, I guess.

[0:22:45]

**Amber:** I guess I would like to know, I was gonna ask if there's, you know, one herb that really comes to mind from your years of study. And if it's something other than Damiana you can go there, but I wanted to ask about your name, as well. And for me, that's not a plant I've worked with at all, really, except if someone gives it to me in like a blend. And my mind just immediately goes to "aphrodisiac," you know, like, really, not a very deep relationship that I have with that plant.

**Damiana:** Yeah, I think my favorite plant ally is rose. I'm just obsessed with it. They're such grandma plants (*Damiana laughs*). And my grandmother's and my mom, and my Aunties really loved them since I was a kid. It's just one of those things like, "Oh, I remember." Since being a kid they were everywhere in my life, and they were like in my practice.

Damiana is actually, it came from one of the first herbal courses that I took. It was like all women and femmes — which usually is the case with herbalism — and we were just giving each other



similar names to our birth names or to our chosen names of that moment. So Damiana was just so similar to my birth name that that was my nickname, and I just absolutely loved that, and I kept it. So I go by Damiana now but yeah. Like there was a Jessica, we named her "Jasmine," and then I don't remember. Like a Geri was like "Gardenia." We all had like these super cute herbal names, and I don't know if they stuck with them. I wonder that.

And then Damiana, yeah, in the US, I definitely think I only see it like as an aphrodisiac. But I think it's also like because that's what sells right? And like, just, oh, even cacao or rose, like whenever I see an aphrodisiac people are very attracted to that because of yeah.

I guess in Mexico, it's more of like, well, I can see the tie with the aphrodisiac but it's more of like a vitality herb. So it supports our whole metabolism and really invites aliveness into our life and just the joy of living, and it also it's a mood lifter. The flower is like this bright, yellow flower. And this year I had the chance of making an essence, and I'll send you one for sure. In the Mayan jungle it was just like so magical and beautiful, and they led me. It was like such an abundance, and the butterflies were like going crazy over them.

One of the tenders of the land heard that my name was Damiana, and they were like, so happy to allow me to harvest some of it. So I dried it and I was like traveling — don't tell anyone. Don't tell customs (*both laugh*) I dried it. — I brought it back. So I still have, like, my first Damiana harvest here. I haven't crafted anything just I haven't. I don't know.

And then when I was processing it, I found some seeds. So I'm super excited, waiting for spring to try to sprout them because I haven't really seen it growing. I don't know if it's Southern California. Maybe it needs a little more rain or humidity or water here than what we have here, but I'm gonna try for sure.

[0:26:03]

**Amber:** And how do you tend to connect with or use rose in your daily life?

**Damiana:** I think Rose is just one of those daily things you know. Like instead of multivitamins, it's rose something.

For several years now I tended to a rose garden. I don't know. It's just one of those signs. Whenever I'm moving like, "Oh, are there roses?" And even if it's just a small patch or a small bush, like in the front little yard or by the door or whatever, it's just like such a yes for me and such a guide for me. So I think tending to them is what like my main connection to them, or like my daily connection to them. And of course, I love, like, harvesting the rose essence, as well.

Almost every day last year, I was in a very amazing project with Milla, and we were on a mission of making 100 rose essences. So it was like, seriously, it was one of like the little lights of the first year of the pandemic for me, just like oh, waiting for the new rose to bloom, or just like taking a long walk and finding a rosebush and just, "Oh my goodness, we can add to our little project." And then when we had the 100 ones we made like a little elixir with them which is so strong (*Damiana laughs*). It was meant to be like holding, and I mean, it's also like so different for everyone. But for me the first time I took it I was sobbing. My heart was like...

**Amber:** So a hundred roses were made an essence of?

**Damiana:** Yeah!

**Amber:** Oh my goodness

**Damiana:** In rose brandy, so it was like extra or an extra an extra roses, but in baths, put in water, you know. I also love cooking with rose. I was taught not to boil flowers, but as an infusion or infusing butter or making rose salts for beauty products. Nothing like rose lotion or like a rose. Just so comforting.

[0:28:24]

**Damiana:** It has been a huge teacher for me about love, you know self-love and unconditional love; just a feeling of that deep knowing in your heart that you're worthy of love, that you are loved, and that you can give and receive love with ease. Like just, I don't know. I guess it can sound as basic or as complex as you wanted it to be.

But I think that's also rose, right? Like so multifaceted that the softest petal or the most subtle perfume, or it can be like the thorniest of boundaries and like a fierce protector that will lead you through. So yeah, so much to say about her, I don't know. We can talk about this for hours.

**Amber:** Well, it's reminding me that you have done some really incredible posts about relationships like romantic, long-term love (*Amber laughs*) and you and your partner. And I just really appreciate, like I see you say it can be whatever you make it. Like this is your template to create what you want it to be, and it doesn't have to look like what you thought it would or what anyone else's looks like.

**Damiana:** It can be anything.

**Amber:** Like yeah, and that's so true! And I think the vast majority of us forget that and kind of just unconsciously fall into "This is what it's supposed to look like."

**Damiana:** I mean, it's a lot. We're under this society and this, like, whole system that, really, since we were born is basically telling us that you are an object of desire or cis-men, and that is like your goal in life; like you're basically like here to please men, to hate yourself, hate your body, hate others than you, and see them as someone that you have to be — how do you say?— that you have to be like fighting for or in this race to see who's better.

**Amber:** In competition.

**Damiana:** Competition, exactly, like, competing with each other. And it's also like a whole path, but trying to step away from that, and just being like, "Oh, I can be in relationship with a man in a different way," it is a lot of work, of course, like, personally and as a team, but you can truly make anything out of it, you know?

Like, I never thought in a million years I would be married, or I would have, like, a wedding or anything like that. And of course, you know, like, from the outside, people can see like a very traditional marriage. And after all these years, like, we've shapeshifted ourselves and our relationship so much, but we've been in each other's lives since I was 15, like, literally — not as a couple, but that's what I mean.

Since 15, we've been like each other's crush, besties, partners-in-crime, lovers, a couple, mother and mothering each other. We're parenting each other, we've been each other's therapists, we've been each other's confidant, everything, you know. When you live with someone in a committed relationship, there are so many things that you can be there for each other.

[0:31:52]

**Damiana:** And then I think where I'm at right now, or where we're at right now, is we just want each other to be our couple, you know. We don't want to give each other all of this other roles because it's a lot to put in the other person, and it's hard because we both work from home, we have been in isolation forever (*Damiana laughs*), whenever we are here in so-called US. But truly finding, like, if I need a therapist, I'm going to look for a therapist. If I want to do ceremony, I'm going to try to look for that space. If I want to have a best friend...

It's not that we're not friends. I really think that one of the main pillars of our relationship is being friends, our, like very, very strong friendship. But beyond that, I just want you to be my partner, and I just want to have a couples relationship with you, and I'm going to provide or look for the resources to find the other roles in my life and not not put that on you, you know.

**Amber:** Yeah, that, obviously, like the friendship aspect is so important. I often realize, like if I'm going to go on a little day trip, or even just to the grocery store, or a real trip somewhere, I'm like, there's no one I'd rather go with than Owen. That's so awesome (*Amber laughs*).

**Damiana:** That is so awesome.

And just like speaking about anything, you know? I have some friends that are like, "I can't believe you talk to your partner about that!" I'm like, what? I can literally talk to him about anything. And like to this day after so many years, like we still haven't run out of like things to talk about, and we're still like silly about the same things, and we still laugh about the same jokes.

And also, like not to romanticize a committed relationship, you know, like it is hard work, and it's like a constant choice of I want to be here, and I have to work hard for this to be happening. It's not this like oh first year into any relationship where like everything's flowing, no problem with commitment. Yeah, we can see each other once a week, that's it. Like just living together.

And I mean, for us it's been like moving cities, being immigrants together, losing our privileges that we carried in Mexico and now we don't have as immigrants here, you know. So like realizing all of that, working towards having stability in another country, building community here, just a lot. I mean, a lot of hard things but also it can feel traumatic at times, you know. It can feel, as we lose parts of ourselves in this process, whenever you are discriminated here. And you've never even known what that was, because you carried so much privilege before that you just don't have here.

So yeah, at the same time, like, healing ourselves and putting in the work and healing together as a couple, as well.

[0:34:59]

**Amber:** That reminds me, I asked you before we talked if you've had any, like big healing experiences. And you answered, "I don't feel like there's a destination, a "healed place." It's too much from generations, and there's only so much I can do," and I love that.

You know, I have said a lot in the past — we have it on our little postcard when we send out medicines — that "healing is open ended and endless." And because I think this is a place where a lot of people get hung up, that they think healing is a destination: you get there, and you're healed, and it's done, and you're good — and that's just not how life works.

**Damiana:** I wish it was (*Damiana laughs*) just like, "Oh, so many miles left to go, and we're almost there, and we're almost there." I think it's also, I don't know, like, I don't see it as a straight line, either, you know. I just think healing comes in waves, and especially for people that are survivors. You never know.

Like, I've had experiences where, like, I've done so much work on myself, and I feel like I've come so far, and then out of nowhere, you know, like, just the most random little thing would trigger me or, like, send me spiraling down again. I'm like, "No! I thought this wound was healed, and I thought I could move on from this!" And truly, in my experience, it's not.

And the other thing is, like, the ancestral part of it, and you know, like, just knowing that yes, I want to take this responsibility of being an agent of change in my lineage, in my family, but even for, like, the generations that I know, you know — like, the things my mom has gone through and survived, and the things that my grandmothers have gone through and have survived. And of course, I'm sure I just know, like, a small little piece of their stories, but even just not knowing with words, or not knowing from them, just connecting to them, and knowing how hard it was, I cannot take on the task of healing myself and all of the generations of women in my family to do that. So we do it when we can.

I don't know, I think that can be taken as like, "Okay, then, why should I even, like, try? Why should I even?" Like, it can be overwhelming to see the amount of stuff that surrounds this, but we do it to survive and to thrive in this life, right? Like it is our birthright to come here and experience joy and be happy. And then the path to that, for me, has been healing myself and healing my family.

Yeah, also, like you can heal each other, you know. Like, all of the things that others weren't able, or couldn't, or didn't want to do in their time, I also can't take on their stuff. Like, I can only try for myself the best that I can, and the only tools that I have are the ones I have.

**Amber:** And it does ripple out, you know, and especially — I mean, maybe not especially — but for those of us who do have descendants of blood, that's a huge reason do it. For those who don't and for everybody, it ripples horizontally, as well.

**Damiana:** Yeah, I like being an auntie, you know, like, seeing my sisters now having kids and my besties having children. And it's such an honor to be invited into their lives and to be trusted with them to, like, hold them or feed them or spend some time with them that, of course, I want to be a person that is doing this healing work for them, and also for them to come to me, if they ever want to talk about this stuff or if they ever need any type. I know that I see myself as, like, a teacher, "I'll teach you how to heal, baby girl," but just like sharing from my experience, and yeah, just talking about my path. Of course, they'll always have that person for them.

[0:39:11]

**Amber:** Well, speaking of things that need healing — so I remember when you first posted about being attacked, crossing the border with a with a car full of medicine, and I did always hope to hear you speak of it more, and you said that you would like to talk today. So yeah, just please. However you want to go with it or whatever you'd like to share, I'm curious about it.

**Damiana:** Yeah, well, it was just such a horrible experience, but also like one of the most surreal things that has happened in my life.

I've been working with Indigenous and other vulnerated communities since I was 15, mostly in Mexico. And then some years ago, three years ago — over three years ago, I think — I was working with a caravan of immigrants in Mexico and bringing herbal medicine. We did a whole fundraising here in the States — thank you, I remember you were there for us, as well. And you sent us so much of your amazing extra potent elderberry elixir that especially kids love and the shelters I was so happy to give away.

But yeah, anyway, so I had a truck full of medicines, and I was going to serve that day to an LGBT+ house because, of course, amongst the vulnerated, also, there are smaller groups that have it the worst. So we were going to go there. It was raining really bad. I lived in Tijuana for one year, so I feel pretty comfortable, like, going around. I'm not an expert, but I made the huge mistake of using, like, Google Maps or one of those apps to take me there, and with the rain, it just took me to a really just, like, sketchy neighborhood. It wasn't even a neighborhood, you know? It was like an establishment of tents.

And yeah, eventually, my car got stuck, and this guy comes to me, "Are you okay?" I roll down my window, and he pulls out a gun. So he robbed me, took everything from me. I had a lot of cash for, like, herbal clinic. He takes my jewelry and has, like, gone to my face and just tries to pull me from, like, my hoodie through the window.

I don't know why he never opened the door. So, like, I put my feet on the door, and he wasn't like a huge guy, so he could never, like, take me out from the window. And yeah, like, I remember so vividly just, like, making the impossible decision of telling him, "Do whatever you want, you have to do. I'm not going with you. Like, if you need to pull that trigger, do what you got to do. Like, there is no way I'm gonna go with you."

And yeah, I don't, honestly, like, I don't remember the exact thing that shifted him. But I do remember I had a stamp of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Tonantzin — which is, in our tradition, Mother Earth and then co-opted by the church as Virgin Mary. And he saw that on my board, and he asked

me, "Are you a Guadalupana?" and I wasn't at that point, but I said yes. And she gave me the miracle of life, you know; like, he changed. And after that, he took the gun out of my face, and we just were engaged in a conversation for, I think, like an hour. He was asking me about herbs.

[0:42:39]

**Damiana:** My whole life I've been a super emotional person. So if you ever asked me, like, "How would you react if you were ever, like, attacked, or if you were ever, like, your life was in danger?" I would probably answer like, I would cry hysterically and just freeze and pee my pants.

Like, I don't know what happened that day. It truly felt like one of the bigger experiences in my life where I was channeling, like someone else was speaking through me. Of course, I was very nervous. I was shaking, I couldn't take off my rings, I couldn't take off my jewelry. But it was like words were just, like, flowing out of my mouth.

And I asked him, like, "Do you or your family need any medicine? Like I have everything." I had, like, a whole truck (*Damiana laughs*). I mean I'm not gonna say everything, but we were, like, basically doing pop-up clinics, so we had a lot of stuff. And yeah, he was just very curious in herbal medicine, and I asked him like, "Please let me keep my life. You're never gonna see me again. I'm never gonna press charges. Just please let me deliver this. Like, let me be the bridge to deliver this medicine because people are counting on this, and they need it. If you need something, like, I'm happy to pull a stop for you and your family as well."

And yeah, like, he finally said, "Okay, you know what? I'm going to help you." And he was the same person that saved me (*Damiana laughs*). So my car got stuck in the mud, and he started, like, looking for debris, and I don't know, like, just random stuff, like just rocks and things to, like, make a little path, and he pushed my truck out of it.

And then yeah, like, there were like all of his other coincidences around this story because the place where I got stuck, it was called the Canyon of the Roses, as well. And then when I first started fundraising it was also the image of a rosehip, like rosehips in my hand. So I was also very protected by rose during that time and my grandmothers, of course.

And I prayed to her. I was like, "Tonantzin, please, (*audio inaudible @ 0:44:43*) I will wear you," and I have worn that. Like I have all the jewelry, like I wear her everyday now, and like I have an altar in my house for Mother Earth. I keep fresh roses for her every day, and I've lived this year extra, you know, like through her, like, through a miracle she granted me, so very blessed.

[0:45:11]

**Damiana:** And at the end, the community guard, kind of like — not like police or anything — but like the community organization of that establishment got there. So he asked me, "Oh my god, are they here for you?" And I was like, "Yes, they're here for me," and all this stuff. I didn't know anything. I was just working there, you know, but I didn't really have, like, that many connections. Like I didn't live there.

And there were two trucks that got there for me because the only thing that I did that was like very, very — well, it wasn't the only thing, but one of the things that I think that really, like, saved me — was when I first got stopped, I messaged everyone: like the folks from the shelter, other herbalists, my friends and teachers, everyone. And I was like, “My car is stuck. Please send someone for me, and if you can, like, let's tow my car. But you know, like, just please send someone to get me because I'm, like, in this...”

I think of hell as that place. It was just like a canyon of nothing, Amber: like there was no plants, no bees, no insects, no nothing. And I swear, I couldn't see with my eyes, but I saw, like, other bodies. And it was like, “My parents and my mom are not even going to be able to bury me, you know. Like they're never going to find my body here because there are other women's bodies here.” I got chills.

So yeah when the guard, the community guard, gets there two trucks show up, and then one of them kind of, like, comes closer to me and asks me if I need help. I'm freaking out, so I'm like, “No, no, I'm okay. I'm okay!” So they're, like, yelling at me from a distance like, “You have to go that way, do this to kind of like get out,” and like trying to guide me, but then not getting closer because they saw I was so, I was freaking out, and then this guy just storms off.

And before, when he was, like, searching for all the debris and everything, he asked me to roll down my window, and he gives everything back. So he gives back, like, my jewelry, my passport, the money. Well, the money was the last thing. Like, when he was going to run away from the scene he, like, pulls out the cash which was the last thing that he got. He just took \$200 and gave me back the rest. And the last thing I told him was like, “Can I please have my wedding rings back?” (*Damiana laughs*). And as I said that I was like, this is so stupid, you know. Like it doesn't matter, that means nothing in my marriage even, you know. And like my partner would never ask me for. Like, I mean, it was nothing, but I think it was also like a way of me acknowledging I was in control and that I could...

And yeah, like, after everything that happened, I worked a lot with different things, but one of the people that really brought me back to life was a curandera. And one of the things she told me was, “He said everything, he did everything you asked him to, you know. You asked him to make a decision, he took a decision. He made the choice helping you in that moment. Like, all of the things that you command, that you were in control,” like, in this weird, very surreal way, but at the end, he helped me, too. And the other truck went after him, and he got hit. So I never knew if he was killed that day because he attacked me.

**Amber:** Oh my goodness.

[0:48:43]

**Damiana:** I actually spoke about this years ago in a podcast with Natalie. And actually, she told me — like when I first met you in person, like we went on a lunch date just to talk about the podcast and her project and just connecting. Like, I also met her as (*inaudible @0:48:59*) and love her, and it's been a long time. And she told me she saw a person with a gun to my face, and she, like, cleared that, she sent him, like, “Thank you, you can leave now.” And she's the only person that has really told me that; that she saw like that energy around me.

But yeah I've also, like I don't think a lot about him, you know. Like for a time, yeah, like it was just like a long process of really forgiving and letting that energy go, you know; it wasn't serving anyone. And certainly, there was nothing I could do at the beginning.

Like there were times — we were talking before about, like, waves of healing — and there were times where I would get triggered and like really hate him, and like I was like I can't believe I have all this anxiety now because of you. I hate you." I had a couple of episodes where, like, random men would approach me in the street or, like, at a grocery store, and I would, like, have a panic attack and I was like, on the floor, just freaking out and crying.

And yeah, and then other times just like, my mom was very like — not at the moment, but then having conversations with my mom — just being very, like, "Who knows what he was going through that he did that, you know? Like, who knows how much, how desperately, he needed 200 bucks to put yourself in danger like that, or even willing to kill you or take you or kidnap you?"

Yeah, like all of these different levels of like feelings for him that now it's just like, you know, like, even if he's not here anymore. And that was also not my responsibility. Like other moments or other twisted moments in my mind where like, "It was my fault that he died," you know. I was like, "I basically got him killed." So very multi-layered, but now I rarely think of him, you know, just think I've just unattached myself from him, completely.

[0:51:10]

**Amber:** I don't know if you heard my more recent interview with Mea, about learning, too, like realizing that she had to let go of any anger around the man who murdered her best friend. It's a similar thing where, yeah, like, it sucks, and there are so many real reasons to be angry from the trauma that this total stranger inflicted on you, and that's not the only possible path forward.

**Damiana:** Yeah, and I have a lot of respect for the victims that go that way, too, you know. I would never be like "love and light," you know? (*Damiana laughs*)

I think we deserve to be angry, you know, and to honor that anger and to be furious and wounded because of that person and acknowledge that. And if you need to keep that in your life, like for me, anger and fury — and not just from that, but from many different events — have been the fire that has triggered action in my life. So I honor those feelings in myself as part of a process. But if you need to keep them for whatever reason, also, like, huge respect, yeah.

**Amber:** It sounds like, in your refusal to get out of the car, it sounds like you were really acting out of intuition, like a primal instinct that "this will not go good for me if I give up my ground here."

And it reminds me of a book that I have been recommending publicly and privately for over 15 years now called [The Gift of Fear](#). It was written by, like, the nation's foremost expert on violence, and I truly believe every woman should read it. But his number one thing when you're in a situation like that, when you're approached, especially in any sort of public place, do not let the person move you to a secondary location. Never submit to being moved from where you are, because that's when you get killed or raped, or whatever is gonna happen, you know. It's once they know that you're pliable and then, of course, if you're being moved from, like, a public to a private place.



But like your animal body knew what this meant.

**Damiana:** You know, I never heard that. But yeah, it's so interesting. I mean, I totally knew because he told me, you know. He told me what he was going to do to me, for how long, which was forever; like, literally, until I starved myself to death or died for whatever other reason.

So it was also very clear to me that I was like, "I cannot. I will never live that life. You know, like I've had a beautiful life. Like, I'd rather stay here." And yeah, like the biggest pain in my heart in that moment was like they're not gonna find my body; like it's not even about myself, like, this is gonna kill my mom and my partner and my sister and my dogs.

And even after that, like getting out of there, I remember that one of the worst things was to tell my family, just hearing my dad cry and everyone, you know, just like feeling like the frustration of not being able to do anything really was just really, really hard.

I think when this happens to you, and you have those horizontal relationships, like, of course, no one was affected like I was, but they were also deeply wounded from the reality check of how us as and as women of color live. And this is just like an everyday reality for us; like this could happen at any moment and not to live in fear.

But I love that. I took a little note of it, like *The Gift of Fear*, and just honoring that in our bodies as well, and seeing, like, how is that a teacher, as well, in that moment?

**Amber:** Yes, I love the author because it could just be this very dry book, these are the statistics, and this is what I've learned. But he, from the beginning is like, "Listen, women, you have this direct line to your intuition, and it is what saves women's lives in these kind of situations." And he gives all these incredible first hand stories where you just can't believe anyone could survive that, but it's because it's different every time; there's not a one size fits all — except for: don't let them take you to the secondary location. So it's always listening to your instinct and acting on it that gets women out of violent situations with.

[0:55:54]

**Damiana:** — Or like stating our boundaries, you know? Like, I didn't understand until a very long time after this moment, but just like stating your boundary, and then getting comfortable with it. It was like only yesterday, I had like this super annoying experience where I was like, flying back home, and I had this dude next to me. He's occupying so much space, you know — like his legs are all spread out, like, his arms on the things, like, the separator things. And just from the beginning, I was so annoyed, just like, "Ugh, why do I have to sit next to this guy?"

And eventually, he is, like, watching his movie, you know. Like, he looks at you, and kind of, like, tries to laugh with you. And I never knew if he was trying to hit on me or just, like, being annoying. And I was just with my headphones, you know, trying to, like, fall asleep, but at the same time I was, like, hyperaware. And he ends up, like, touching my leg, and I got completely fired up. Like, of course, because I see him, and yeah, I was like, "I can't believe you're in my space. You've been in my space

this whole time. It's disrespectful because of this and this and that. Shame on you for touching another person's body without their consent!"

And yeah, eventually, like, the person in charge of the flight or whatever comes over, and she changed my seat. And of course, he was just like, "I was just joking with you. Like, why do you have to make such a big deal out of this? Chill down! Like, you're acting crazy!" And I was like, even more fired up about this (*both laugh*).

And it's taking me so many years for me to be comfortable to, like, self-advocate, and to speak up when all of this stuff happens, even if it's small, you know, or even if it's like a microaggression. And of course, that makes me an angry, brown woman, a crazy, dicey person, you know? And eventually they just changed my seat.

But I was so angry, Amber, that I started crying, like just tearing up in anger. I was, like, shaking. I feel it a lot in my hands whenever I feel like, I don't know. My grandmother has arthritis, or I'm always scared that it's kind of like an echo of pure emotions, like unprocessed emotions. And I was shaking, and I started tearing up. And of course, I was embarrassed because I wanted to be strong, and I wanted to be like, "Fuck you!" — sorry (*Damiana laughs*).

And he just, like, looks back at me and smiles, and I'm like, oh my god, just like so angry. And then I was like, why am I embarrassed (because I was crying)? Like, I don't want to be crying. I want to be the bigger person here, and I don't want him to smile. Like, I want him to. Like he should be embarrassed of himself.

And yeah, you know, and just like, I don't want to do this thing. I don't want to do this work, like, ever again, but I have to; like I owe it to others like me, and I also owe it to like other me's; like other versions of me that couldn't speak, that couldn't say no, that couldn't, like, stand up and like raise your voice or state their boundaries, or like, all of the things, defend themselves as well.

[0:59:24]

**Damiana:** And yeah, and yesterday, a friend told me like, "When you're doing this, you're also giving permission to others to do that, you know, like it's so important." Yeah, it's so important, but I still don't want to do it (*Damiana laughs*), the worst burden.

**Amber:** Yeah, it's like you were saying earlier that healing is horizontal and like those moments of standing up for what's right have these horizontal ripples as well.

I'm sorry, you have to go through that. And that smile, that's just so nasty, and it I think it like proves that your feeling about him was right the whole time. It wasn't that he accidentally touched you.

**Damiana:** Of course not, no, and thank you for saying that. Thank you for saying that. And yeah, I mean, I think the worst part of all of this is that we do this for ourselves and for other others like us, but that guy doesn't give a shit.

**Amber:** There's no consequences.

**Damiana:** Like that guy doesn't understand and there's no consequences for him, and it's literally like when you stand up to systemic oppression — be it racism or misogyny — you're just screaming into the void, like 99.9% of the time. You're just screaming into the void, you know. Even if, yeah, like, even if, okay, like, I got home, and I thought, well...

My partner went for me, to pick me up at the airport, and I told him all this. And he was like, “Yeah, like, what do you want to do? Like, do you want to go somewhere else? Do you want to, like, talk to someone?” And I'm like, well, not that I even — I mean, not that I believe in cops or this other legal system, but even if I do, you know — like, now put the labor of being a woman of color with a strong accent, an immigrant? How is that going to be for me? Are they even going to believe me? Are they even going to, like, do something about it? Or am I also going to be now facing violence from, like, another instance of someone who's probably the same? It's just so layered.

[1:01:33]

**Amber:** I wanted to talk about flower essences. And you said earlier when you talked about the rose essence that you made with Milla, that you would just, like, go for a walk and come across a rosebush and make one. And you talked about this in one of your posts that you now have, like a little kit (*Amber laughs*) that you can bring with you to make flower essences anywhere.

So I want to hear about sort of your progression with them and how you, I don't know, frame their use in your life as medicine and the aguas serenada? Yes.

**Damiana:** Yeah. Perfect. (*Damiana laughs*) Well, I'm actually going to offer some agua real quick for us, just speaking about all this stuff (*inaudible @1:02:20*) and cleanse this space a little bit.

Yeah, well, flower essences, I think that is one of the other things that I was exposed to in Mexico, but I never really knew they were flower essences. And then, when I was taught about flower essences here, it just kind of, like, it took a while. And working with curanderismo it just sort of clicked, like, “Oh, okay.”

So I was at Aguas Serenadas, which means “serenaded waters.” So, like, flower essences would be like a type of agua serenada. But for example, a sun tea is an agua serenada, as well or, like, moon water is an agua serenada, as well, which I think it's also an environmental essence or like a moon essence. So there are a lot of crossings there. But yeah, I think essences is just like one of the categories of agua serenada, and there can be aguas serenadas for many different things, right?

So for example, the water offering that you place in an altar or ceremony, that would be an agua serenada, but it's not necessarily for you to consume or to preserve or to take, right? So I think we also, in traditional curanderismo, it's more like more herbal remedies or other offerings that are, yeah, I guess that are just not human centered, necessarily, or not, like, human body-centered in the dimension, right here, right now. And agua serenada has also been like, kind of like a portal through that.

And now I carry my little kit. It's just — look at my little baggie.

**Amber:** (*both laugh*) Oh, I love those.

**Damiana:** ... It's like a fun, childish, little thing (*both laugh*), but I do travel a lot because of, like, my mutual aid work and my solidarity work. So sometimes I encounter some of the most amazing beings when I'm working and I love. I carry my little glass bowl, some smoke, either like a little copal, or something, and then a couple of droppers. Then one has water and another one has alcohol and a little cloth, even if it's like a bandana or something just to place the bowl in if we're meeting outdoors I guess.

And yeah, and then it's just like an impromptu flower essence-making, just meeting up, and oh may I? Yes, good. I think a very important part of flower essences means also I mean you do take, as in you receive so much from like being there, but you don't necessarily have to harvest any part of the plant to be in communion with that energetic medicine.

[1:05:22]

**Damiana:** And yeah, it just has evolved so much from flower essences, too. We were also talking about, like, for example, dragonfly essence which was, I hold like a monthly essence circle. So our third one, two months ago, we did cenote blue dragonfly essence, and it was just like such a beautiful place, and we were in this cenote which, if you're not familiar, I don't know if they exist somewhere else, but I know they exist in Mayan territory in Mexico.

They're basically like caves that are open to underground rivers that are just like connected in this huge kind of, they look kind of like this mycelial network, but they're actually like flowing rivers underneath the jungle, connecting, like, all bodies of water and bringing life; like truly holding the jungle outside. And you can visit some of these caves and go down, and they're also very, energetically, they're really strong because they're supposed to be portals into the otherworld. So you can experience a lot of, like, I don't know, like excitement or anxiety or nervousness; they're very liminal spaces.

So we went to one of those ones, and it was really beautiful, and I had my bowl, and I was just like, "Oh, this is perfect I'm going to make like a cenote essence," and then the blue dragonflies came to the bowl to just like bless that little container and drink some water. It was just amazing. It was amazing to share that with everyone, and then yeah, just carrying. And I see agua serenadas a lot like a liquid picture, like a liquid picture of a moment and time. And then we get to carry it not only in an image but in a little bottle that can be taken internally,

So it was pretty much I've had the most amazing experiences making this medicine. It's very, very dear to my heart, and I also feel very comfortable sharing them. And in this essence circle that I was telling you about, we take the medicine together, so we collectively receive whatever we get to receive from them together as a group. So I've also loved developing, just holding that space, and just guiding like a little mini journey for all of us to give ourselves the time to receive from the essence, and just taking like a little like, I don't know.

Self-care has turned into this, like, whole trend thing (*Damiana laughs*) about like buying and consuming, consuming, consuming, and like investing so much money. And I mean, I guess in a way, it's also buying an essence, but it's also like the gift that keeps on giving; like, from one little bottle, you could stretch it out for the rest of your life if you wanted to.

**Amber:** Yeah, one vial lasts forever.

**Damiana:** Forever.

[1:08:39]

**Damiana:** And I've shifted a lot of, also, I don't use brandy anymore. For the longest time I resisted that because I really felt like the brandy was like a sweet way of holding that living water, like imprinted living water. But this year, and since I started these circles, I shifted to glycerin which has felt amazing, you know. Like in some of the circles we've worked with the essence as lip balm and just connecting to kind of like our mouth and our lips and our words.

I also wanted to be more accommodating to more folks, you know, people that don't want to work with alcohol, necessarily, and more than human people, you know. Like I feel really good about like brushing my dogs with a little glycerin essence and then just working with them like that, or I mean, through the summer just making little ice cubes with the essence and then just knowing that there wasn't really any alcohol there to give out to the plants or the trees, or put there for like the bees to drink some water, or any being that need some water, and just have like a little bit of freshness there.

So yeah, instead of, like, constricting myself, I think that glycerin has also kind of opened myself to all of these other ways of working with essences. It's super soothing to the skin. It's also really sweet, so you can use it as a sweetener. I mean, with essences it's all about frequency and not so much about quantity, but just adding like a few drops to your tea or your coffee, and then it gives you like that light sweetness. And at the same time, you're commuting with this vibrational energy in the flowers and so yeah.

**Amber:** Yeah, did you 50/50 water/essence to glycerin?

**Damiana:** I just take the glycerin and then pour the water over it. And the mother I still preserve in alcohol just because I want it to last forever. And I always think like, "Oh, what a precious legacy to leave to whoever is interested," you know, like what a beautiful way of like, gifting to — if I ever had children of my own or if I ever have, like, a niece or a nephew that's interested in that.

And I had a dream, like, many years ago where I received, like, a kit of essences, of mother essences. And I already had, like, somewhere to begin with, you know. I didn't have to craft my first one because I already had one. So that just stayed in my mind. And I'm like, "Okay, I'm gonna keep them mothers." And I don't even do brandy. I usually do like 80 proof or something, so they're stronger.

[1:11:44]

**Amber:** Yeah, I like that people are kind of expanding beyond just the traditional flower essence idea, and, like you spoke about, you don't even have to necessarily cut off the flowers from the plant and drop them in your water.

A lot of people now are just holding the water near the plant, and letting the vibrational imprint happen that way. Or, like you're speaking about, these dragonflies can imprint or just the moment,

you know, like the moment when the sun rose behind the redwood tree is now in my essence. I love seeing people, you know, kind of branch out more into these essences of flowers, animals, cosmic phenomena, moments, thoughts.

**Damiana:** Yeah, I think it's also part of, like, decolonizing our practices, you know. I mean, the way I was first taught about flower essences, there were so many rules, like "don't touch it with your hand" and "don't let your shadow be casted in the bowl," and all of this like very...

And I think because the more popularized, or at least for me, Bach flower remedies, I think they're called flower remedies. I think also like part of like, rebelling against like, no, I don't have to follow this dude's rules, you know. Like, I want to invite play into making agua serenadas, and it's supposed to be fun. And I don't want to be like walking on eggshells and like asking myself, "Did I do it right?" And then I end up with a mother, and I don't know if this is correct, or not, like, what if, like, my finger accidentally, like, cast a shadow on this? And then, you know. (*Amber laughs*)

**Amber:** Yeah, and it makes the imposter syndrome worse for people who are already feeling that as they try to get into herbalism

**Damiana:** Absolutely, absolutely. 100%. And just so many different ways, you know, like, also tuning into the subtle things of like this subtle plant language, like for me, it's really interesting, too. Okay, I see a plant with many flowers, and I feel like I guess in my heart about making an essence, like which bloom am I going to choose? And then I usually go for the ones that, when I'm not going to harvest, I usually, like, choose the ones that are facing down. So I'm like, oh, perfect, just like I'll receive that little message in the bowl, and I don't even have to do anything else. And then I'm just like, oh...

**Amber:** Then they sit in the bowl of water without having to be cut from the rest of the plant?

**Damiana:** And then they're alive, you know?

Like I'm thinking oh, they're actually like transmitting from the root and from the soil, in that moment. And like that connection was never caught. It's just like flowing there. Or the sunflowers, like right now with the fall, like the sunflowers are like going to seed. And they turn into these huge showers of like, the most amazing messages. One of my favorite things is like just being under a sunflower head shower and you can really feel the medicine. I always go for those like, oh, perfect, like, I'm gonna bring my bowl. And sometimes they're like the biggest bowls.

I want to write another piece of, like, choosing the container. I think also, traditionally, it's supposed to be like, clear, perfect, without edges, without brand-bowl. And then yeah, I've used a jicara, like an old gourd. And if it's not, or I don't know, like a bowl that was my grandmother's, or it wasn't even a bowl — like a plate, like a little plate. But it was my grandma's, and then I curated that, and that is like such a precious flower essence maker for me. It can really be anything but just inviting what feels good to you.

And I think that is one of the things that I love about shifting my perspective to aguas serenadas because they're not necessarily contained in glass. They're not necessarily activated with the sun. They're not necessarily. Like there are all of those different ways of making them and.

**Amber:** Yeah, I love that flexibility and creativity that you can bring to that. That thing about the plants with the flower head still being connected to the root, I heard Dr. Zack Bush talk about that very thing on a podcast once where when they've studied a just plucked tomato — literally, a minute ago it was picked, versus one still on the vine — the nutritional content is really quite different. It immediately starts losing certain things. I wish I could remember what it was. It's been years since I heard him say this. So he said that in his garden, now he just eats them on the vine (*both laugh*).

**Damiana:** I love that.

[1:16:51]

**Amber:** I have this phrase written here in my notes, and I think it was connected to this dragonfly essence that you made. I think you'll know what I'm talking about, where you shared with me about "retrieving yourself"

**Damiana:** Yeah, so this flower essence is connected to the Ixchel, which is a Mayan. We were not taught — well, I wasn't taught, really — about gods and goddesses in Mayan and Mexica traditions. They're more of like incarnations of the Divine, and I don't know if that translates really well, but yeah, I wasn't taught, really, like about god and goddesses. But like Ixchel is like this incarnation of the Divine related to the moon. She reigns the moon and all of the aspects of the moon — so cycles, fertility, birth, childbearing, pregnancy, creativity, bio rhythms, cycles of year, as well.

And there is this beautiful legend of Ixchel. Well, it's like a super long myth, but long story short for the sake of the podcast, she's basically destroyed. Her body is shattered in different pieces, and she dies. So she goes to, she's taken to her father or her grandfather. And she's taken in this type of canoe, and she's covered with 400 dragonflies.

So 400 dragonflies surround her with the vibration of them, the subtle vibration of them being alive, for 13 days and 30 nights. And finally, when they're ready to let her go into a cenote, into the otherworld, the dragonflies fly away, and she's alive again. Like she's been put back together, like the dragonflies glue her together and bring her back to life, and for her to be the moon again, and for her to come back and reign all the different realms that she governs.

So yeah, I think I was talking a lot about how this blue dragonfly essence was helpful for piecing myself back together and retrieving myself back into being alive and to take agency of my own life. And again, not that I'm there yet, not that we're ever going to reach any destination. But as we heal ourselves as we cure ourselves from "susto," which is losing small parts of our soul, we are retrieving ourselves back into life.

**Amber:** That's so lovely. I was a Religious Studies major. I was, and I've continued to, you know, ready mythology and all sorts of traditions around the world and that's a really common thing is this story; that often when people go into shamanic states — or I've heard of this a lot with DMT, as well — they experience like being dismantled piece-by-piece, and then put back together in some way. And often there is like a helper, creature, or element or something, but oh, I just love that image of 400 dragonflies! Can you imagine the vibration? How good that would feel? The medicine?

**Damiana:** And I think four hundred for Mayan is like the number twenty for Nahuas, which means a lot, you know —just like in Spanish we say un millón de gracias, a thousand times, thank you, or in English, maybe one hundred. It just means like, a lot of them, you know. Like, imagine how many dragonflies to cover a whole canoe.

And yeah, sometimes in life, like what seems as our coffin is actually the crib to be born again, right? like that symbol of like, “It seems so hard, and yes, I don't want to, like, die, or let this part die of myself,” only to come back whole.

**Amber:** Yeah, you feel like you're just like in the dirt, but you're composting into.

**Damiana:** Exactly! Into life, really, you know, into beauty and creation. And I'm excited to send you and your listeners to share these, like, magical dragonfly essences.

[1:21:44]

**Amber:** Yes, yes. So you will offer to patrons the ability to enter a giveaway and receive one of these dragonfly essences. And tell people, please, about your Patreon and what you offer there.

**Damiana:** Yeah, thank you. I don't know, I think that just for many years I was offering on Instagram and organizing classes online with n this past couple of years, and it felt like a lot of energy was leaking. Like I didn't really know where it was going when my account started growing a little bit. I think at the beginning, like since I knew basically everyone was my friend, everyone was like, oh, either I took a class with or they took a class with me or I knew through the farm or they were my clients, that I decided to do this little platform.

And yeah, I share a lot about my perspective on herbalism from, like my Western studies, and all this kitchen medicine I grew up with being born and raised in Mexico, and then curanderismo studies as well. And then a big part of my practice is community work and mutual aid work. So just reporting back on that, and truly, for me, acknowledging herbalism as a tool for showing up for others, and decolonizing health and bringing a dignified life into communities who asked for it or who want that.

So yeah, mostly that. A lot of recipes and just like fun, ancestral foods, which I'm also obsessed with and that I love to carry, and then the monthly essence circle as part of some tiers there, as well. So I open it every month, like if you just want to try and come in for one month and just drop in, and seems like too much of a commitment. That's totally fine. I'm sure I'm probably getting half of it, but that's what's coming up right now. *(Damiana laughs)*

My zines, I have a little project also like resource gathering and storytelling collectively. And yeah, I'm like after so many months, I'm about to finish printing one called “Amo Rosa” that is all about roses. So it's all about like recipes and stories on roses and remedy making, and it's so awesome. I'm so excited about this. And hopefully, I wanted to keep doing this, like at least once a year or at least two times a year, and just have like, several different volumes because who can have enough rose? Like no one can have enough rose medicine.



I have all of these different resources, and I always, like, save whenever. I think I have one of yours like a long time ago you put together like this sort of Materia Medica or something like that about rose, and I have yours. So yeah, I don't think we can have enough of them.

**Amber:** Yeah, totally. Yeah, that was a patron PDF. I think they went along with my rose medicine episode of this podcast a few years ago.

**Damiana:** Oh, I'm gonna revisit for sure.

**Amber:** Yeah, and it features recipes and some things from many herbalists. Your Instagram is just so good, too. So of course, I will link to that, and you talk about all the things we've talked about here today.

[1:25:10]

**Damiana:** Thank you. Thank you. I mean, yeah, well, that one, I think, it's more like I've never saw myself artist-y and just through photography, and I think, really, crafting herbal medicine has been a way for me to acknowledge, "Oh, this is making art," you know. It doesn't have to be like a fine painting or going to like a fine school of arts in order for you to make art through your hands and medicine.

**Amber:** Right, and this is going back to that aguas serenadas, and how it doesn't have to look a certain way. Like, what art looks like or what herbal medicine looks is truly infinite. And I think what a lot of people don't realize, especially if they're new to herbalism, and they think, "Ugh, I gotta memorize the actions and the Materia Medica," is that that's not what you have to do at all. This is an art form, and it's just another avenue for creative expression in this life.

**Damiana:** 100%. Like finding your own way, you know, like, I'll Google, like, even if I read this, or I know this, like oh, yeah, like herbal actions of calendula, and I'll just remember. But then the real development of my relationship to them is growing them in my garden, working with them, connecting through them to the sunshine, and how the sunshine feel in my body and in my heart. And developing that relationship and that healing, like, walking, again, that little path in my mind where I can go there, that is what feels very mine, and that is what like that herbalism practice is about, I think.

Everything else, like just there's so many amazing books out there that will teach us, like open, and bookmark, and just Google a lot of like the constituents. I'm not saying it's not important, but I think it's like the least important part. And also the amount of things — like I think that herbal school and a lot of like herbalism in the states I see about, like, hundreds of different plants, right, and like, hundreds of different actions and all of those ways. It always brings me back to — I think I read this but — in Instagram, but just, like, go back to a few herbs. Like, if you can have, like, a great relationship and learn a lot about how 10 herbs work, that's amazing, like, for life.

**Amber:** Yeah, for life. That'll get you through.

**Damiana:** Yeah.

**Amber:** Okay, thank you, Damiana!

**Damiana:** Oh, thank you so much, Amber! Me too. Me too. I hope we can connect again soon. Like, please, let's not allow it to be years before we gather again in the flesh, or at least again.

**Amber:** My little one just turned five. So I'm feeling a little bit more wiggle room in my life.

**Damiana:** Wow, I can't believe she's five now and that I met her first in your womb! *(Amber laughs)*

**Amber:** Okay, thank you.

**Damiana:** Thank you. Bye!

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*(Exit music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)*

[Closing]

[01:28:14]

**Amber:** Thank you for taking these Medicine Stories in. I hope they inspire you to keep walking the mythic path of your own unfolding self. I love sharing information and will always put any relevant links in the show notes. You can find past episodes, my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and a lot more at [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com). We've got reishi, lion's mane, elderberry, mugwort, yarrow, redwood, body oils, an amazing sleep medicine, heart medicine, earth essences, so much more. More than I can list there. [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com).

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" It's fun and lighthearted, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with both the medicine you are in need of and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at [patreon.com/medicinstories](https://patreon.com/medicinstories). It is so worth your while. There are dozens and dozens of killer rewards there, and I've been told by many folks that it's the best Patreon out there. We've got e-books, downloadable PDFs, bonus interviews, guided meditations, giveaways, resource guides, links to online learning, and behind-the-scenes stuff and just so much more. The best of it is available at the two-dollar a month level. Thank you.

And please subscribe, in whatever app you use, just click that little subscribe button and review on iTunes. It's so helpful, and if you do that you just may be featured in a listener spotlight in the future.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her beautiful song "Wild Eyes." Thank you, Mariee.

And thanks to you all. I look forward to next time!