



## Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 33 with Anja Robinson

Root Cause Medicine & Breasts as an Intuitive Center

November 23, 2018

[0:00:00]

*(Excerpt from today's show by Anja Robinson)*

*... It's vitalist medicine. It's looking at the whole being: at the body, mind and spirit, and coming together with all of that to find remedies for people.*

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

[0:00:14]

**Amber:** Hello friends! Welcome to Medicine Stories Episode 33.

I'm Amber Magnolia Hill, and I'm glad you're here.

Big news around here: it just started raining a few minutes ago. I am in Northern California. I'm about an hour away from the Camp Fire, and I cannot begin to put into words the relief of fire season being over and just knowing that my house isn't going to burn down this year (*Amber laughs*) for the next six months, at least, maybe longer. Hopefully much, much longer. It's so welcome. It's so needed. The land will be so happy, and I'm just feeling a lot of deep joy and gratitude right now.

I wasn't really able to speak about the fire in the last podcast intro because I was just kind of frozen in fear around everything. I did an Instagram post about it last week, [MythicMedicine](#) there if you want to check that out. But, you know, suffice it to say, it's terrifying. Terrifying living in this tinderbox and knowing at any moment I could wake up in the middle of the night and the flames are at your door. It's always been my biggest fear since I was a tiny child to burn to death, and I don't even like thinking it. I don't even like saying those words out loud, and that it's such a reality now for so many millions of people on the West Coast. It's just so scary. And of course, I acknowledge that my fear and my terror over the last couple of weeks are nothing compared to the hundreds of thousands of people affected by what happened in Paradise and the surrounding areas and in Southern California as well and all the previous fires, and all the future fires, it's just so, so intense!

If you're interested in all this, I really recommend a recent episode of the For the Wild podcast. I think it's called like [Myths and Misinformations about Wildfires](#). Something like that. It's really, really great and gives a much bigger ecological framework for these wildfires, as well as tips for protecting your home if you're in this area. My husband, Owen, and I have done a lot of fire preparedness around our home and will continue to do so.

[0:02:55]

**Amber:** So today. Today I'm talking with Anja Robinson. Anja's a **TRULY** gifted herbalist and I love this episode because it gets really, really like technical and scientific and just full of really practical advice around herbalism and around health for people in female bodies.

We talk about a lot of good stuff.

Let me tell you about the giveaway we're doing first, though. So on [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](#), we're doing a big giveaway for \$100 gift certificate to Anja's shop, Mana Medicinals, as well as a \$100 gift certificate to my shop, Mythic Medicinals. So \$200 altogether you can win, just by being a patreon supporter at the \$2 level. So head over there and check that out and please enter and be a part of it.

Anja and I talk a little bit about birth in this episode, and she mentions my birth story from my youngest, Nixie, born two years ago. And I just want to say, if you want to check that out, it is at my website, [MythicMedicine.Love](#), and I would just go to that homepage and type "birth" at the top of the page, in that search bar there. I also have my oldest's, my twelve-year old's, birth story there. It was the first blog post I ever wrote was that birth story in 2006. And seriously, if I hadn't have posted that I probably wouldn't be doing this now. That got me into blogging. It introduced me to a whole bunch of people, who I'm still friends with, and that just, you know, one step after another, segued into me doing what I'm doing now, here, with this podcast. I also want to let you know that Anja and I are going to record a second interview because there was so much more I wanted to talk about, both in terms of herbalism and Anja's personal life. There's some, she's got some big story medicine around the death of her mother and her past as a drug abuser and, I mean, it's just incredible what she's been through and how she's ended up doing what she's doing now. So I really wanted to get more into that, and it just seemed that the only way to possibly do that was to record a second interview. So that will be coming out soon. Stay tuned for that.

Oh, and the Patreon giveaway will end on the Winter Solstice, gives everyone enough time to listen to this episode, or maybe the next one, and enter. And then whoever wins will get many medicines in the mail a little bit after Christmas, which I think is nice because, you know, it's disappointing after Christmas; it's kind of a letdown. So set yourself up to receive something awesome, possibly, if you win.

[0:06:08]

**Amber:** Okay the things that Anja and I talk about today -- I want to do this in the intro because it's a lot. It's... yeah. It's just a lot of good stuff, and I want you to keep listening to get all this info. So, just so you know and keep this podcast going today.

We talk about:

- The intersection between herbalism & functional medicine
- Why the deeply-embedded idea in herbalism of "Just live like your grandmothers lived and you'll be healthy" just doesn't work anymore in these modern times
- Health confusion and information overload
- A name is a prayer: the meaning of Anja's name and how it ties into her life's path
- The gateway of birth & the role of a birth attendant
- And then we get into understanding the complex dance of women's hormones and what we can do to create better hormonal health (we talk about digestion, the liver, PMS, headaches, bloating, cramps, water retention, breaking out, PCOS, endometriosis, fibroids, toxic overloads, xeno-estrogens, and so much more. Stuff that I always say in this interview that's been hard for me to grasp, wrap my mind around, but Anja's got it.)
- The importance of the lymphatic system, which cannot be overstated
- The insanity of the truly toxic products that are marketed to women as real femininity
- We talk about Rosemary Gladstar's idea of "Don't put anything on your skin you wouldn't put in your mouth"
- And then we get into a deep dive into breast health
- Reframing self-exams: knowing the terrain of your own body, what to look for, and what not to worry about!
- The flexibility & resiliency of breast tissue. (*Amber laughs*) She talks about her teacher saying, like, "Tenderize that meat!" (*Amber laughs*) Which is funny.

So, gosh. I just really think that any person with breasts, vulva, uterus, the whole situation of having what we have historically called a "woman's body" should listen to this podcast. And Anja and I do just simplify everything by using the word "woman" and "women" and we understand that not all people who have this anatomy identify as women, and hope that you will understand us and forgive that we just chose simplicity while speaking about this. And the language is ever-changing.

and it's hard to know what to say without making someone possibly feel offended or omitted and that is not our intention at all.

I also wanted to mention that Anja talks about her e-book about breast health, and you can find that just by going to her website: [ManaMedicinals.net](http://ManaMedicinals.net), and you can download her e-book there which is awesome!

**[0:09:01]**

**Amber:** So I think that's it. Let us proceed with this interview with Anja Robinson, but first, the bio. I always almost forget the bio:

Anja Robinson is the Founder of Mana Medicinals, a small business founded around embodied wellness for women. She's a clinical herbalist, holistic nutrition consultant, women's health educator, and full-spectrum birth doula with extensive training in Ayurvedic medicine. Anja is passionate about women's health and believes it is every woman's birthright to have access to a healthy lifestyle, in sync with the body's natural rhythms. She believes in the body's innate capacity for healing and a woman's own intuition around her well-being. She helps empower women to take back their health through body literacy and syncing with their natural cycles. She's woven a tapestry of healing that bridges the scientific with the spiritual, and the clinical with the intuitive. (That is so true. I just love that about her.) This unique perspective of women's health is steeped in many different traditions; weaving together Ayurveda, Traditional Western Herbalism, Functional Nutrition, and Intuitive Womb Wisdom. Anja believes that healing is elemental, and through exploring the ways that the elements are expressed in each woman's individual constitution, insight is gained in the pathways toward optimal health. She is passionate about whole foods nutrition, botanical medicine, and sustainability through bodies and lifestyles as well as for the earth.

Anja's handcrafted botanicals, women's wellness mentorships, and workshops represent a compassionate system of healing, helping women, families, and communities lead vibrant, healthy

lives in harmony with our sacred ecosystems. Alright. How great does that sound? Let's talk to Anja.

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

[0:10:53]

**Amber:** Hey! Hi Anja! Welcome to Medicine Stories.

**Anja:** Hi Amber! So happy to be here.

**Amber:** Yeah, I'm glad that we're talking because having this interview coming up, I did what I always do and I did kind of a deep dive of your website, your writings, and your offerings, and was reminded that you're a **deeply** knowledgeable, super smart, well-trained clinical herbalist. And that is something that I am not. In a lot of ways I've done a lot of research and learning, but you've just, you've got really specific knowledge about certain body systems and this sort of clinical -- what's that kind of medicine? -- **functional** medicine background, right?

**Anja:** Yeah!

**Amber:** Which I **LOVE!** I've been saying lately, "I swear: if I could go back again I'd still be into herbalism, but I'd really want to, like, go into Functional Medicine." Well. okay, let's just start there and then we can get into more personal stuff.

But, like, how did you come to be doing what you're doing, and how do you merge those two?

**Anja:** Yeah, well, you know, it's been such an interesting progression. I really started on the herbal path and was really called to clinical herbalism, and just...

**Amber:** --Maybe define what clinical herbalism is, too.

**Anja:** Yeah, just a little bit more -- I was really interested in body systems and understanding how things worked and standardizing my medicine, and, really, you know, when I was a little girl I wanted to be a doctor. And so, the way that my brain works I really want to pick apart every little thing and understand how it works. And I love working with plants, and I love working with people, but I wanted to help people on a deeper level. I mean, I love giving someone a tea or a tincture, but I was, I've always been really, really interested in root cause medicine, and kind of looking at the bigger pictures. To me, clinical herbalism is getting a little bit deeper than just giving this plant for that symptom. It's kind of understanding the body and the systems on a deeper level and really looking at root cause and how to -- It's vitalist medicine. It's looking at the whole being at body, mind, and spirit, and kind of coming together with all that to find remedies for people.

**Amber:** I think about it, too, just the word "clinical," you're working one-on-one with people. You are, like, in the... in it with other people, you know? I don't work one-on-one with people. I kind of take in information, synthesize in my own way and then disseminate, but I'm not sitting across from another human being, like, taking their case history and learning and experimenting, and learning as I go, through people and through the years, what really works and what these larger patterns are.

**Anja:** Yeah, and I think that's something, for me, that's been really umm... I love that herbalism is not standardized. I don't **want** it to be standardized, but within that, there is a part of me that has fought to be taken seriously and that the knowledge that I have is real. So that's part of the path that brought me deeper into nutrition and brought me deeper into functional medicine is kind of exploring a little bit more of the Western realm and kind of diving deeper into body systems and anatomy and physiology, and the process of different disease pathologies, and kind of being able to understand Western jargon.

And also a lot of my clients are working with, whether it be just a regular Western doctor or they're working with a naturopath or they have some other primary care that they're working with, and I

wanted to be able to work alongside those people and to kind of help make the information that they're getting from their primary care more accessible and more understandable to them. And so, that's kind of was a lot of my drive to get more into the functional medicine model. And to me, it just really resonates and makes a lot of sense, and it's very based on root cause and looking at the whole person.

As one of my teachers calls it, she calls it "The total ecology of women's health," and I really love that kind of analogy because our bodies are this kind of whole ecology. And we have to take into consideration our emotional and physical and spiritual. Those aspects place such a huge role; not just what's going on physically.

**[0:15:43]**

**Amber:** So, define "functional medicine" for us.

**Anja:** Well, functional medicine, I would say, it's definitely... it's kind of based on more new, cutting-edge research. It's definitely very science-based. And they do look at a lot of testing, (which, you know, I believe we have to take with a grain of salt because we can look at all of the tests), but we also have to remember that there is a person in front of us. And sometimes these tests are really new and they don't line up with what we're seeing in front of us.

So functional medicine is really just kind of a deep-dive into body systems and root cause medicine. And it is based on a lot of really current scientific data. So I think that's something that's really great about it is there is a lot of clinical studies coming out, and functional medicine is really integrative. So it blends holistic therapies. It blends nutrition, herbal medicine. It's looking at all of the different forms of medicine that are out there and pulling from all of them, which I like.

**Amber:** Yeah, it seems like this perfect meeting place and interfaces with all these different areas of study. Like you're speaking about with the testing, it seems like it's really metrics-based approach to health.

**Anja:** It is, and I think that's why I love blending it with herbalism, which is so much more, like, feminine to me and more kind of intuitive and just, you know, you can really feel into someone. So I think it's a good blend of my brain because I have that really right-brained, scientific, nitty-gritty aspect to how I like to understand things. And then I love what herbalism brings and what plant spirit medicine brings and really being able to connect with people and teach them to connect with plants and heal their bodies on that realm.

So to me, it was kind of the perfect blend of wanting to satisfy my science nerd and bring a little bit more validity into what I was talking about with clients, and also being able to chat with people's naturopaths and doctors, and understand the languaging that they were using and understanding maybe the testing or the medications or any of the different things that they were doing, so then I could be able to help my clients understand that because I don't think there's a big language bridge between what's happening in the Western model and then when you go and see your doctor, you have no idea what they're really talking about. So, just kind of wanting to create a bridge there for women between wanting to heal themselves naturally, and still knowing when they need something more and they need to be working with a primary care.

**Amber:** I think for a long time the sort of dominant narrative in herbalism (which is valid in its own way) and that I really subscribed to for a long time has been, you know, "just live how your grandmothers lived. Just eat nourishing food and take whole herbs and everything will be fine."

That's just not true anymore in the modern world with the toxic load that we are all **constantly** exposed to. So I really, in the last couple of years, come around to a place of so highly valuing the metrics, the tests, the really deep clinical dives into each individual's health because we're all dealing with different things, manifesting it in different ways: auto-immune issues, hormonal imbalance; there's so much there.

So I love that you're doing this.



[0:19:45]

**Anja:** Yeah, and, you know, I always start with nutrition and whole foods and whole herbs, but sometimes we really are at a place in our culture where soil health is just -- even if we're farming organically, maybe-- we're not getting the amount of nutrients in our foods that our ancestors were able to get in the foods that they grew in the soil. With our stress load and toxic load, there's some things, like, even if you were to eat the best, most whole foods, organic-based diet, we still might not be hitting where we need to with certain nutrients in this day in age because we just can't get them from our foods the way we used to be able to.

So it's been an interesting journey for me, as well, because I used to be really anti-supplement. And I'm still very cautious when I do use them, and I really, if I decide to use them there's a really good reason why. But there's certain things, especially as women, that it's really important to be supplementing in this day in age, just so we can literally have all of the building blocks we need to have all of our body processes be working in a healthy way.

**Amber:** Exactly. And yeah, even if you are eating all organic food, as I've been doing for at least 15 years now, I still have health issues and will continue to. Glyphosate is in at least 75% of the air we breathe and 75% of the rain that falls down in this country. And that disrupts the normal pathways in our bodies and how we take in nutrients like you were saying. The soils are depleted of nutrients and then our body's absorptive (that's not the word. I always say that word) **pathways** are being disrupted.

**Anja:** Yeah. It's just... I think we're having to take it one day at a time and just constantly adjust because there's no way to really know how to navigate through this. It's really new territory, and I think that's where some of these testings can be really helpful for women that are having, you know, they're doing all the right dietary things. They're living natural lifestyles, and they're still, like, not feeling good, and they don't understand what's going on.

Sometimes taking a little deeper dive at what's happening in the body can really just give us a jumping-off point so they can move forward and figure out what the next steps are.

**[0:22:18]**

**Amber:** Yeah, yeah. It's definitely a strange new world, and it's confusing. So many people have food confusion. I've talked about this on the podcast a lot. Myself included, I'm like, "This is the best way to eat. Now, this. I'm into this diet now. No wait, that's bad for me." (*Amber laughs*)

It's confusing. It's because there's such an information overload, and things are changing so rapidly.

**Anja:** Exactly. And that's one reason, another reason, that I kind of moved into this sort of mentorship model with women is to help kind of navigate that because if you do look on the internet, you are told 20 million different things about what to eat and what's healthy.

For me what was really helpful in that was studying Ayurveda and really understanding constitution and people's constitutions and where they're at has really helped me. Because, you know, I could be eating a certain healthy diet that's really balancing and nourishing for me, and then you tried to -- I give you my regiment, and it totally throws you off balance 'cause you have a totally different constitution than I do.

So, there's something in that ancient system of understanding our doshas, and understanding the underlying elements that are at play in our bodies that can really help us to make proper decisions with our diets. And, of course, that's going to change throughout the cycles of our life, and throughout the different seasons, and throughout the different seasons of being a woman. So it's constantly shifting, and we're constantly moving towards balance.

Balance is not something that we ever fully achieve. Once we get there, then something is going to shift again. (*Anja laughs*) So.

**Amber:** That's such a good perspective.

[0:24:03]

**Amber:** Okay, let's just pull back a minute and talk about an aspect of your personal mythology that I found really neat, and then we'll get back into this because it's sort of related:

Tell us about your name, about the name "Anja."

**Anja:** So my mother is from Germany, and it is a pretty common German name. I'm -- my mother passed away about nine years ago, so I never really got a chance to ask her why she named me that. I wasn't that interested in it before the time that she passed. But just doing my own research and looking into what that name means, it actually means "mother" in Hungarian, which I have found really interesting because that's been one of the really deeply underlying archetypes that I've played out in my life.

I feel like I'm very much a mothering person. I have a heart tattooed on my chest that says, "Mama."

**Amber:** Like an actual human heart...

**Anja:** -- Actual human. (*both laugh*) That's my Mama's heart...

**Amber:** -- anatomically correct --

**Anja:** And I just think that it's so interesting, our names and how I believe our name is a prayer. It's a spell. It holds so much power. And really not knowing much about my name, and then in the past five, ten years just looking deeper into that, I've just found that really interesting because I really think it speaks to who I am on a really deep level.

**Amber:** That's really neat. And then the main focus of your work is with women's health, and you provide doula services, you do placenta encapsulations?

**Anja:** Mhmm. Yeah.

**Amber:** Yeah (*Amber laughs*). You work with mothers on a super important level! Yeah, I'd like to hear more like what drew you to working with women, especially with mothers. And, if I may ask if you would like to be a mother yourself someday.

**Anja:** Yeah. Well, you know, I think for a long time I was just, you know, doing herbalism and didn't really have a focus and feeling a little bit lost in that. It was just such a huge topic, and I needed something to focus on. And I was really stressing out for a long time about what's my niche? What am I going to do?

And I just kept having women show up, and just kept having them saying, "Oh I'm having a problem with my cycle" or "I'm having such bad cramps" or "A lot of my friends starting getting pregnant, and it just over the course of about a year that the people that were really showing up and needing my help were women. And I've always been totally obsessed with birth and pregnancy. And I definitely really want to be a mother. And so, you know, the more that I looked into it, the more that I realized that women are such an underserved population, and there's so many health issues that we're dealing with, and there's so much lack of education around our bodies and the deeper ways some of our cycles work. Also, pregnancy and post-partum, when I really started diving into that, there's such a lack of education and lack of good information out there for pregnancy nutrition and post-partum care. And so I really just kind of saw the opportunity and it's just been a bit of a wormhole from there.

[0:28:07]

**Amber:** So how has it been attending births? How many have you been to? What is that like?

I just want to say: giving birth is so intense that it actually make me not want to be present when other women do it, because I was just like... it's **too** big; that energy. I could handle it in my own body pretty well, but I don't know if I could, like, witness another person.

I don't know if that makes sense.

**Anja:** No. (*Amber laughs*) It totally makes sense. I was so nervous for my first birth. I'm... I really only got into birth work for the last couple of years, so I've only been at a few births. But the first birth that I was present for was for one of my best friends, actually.

One of my mentors, she talks about being a doula as like being a gatekeeper for life. You're kind of standing at that doorway between life and death, and sometimes, most of the time it's life, but not always. And it is really big. It's huge. But I think there's just something that feels so intuitive in that space, and there's such an opportunity to just hold space and witness a woman in her deepest sense of her own power, and to really just be able to hold space and make sure she's able to stay in that power and not be disrupted by anyone else who's not understanding or aware of the power that she's harnessing in herself through that process.

**Amber:** Mhmm. Yeah, it's like birth is this portal, this gateway like you said. And as a birth worker, you're kind of at the gateway between the woman and then the rest of the world, right? It's, yeah, your job to create that safe space for her to be in.

**Anja:** Yeah.

**Amber:** Especially if it's in a hospital or clinical setting.

**Anja:** Exactly. Where you can just help remind them, you know, that they get to make the decisions, and that they know what their body needs, and that they don't need anyone else to tell them what they need or what they ought to do.

And really, it's just beautiful to watch women step into that role, and it's such a beautiful transition from maiden to mother. It's just really powerful to be able to hold space for a woman in that place. I think I was really scared before my first birth. I was like, "Oh my gosh, am I gonna like this?! Am I gonna be able to do this?" And after watching the first baby come into the world like I said, it was my best friend, so it was a really beautiful, beautiful birth at this birthing center, and I was just bawling. It was the most beautiful thing that I've ever witnessed.

And in that moment I was like, okay. This is definitely... I'm into this.

*(both laugh)*

**Amber:** I always cry reading birth stories or watching birth. **Every time** I see a birth. Sometimes on Instagram, you know, I follow different birth accounts and will be scrolling through, and a baby pops out, and I'm just like suddenly sobbing. *(Amber laughs)*

**Anja:** Oh, yeah.

**Amber:** With my own birth, I was just like, UGH. The actual first words out of my mouth after my now two-year-old was born were, "**Fuck** giving birth."

*(both laugh)*

**[0:31:37]**

**Anja:** I remember reading your birth story, and I definitely cried. And looking at all those beautiful photos that you have, I just, you know, it's just such a beautiful story, and it's so perfect in the way that it is for every woman. I think the hardest thing for women is that we maybe think we know the way that we want things to go, or we want to kind of control it, and part of it is just this really deep

surrender, allowing the birth to be what it's going to be. And we can do so much to control it, but then at a certain point, we just have to fully surrender to the moment. And that's big.

**Amber:** It's so big. Yeah, it's just the deepest, relinquishing of control going through that process.

[0:32:30]

**Amber:** Yeah, let's stick with women's health here.

You know, so I find hormones so confusing. Like, endocrinology, I just cannot wrap my mind around it. No matter how much I read, I'm like, "I still don't get it," and you seem to have a really... you nailed it. You got it. I was looking through your blog this morning, and you talk about estrogen, excessive estrogen, and about iron deficiency. I liked those two articles a lot, and they're kind of different issues.

But like, what do you see, clinically, going on with women's health most often? What are really frequent issues that are facing modern, mostly American (where we're living) women?

**Anja:** Well, you know, the estrogen dominance, you kind of hit that one on the hand just bringing that up.

That is just such a big issue with women in this day in age. Our hormones are very complex, and I've spent a lot of time reading books, and I've studied it from different teachers, and listened to a million lectures, and there's times where I'm still... my head is spinning because it's so, so complex. Our estrogen and progesterone are constantly doing this dance where they need to be in balance. And there's so many things that are present in our daily realities that are kind of messing up this balance between our estrogen and our progesterone. So a couple of the things I talk about a lot because I do a lot of -- I teach a lot about breast health and about the lymphatic system. Within that lens of looking at our hormones, there's a few different ways that our estrogen can get really out of balance. And one of those ways is our lymphatic system. It's really our body's natural

detoxification system; it's where all of our cellular metabolites and byproducts of all of our hormones and everything, that is how they leave the body - is through the lymphatic system. And that goes into the blood, and that goes into the liver, where we process it, and then things leave the body.

So a big thing that's happening in our culture is just stagnation in general and stagnation of lymph. Our lymphatic system, it doesn't have a pump like the circulatory system does. So it relies on exercise or physical manipulation like dry-brushing or using a gua-sha or a bianga, oil massage, somehow moving our blood and our lymph is the only way that it moves.

So, you know, we live in a culture where we sit in the car a lot, or we sit at, maybe people are sitting at a desk, or they're just busy in their lives and they're not getting enough exercise. So all of these hormone-kind-of byproducts are sitting in the lymphatic system, and if they don't move out quickly enough, then they actually become, begin to be reabsorbed. And so that can actually throw off our estrogen-progesterone balance because those, that estrogen, which is trying to leave the body after our cycle, is over and we're kind of starting a new cycle right after our menstrual period, then all of those hormones need to leave the body. If we're not moving, we're actually reabsorbing those old hormones that are trying to leave.

That can also happen -- that's also really tied into digestion. So one of the ways that once things do move through the lymphatic the system that they can come out of the body is through urine and through our stool. And so if we're constipated, if our diet isn't great, and we're not having enough bowel movements every day, then the same thing can happen. The estrogen can get reabsorbed through the walls of the colon. And at that point, the liver has started to breakdown the estrogen, and it's in a different form than it was initially, and it's actually in a form that's more toxic to our bodies. So if we're not having good digestion, and we're not moving things through quick enough, then we're reabsorbing this more toxic form of estrogen. And then it throws off our balance of estrogen and progesterone.



Just to give an example: some of the big issues that a lot of women face, basically all PMS symptoms, are related to estrogen dominance: headache, bloating, water retention, cramps, breaking out on, like, the chin area on the face, we all, like, PCOS, endometriosis, sometimes fibroids, a lot of these are related to estrogen and estrogen-dominance. So a lot of symptoms that women are experiencing within their reproductive system actually have to do with this balance. So it's a really big topic.

**[0:38:12]**

**Anja:** And the other issue that's really coming into place here is environmental toxins and xenoestrogens.

So basically these are chemical substances that are out in the world. They can be in plastics. They can be in glyphosate or chemically-sprayed agriculture or meats, or, you know, household cleaning products, all these different places, but these are substances that are basically endocrine disruptors, that once they go into our body, they actually bind to our cells, to our estrogen.

We have a little, kind of like a lock, that's an estrogen receptor. So these xenoestrogens that are out in the environment from chemicals actually bind to those estrogen receptors, and they trick our body into thinking it's an estrogen. So that is another whole thing that we are now exposed to as women with all of these chemicals constantly bombarding us and it's totally throwing off our balance of estrogen and progesterone, and it's totally throwing off our entire endocrine system.

**[0:39:24]**

**Amber:** Wow. Yeah, I mean all of that sounds so familiar. So, obviously, ideally, if you were gonna be helping someone with excess estrogen, you'd be sitting with them, they'd be doing labs, getting to know their constitution, but can you give some general recommendations for listeners who might see themselves in what you just described.

**Anja:** Yeah, well, one thing, you know, that we should all be doing (obviously, there's no way for us to completely avoid chemicals in this day in age. It's just not possible), but the first thing is to really look at our lives: what foods are we eating that are wrapped in plastics? Are we drinking out of plastic water bottles? Are we... let's take a look at all of our household cleaners. Are we using natural vinegar and maybe an essential oil, versus pledge or something like that? Are we looking at our body care products? Are they organic and natural? Like, the more that we can kind of mitigate the amount of chemical bombardment that we're getting is gonna be helpful. So, obviously, again, we can't totally eliminate that, but we can look at what are the important vegetables to make sure we're buying organic. And if we are going to be eating meat and dairy, those are things that are really, really important to eat organic and get grass-fed, because the hormones and the antibiotics in conventionally farmed meats are also endocrine disruptors. So, you know, meat is a whole subject. I know it's come up on here before and I'm not even going to into that, but if we are choosing to eat animal proteins, making sure that we're getting organic and grass-fed sources of that is really important for our hormonal balance.

So just looking at detoxifying our daily lives as much as possible is a big thing.

And then, movement. Making sure that we're moving our bodies, that we're getting exercise, that our lymph is moving is really, really important. Like I said, that's our natural detoxification system like I said. I teach a lot about doing body brushing and using a gua sha, and go out and get your blood moving, take a walk, take a hike, just get moving.

And then within our diets, obviously, you know, eating a whole-food-based diet and getting a lot of fiber. So what I was talking about with the digestion and not going to the bathroom enough, a big thing is that people are not getting enough fiber in their diets and fiber comes from whole fruits and vegetables and legume and whole grains. Just for a little bit of perspective, our paleolithic ancestors were eating about 100 grams of fiber every day. And the standard American diet has about 8 grams of fiber in it. And what we're shooting for in the holistic, nutrition realm,

we're shooting for between 30-40 grams of fiber a day. What that actually looks like on your plate would be 9-12 servings of vegetables a day. Which, a serving is about a half a cup.

So you could be looking at 6-8 cups of leafy greens, and broccoli, and chard, kale, all those kind of things. But even as someone who eats an organic diet, eating 6 cups of greens a day is a lot! And so, we're just -- we're not really hitting our mark on fiber. We're not getting enough, like, bulk in there that we can really keep our digestive system moving. So that's a really big one that I try and help bring that perspective of how much we actually need to be getting those vegetables and those legumes and whole grains into the diet.

And then, you know, of course, cutting out things, like, really looking at refined carbohydrates and refined grains, and sugars, and the things that are going to be putting more of a load on this. And, you know, liver support is just so important because our liver is doing the job of detoxifying everything, but specifically, as women, our hormones all have to be broken down and detoxified by our liver. And that actually is a pretty big load that we have on our liver JUST from detoxing our estrogen and our different sex hormones. Liver support - working with different herbs, I'm always trying to get women to do food as medicine. But putting some burdock or dandelion root into your bone broth, or making some herbal decoctions and bringing those liver herbs in. Just supporting our livers is a really important piece of the puzzle as well.

**[0:44:48]**

**Amber:** One really easy way to do that (that you mention I think in the article) is bitters. And I'm just gonna put a little plugin for your line of medicine, you make my favorite bitters, and you have a number of flavors and they're in a SPRAY BOTTLE, which is just so much preferable to taking your bitters in dropper form. I love it. And since I've been using your spray for over a year now, and I just have it right there on the table, and I take it with me when I travel, I use it almost every time before I eat a meal. Just a really simple, don't-even-have-to-think-about-it way to support the liver and get those bitters in.

**Anja:** Yeah! And I don't know what it is about the spray bottle. It's the same thing for me for some reason it helps me remember even more so than taking a tincture. (*Anja laughs*) Something about the spray it just coats the whole mouth and is really nice.

But yeah, bitters is such a great way. They're so easy. And I make a few different kinds of bitters formulas, but I really try to bring some good warming spices into my bitters, because that's one thing about bitter herbs is that they tend to be really cold and dry. And that can be really imbalancing for a lot of people's constitutions. Particularly this season, the fall, coming into winter, where we're kind of in the cold and dry season. Bitters can really throw people off. So you can bring in some, like, ginger and cinnamon and cardamom, and some other warming herbs in there to make sure they're not throwing you out of whack.

[0:46:24]

**Amber:** I kind of want to bridge here between -- I want to get back to breast health and body care products 'cause I just think about this all the time; that the things that are marketed to women to put on our bodies are so insanely toxic.

I can't even believe it's legal, and I just feel like a true sadness for women who don't know; who don't understand what they're using. I'm thinking specifically right now about deodorant and antiperspirants.

Yeah, do you have things to say about that?

**Anja:** I mean, I do, yeah!

Well, one, we have -- all of our lymph drains in the body right under our clavicle, so kind of right at the top of your breasts, under your clavicle bones, is the subclavian vein which is where all of the lymph moves into the blood. So the biggest, **all** of your lymph drainage, happens in our sort of breast region.

What can happen: basically, sweat is one of the ways that our body detoxifies and gets rid of things; the other two being urine and stool. So, your body's natural way of getting rid of toxins is through our sweat. And obviously, we sweat through our armpits. And so, with an antiperspirant, with something that has ingredients in it that purposefully make you **not** sweat, you are locking in toxins that are trying to get out. And not only are you locking them in, but you're locking them in right around the breast tissue area, which, our breasts are mainly adipose tissues, so they're mainly fat tissue. And the thing that we know about fat tissue is that it accumulates heavy metals, it accumulates toxins.

In Ayurveda, they talk about the concept of "Ama," which is kind of toxic buildup in the body. And the breast tissue, or just fat tissue in general, it stores more ama; it stores more toxins. So, if we're putting on the antiperspirant, and we're not allowing ourselves to naturally detoxify through our sweat, we're locking in those toxins right in an area of our body that, one, doesn't get a lot of movement and has a lot of natural stagnation, and then we have a lot of fat tissue which just holds onto those toxins. In Ayurveda they see that those toxins they kind of get lodged in the tissue, that's the underlying -- that's where disease starts is from toxins getting lodged into the tissues.

And also, a lot of antiperspirants have aluminum in them and have heavy metals. And so, you know, again, not only are you not allowing your body to naturally detoxify, but you are putting heavy metals in an area of your body that's going to store heavy metals. So it's just -- it's so unfortunate because, you know, I grew up -- I would say until my, maybe 18 when I became more of hippie and was like "No deodorant! I'm not shaving my armpits." (*Anja laughs*)-- but you know, we all grew up using antiperspirant deodorant, and that's what's on the market for the everyday woman. And now, luckily, there's a lot of brands where you can still wear some sort of natural deodorant that doesn't have that antiperspirant action, and that's the main action you want to look for: you do NOT want to use an antiperspirant.

I always want to preface this: there's no shame if you have been, or if that's what you thought was good or what you like, but it's really important that we understand the mechanisms of how that's harming our bodies, and then we can make more informed decisions as we move forward.

**Amber:** Yeah, I mean, totally. That's just how we were all raised and what was available at the store. It just... yeah, didn't even question it until the information comes to you. I forgot what I was going to say, but yeah, I haven't used antiperspirant in a long time, and I also don't shave my armpits. And I've gone back and forth with shaving, but a few years ago I got a staph infection in my armpit. And it was from nicking it while shaving; a nick that I didn't even notice. It was so minuscule, but we all have staph on the surface of our skin all the time, and it just happened to move right in there. And I was like, this is really not worth it.

And then I got pregnant soon after that. And the scar tissue and the scar build up from where the staph infection had been -- and it had gotten lanced and I think maybe that lancing is what caused that -- caused me to start having plugged milk ducts while I was pregnant. I was, like, 37 weeks pregnant. I was like, **WHAT** is happening?

So I just started. It wasn't worth it for me. And I'm a sweaty, stinky person. It's in my family. So I really have to just kind of, you know, buck this, cast off this cultural narrative that it's disgusting to shave my armpits and to not use antiperspirant. And I use a number of different herbal deodorants. I kind of cycle through them, and I love them all. I just, like, refuse to be shamed for being a human with a human body. And I have been happy to discover that a lot of men (as a heterosexual woman), absolutely love it. And go crazy for seeing that I'm not doing those things to my body.

**[0:52:09]**

**Anja:** Yeah, and I mean also there's such a natural, I mean, our pheromones are such a sex -- There's a smell that comes out that we're masking with chemicals and with different synthetic fragrances. I forget exactly what podcast I was listening to, but I heard this whole article, or sort of

interview, that was talking with someone, and they were discussing that through using synthetic fragrances and synthetic smells, sometimes we match up with people that actually aren't a good match for us because we can't actually smell their real pheromones.

And that's such a way that we've found someone that we're compatible with: that if you like their smell, and you connect in that way and masking and having all these synthetic fragrances, people are, like, having a harder time connecting through that kind of like deeply primal level...

**Amber:** Yeah! Primal, animal. Yeah, exchange.

**Anja:** Yeah, the deeply primal animal sense of like, "Yes, I smell you, and my body is registering that this is attractive."

**Amber:** Yeah, it's like a subconscious exchange of genetic information with those pheromones signaling.

And, not to mention, we now know from multiple studies, that women who are on hormonal birth control have their pheromone pathways completely disrupted and will often choose a mate, who, once they're off birth control, they're like, "What? I'm not into you." (*Amber laughs*) "How did that happen?!"

**Anja:** It's so interesting! It's just... it's really crazy. So that is a huge thing about deodorant.

And there is a lot of great natural options, and I totally understand women who are in the workplace and really need to not have sweaty armpits and body odor, and there are a lot of great alternatives out there now, and finding one that's right for you and that works well.

**Amber:** I want to acknowledge that, too, that being in a workplace especially like a corporate workplace or anywhere where you're highly visible, it's very different than me being a

stay-at-home mom running my business at home. I still would not use antiperspirant, but I might use a little more of a hardcore deodorant if I were in that situation.

**[0:54:40]**

**Anja:** And, I guess, just a little segue here while we're talking about this and just women in the workplace and something that just is something that's coming up is that I just want to talk about bras for a second.

**Amber:** Oh yeah! I wanted to get into that, too.

**Anja:** Awesome.

As we're kind of talking about the lymphatic system, and as I was saying, most of our -- all of the lymph in the body drains right here, right above our breasts, we have actually over 100 different lymph nodes underneath our breast tissue, under our breasts. And so, by wearing underwire bras, or, even not underwire, they could just be a sports bra, but it's missized, if it's too tight, then we're actually cutting off the flow of the lymph underneath our breasts.

And so I do a lot of lymphatic breast massage, and I do a lot of breast check for women. ANd what I find over and over and I've even found on myself, which, I hadn't I don't think I've worn an underwire bra in over a decade, and as I've first started getting into the lymphatic breastwork, I realized that I had matted breast tissue. Like, matted lymphatic tissue that was matted to my breastbone.

So underneath my breasts it felt kind of like, if you've ever had a knot somewhere, and you can feel that adhesion, you know, you can feel the knot, that's basically I could feel that all on the underside of my breasts, and like I said, I hadn't worn an underwire in ten years. That was old tissue, that because that underwires just sitting there, it can literally, like, matte your tissue to the bone. And not only are you not getting good detoxification, but you're getting a longstanding adhesion, you're not getting good blood flow.



And so, again, there's no shame. Like, if you love wearing underwires, if you love the way they look, if you need to wear one for your job, that's fine, but I always kind of recommend for women to wear them just as long as they need and take them off as soon as possible. Like, put it on in the parking lot at your job, and take it off when you get into your car on the way home, and make sure to give yourself a nice little breast massage and get the lymph and the blood flowing under there. Kind of a good rule of thumb when you're trying to figure it out is if you ever take off your bra and you have a mark like you have a line, where you can see what you were wearing, then it's too tight. And you're definitely not getting good lymphatic flow. So even if that's a sports bra or a little bralette and it's not sized right, and you have a mark where it was, then you need to find something that fits better.

I always just recommend for women to go into one of those fancy bra stores. You don't have to buy anything, but they always will size you for free. See if you find out the exact amount of inches.

And also, another thing to think about is what material our bras are made out of. Because a lot of undergarments are synthetic materials, and, again, it's in an area that's really sensitive and it's up against our skin. So the more that we can use natural materials for our undergarments is really important as well.

**[0:58:07]**

**Amber:** Yeah, isn't breast tissue really absorbent? -- That's the word, not "absorptive." --

**Anja:** Yeah breast tissue is very absorbent. I mean all of our tissue really is, and that's where this whole body care products is such a big thing, too. Because anything that we put onto our skin, it's actually bypassing -- you know, if we put something into our mouth it goes through the digestive system, and it goes through the liver, and it kind of goes through it's whole natural process of being detoxified in the body -- but when we put stuff directly on our skin it's bypassing that entire detox system, and it's just being directly absorbed into the bloodstream.

And so I always love what Rosemary Gladstar always says, like, “Don’t put on your skin that you wouldn’t put into your mouth.” I’ve always kind of loved that and really lived by that. And that’s why when we’re looking at these products, like you said, even some of the more “natural” or there’s marketing and branding is just so crazy these days. You go into, say, just Whole Foods and look at the natural lotions and soaps and stuff, and then you turn some of those bottles over and read the ingredients, and if you can’t pronounce those words, and you don’t know what they are then you probably shouldn’t be putting it on your skin.

It’s just so confusing because now things are being marketed as like “Oh natural and healthy!” And we still want to turn it over and look and see what’s in there and make sure there’s no parabens, there’s no synthetic dyes, there’s no... just... I just look for words I can’t pronounce. Then I’m like, “Oh, well I don’t really want that anyway.” (*Anja laughs*)

**Amber:** Yeah, for anyone who doesn’t know who’s listening, the word “natural” has absolutely no regulatory meaning on marketing and on bottles. It means absolutely nothing. Anyone can put that word on any product they want.

**Anja:** It’s surprising, actually, how many things say natural, and then you look at it and you’re like, “So what about this is actually natural?”

**Amber:** Yeah, and it’s ‘cause they have one plant extract in there somewhere.

**Anja:** Yeah.

[1:00:28]

**Amber:** Again, not to shame any individual woman because it’s our culture, and it’s the heaviness of marketing and just this toxic, toxic culture that we’ve been a part of for so long, but think about what women are supposed to look like every day, especially in the workplace. And yeah, so high heels, maybe, like, really tight pantyhose or tights or pants of some kind that are restricting the

belly, the uterus, that whole area, bras that uplift, like, you can't have real boobs; you can't have saggy boobs in any way; antiperspirants, make-ups, synthetic perfume, whatever other things that we're putting on our bodies; maybe hair products, makeup -- I already said makeup -- that's just... it's **SO** much. It's so much. The toxic load is so heavy and the effect on our bodies is so real. And it's just, what we've been told, is that it's real femininity.

**Anja:** Right, and we just have to, you know, we can't, maybe we don't take all of that out. Maybe there's a special time and a place, and you want to wear makeup, and there's some that are totally plant-based...

**Amber:** -- Of course. Of course!--

**Anja:** ... But we think about, like, women getting manicures and pedicures. They're getting their hair dyed. They're getting eyelash extensions. It's just, like, how many chemicals are we being exposed to? And maybe we're not at a place where we're ready to totally go full, cut out all of that, and be 100% natural because some women aren't comfortable like that, and I totally understand. But it's kind of like, maybe pick and choose the things that are really important, that you feel like the thing that you really want to hold onto, and try and cut back on some of the other things.

You know, just like hair products, and hair dye, and hair straightening, and you know, nail polish remover. There's just so many things that women, more so than men, are exposed to. And that's just in the beauty care. We're not even, like, getting to like, okay, well, now generally, women do a lot of cleaning as well. And so they're the ones that are exposed to a lot of the cleaning products in the household. And if those are full of chemicals, then they're getting a lot more exposure to those. And, you know, we have things like new cars and new furniture, which has flame retardant on them and the off-gassing of things that are new. And that's something that I always like to just get people aware of. I'm not saying don't ever have anything that's new, but there is something just to buying things that are vintage and older where we're not contributing as much to this mass marketing of new things. And also, generally, furniture and rugs, and things that are older have

had a chance to off-gas all of the toxic stuff that's on them. And then you don't have to deal with that.

[1:03:42]

**Amber:** Yeah. (*Amber laughs*)

We got a mattress off Craig's List this summer, and I really liked it. And so I looked it up on Amazon because we needed another mattress and found the same one, and it's like "WARNING: This mattress contains chemicals known to the state of California to cause cancer." I was like, "Wow! That's crazy that that's the world we're living in."

**Anja:** Like I said, we just have to take baby steps. It's like if the first thing you do is start using white vinegar to mop your floors instead of something else, like, that's such a good step, you know? And if we can find a natural deodorant, and if we can start supporting our livers through all of this, supporting our livers will just help our bodies deal with these heavier toxic loads.

And really looking at our foods and making sure we're not getting extra toxins in the foods that we eat. And there's a really great resource that I like to share with clients. It's called "The Dirty Dozen and the Clean 15." You can Google it, but it's just a really great little list of vegetables and fruits that are really important to buy organic, and then some of the Clean 15 are the ones that you can actually get away with that are not organic that are probably gonna have less, or not really have much residual pesticides. But the Dirty Dozen are the ones that we're really saying, "Hey, let's look out for these and try and not eat conventional because these are the ones that are keeping in the chemicals."

**Amber:** Yeah I think strawberries are maybe number one on the Dirty Dozen because they're so permeable. You're basically just eating those pesticides. And then avocados are on the Clean 15 because that skin is so thick. It's like, you know, it's okay. Organic avocados can be expensive. Buy them non-organically and you're gonna be alright.

**Anja:** Right, and so we just have to take steps because I know it's not within everyone's availability in their daily lives to be able to eat fully organic and do this, but it's like, if we can kind of pick and choose the ways that we can be more natural that can really support our overall endocrine health longterm, it's really important for us as women.

**Amber:** Yeah, and just real quick, to touch on the natural cleaning products, there's a great way to save money. Literally, the only two cleaning products for the last 15 years are white vinegar and Bon-Ami. And they get EVERYTHING done that I need to clean in my house.

**Anja:** And white vinegar is so cheap!

**Amber:** So cheap. (*Amber laughs*) Incredibly cheap. Bon-Ami is, too.

[1:06:25]

**Amber:** So breast health. How... do you have tips or techniques for breast self-massage or what women should be looking for? General ideas for how to actually connect more with our breasts and be more present with them? I think so many women are completely cut off.

**Anja:** Yeah, I will say some things without going too much onto a tangent.

So one thing that I think is really, really interesting that umm -- there's a woman, Christiane Northrup, she's an ND. She wrote the book, *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*, and I love what she says in there about reframing the breast self-exams because actually in 2009 they started changing within the Western medicine realm, they changed the regulatory... they stopped telling women to do breast self-exams. What was happening was women were doing breast self-exams, were finding a lump or something, were coming in, getting biopsies, and were finding massive amounts of benign lesions of women's breasts.

So basically women were getting freaked out, getting an invasive biopsy, and nothing was wrong.

What Christiane Northrup talks about is this reframing of the breast self-exam. It used to be: you do it once a month, and you're looking for a lump, and you're looking for cancer. She just talks about the laws of attraction and what are we really calling in. So I really love just starting out with this reframing of, like, let's get to know our bodies. Let's feel our breast tissue every day, so we can feel really empowered in that. And then if something does change, we're aware because we've been touching ourselves so much that we know that something is different, and we can find things early. But instead of approaching your breasts in this sort of "search and destroy" attitude, instead, we're coming to our breast tissue and loving them up and juicing them up, and getting our lymph moving, and connecting with our bodies.

The breasts are so intuitive. It's such an intuitive center as women. And if you think about the way that we stand, our breasts are literally the first thing that come in contact with the world around us. Through years of patriarchy and over-sexualization and religious, all sorts of things, we've been so shut down, and women have so many stories. Either they feel like they have too much or not enough or maybe there's been abuse or trauma, there's so much that comes up when we touch our breasts or even talk about our breast health.

One of the ways that is so healing is to really just start loving ourselves and accepting what we have and the beauty that breasts are. They're all so different, and they're all so beautiful. And just touching them and loving them and getting things moving in there every day is just really so important. So I highly recommend have some sort of breast care practice. I know you have a really lovely e-book on body oiling, and I actually think body oiling is a great way to connect with the breast tissue. And I also have a 30-page e-book that I wrote on lymphatic breast health, and it kind of talks a lot about that.

I think one of the main things for me is to really get in there and to explore. When I first got a lymphatic breast check from my teacher, DeAnna Batdorff from the Dhyana Center, she -- I was just SO amazed at, like, they picked up my whole breast tissue off my breastbone and were, like,

feeling underneath it, and feeling underneath my nipple, and I was just so blown away. I just had never really touched myself like that. And, you know, I've touched my breasts before, but just the way that they were really getting in there and feeling I just kind of had this huge breakdown, and was like "Whoa I'm 27 years old (at the time), and I've been studying natural healing, and how have I never even touched my own breasts like this?"

And it brought up a lot of grief for me, and it brought up a lot of anger, and it brought up a lot of different emotions, but since then it has really inspired me to share this work and to teach women how to touch their breasts. What we're kind of taught is to just gently touch and feel in a circle, like, that's really not always enough. We really want to get in there and massage the tissue and kind of felt underneath the tissue to see what we're feeling for.

Yeah, there's, you know, there's a difference between what a lot of women experience in their breasts is kind of a lumpiness or almost sometimes it can be, like, "ropey" or it feels like fibrous. And a lot of times women are feeling that and that's what they get nervous about because they're feeling lumps in their breasts, and we're taught that lumps immediately mean bad. But, generally, that's cold and dry tissue that our lymph kind of coagulates and can turn kind of lumpy. By doing the breast massage and warming up the breast tissue, and using a gua sha or using your hands and really getting in there and massaging the tissue, we can actually make a lot of change in the tissue and we can break a lot of that up.

**[1:12:28]**

**Anja:** Yeah, there's specific things that we're looking for as far as the more scary lumps in the breasts. I don't know. Do you want me to touch on that?

**Amber:** Sure.

**Anja:** Well, there's really two main things that we're looking for when if something were to be more concerning or we'd want to get further testing. And the first one is like a really hard lump that's

possibly irregular in shape. Like, you can kind of think of like a piece of broken-down piece of pumice or something, where it's not really round or soft. It's just kind of hard. And the thing about cysts or congealed lymph or any of that other stuff is that it's going to one: ebb and flow with your cycle, and two: if you start doing breast massage and start working with it, those things will shift. If you find a hard lump that you're working on your breast tissue, and it's not shifting, and it's not changing, and it's just kind of staying the same, that is something to be concerned about.

And the other thing about those lumps is that they won't have pain. Where, if you find a cyst in your breast -- I don't know if you've ever had a breast cyst -- but they're very painful. It's like a sharp, hot pain. Like, you will probably say "Ow!" and you know. Some of the other lumps we find in our breasts, they might be sore, and that's kind of a sign that there's stagnation in the breast tissue, and that's our lymphatic system speaking to us that we need to do some work. But if we're finding that hard lump that has no pain, and just will not change month-by-month is the same, that's definitely something that we want to go and get checked out further. Oftentimes on women, I've found them right around the areola, like, underneath the nipple, so that's a really good place to check as well.

And then the other thing that we want to look out for, it's kind of, it initially might feel like a cyst. It feels kind of like a water balloon, like, you'll find a lump in your breast that feels kind of balloon-ish, like, tight. But when you're feeling around, if you can kind of feel under it and stuff, it actually will have like four little tentacles which are attaching it to your breast bone. So if there is a lump and it feels kind of like a tight water balloon, and you feel it connected to your breast bone, that can be a tumor. And so that's definitely something that you want to go and get more checked out.

So that's why it's so, so, important that we're touching ourselves every day, and we are, and something shifts, we have the ability to make an informed and empowered decision about what we want to do. There's generally, if we're looking for -- we want to find out more, our options are mammogram, which I know a lot women are not thrilled about and there is radiation. There's



mammogram. There's thermography, which is like a heat scan of the body. And then there's ultrasound.

The one thing that I want to say about that is that I have worked with and spoken to many women who had mammograms, and things didn't come up, but they showed up on thermography, and vice-versa: where people didn't want a mammogram, got thermography, nothing showed, but something showed up on the mammogram.

And so none of these tests are like iron clad. So if you are dealing with wanting to get something checked out more, I really recommend just doing all of them. It's a personal decision that each woman has to make. Ultrasound is a great way to go. A lot of doctors won't give an ultrasound unless you've had a positive mammogram, so you just kind of have to work with and find the right doctor.

Just knowing that sometimes just doing one type of test might not -- if you feel like something is not right, and you get a test, and it's saying everything is fine, and intuitively you feel like something is off, then I always recommend trying a different type of test because I have seen some of those tests not pick up on things.

**Amber:** Wow. That was all **such** good information, Anja. Thank you.

**[1:17:21]**

**Amber:** I want to just echo the idea of becoming familiar with the terrain of your own body. When I started my herbal body oiling practice, which I spoke about at length in a previous episode, I didn't have that as my goal in mind. I just noticed how much herbal body oiling calmed my nervous system down immediately and helped with muscle pain as well. But over the years of doing it, I was like, I am so familiar with the terrain of my body. I know every nook and cranny because I've been trying to get this oil to seep into the skin everywhere, and when I had that lump in my armpit a few years ago, and the intake nurse at the ER was asking me questions, and you know, she got

alarmed when I told her I had a lump in my armpit. She was like, “Any idea how long it’s been there?”

And I was like, “yeah, since yesterday.”

And she was like, “H-how do you know?”

And I was like, “I just know my body. I literally rub my armpit almost every day when I do this herbal body oiling, and it wasn’t there the day before yesterday.” (*both laugh*)

And she was like, “Ooookay.”

So I wasn’t concerned. I knew it wasn’t some longstanding tumor that I had **just** discovered because I had just touched my armpit for the first time. But yeah, I don’t -- while you were talking both of us are like squeezing our boobs, and I can imagine a lot of women listening are doing the same thing. (*Amber laughs*) But I’ve never done that sort of a thorough exam that you were just mentioning. And I’ve seen DeAnna and her helpers do those before at the Women’s Herbal Symposium. It makes me want to get in there more, like, don’t be afraid to touch your own body! Don’t be afraid to explore your own body.

**Anja:** And, you know, a good thing to remember, too, is that if you find pain that’s actually a good sign. It does mean that there’s work to be done, and stuff needs to be worked out and needs to happen, but pain, both of those things that I was talking about that might require looking deeper, both of those don’t have pain. So if you’re finding lumps and they are not painful, that is, like, kind of a flag to watch it for a couple of cycles, see if shifts, see if it changes. But if you’re finding areas and finding bumps and lumps and things and they are sore, or they hurt, then that’s actually a good sign, and that’s your lymphatic system saying, “Hey I really need you to do some work here.”

But those are things that are not as scary. I think it's really important, and I think so many of us are sort of afraid to touch our own bodies. And our breasts deserve as much as our hair, or, you know, we spend time -- or maybe not every woman -- but women spend time doing their makeup or their hair or washing their face, or all these other different things. And if we spent ten minutes a day massaging and rubbing our breasts, it can make a world of difference. I really love doing it in a sauna or in a bath or in a shower once our body is warm; that heat really helps to liquefy the lymph so we can get a lot more work done that way.

**Amber:** And it feels **SO** good too. It feels so good to have your breasts touched in a non-sexual way. As a currently breastfeeding mother and a non-nursing way. We just forget how completely interconnected all parts of our bodies are. And when I'm having back pain, which is pretty frequent, I'll notice that a good breast massage improves my back pain, because it's all connected through there.

**Anja:** Yeah and it's just such a big thing, you know. You just mentioned... breast tissue is so stagnant. Other than foreplay, breastfeeding, or if we have an actual self-care practice around our breasts, like, that tissue does not get movement. And because it's mostly adipose tissue, there's less blood flow bringing fresh oxygenated blood into that area versus a muscle. So there is just naturally more stagnation in that tissue. And unless we're moving it, our breasts **do not** get enough movement, and they need to be rubbed. It's really healing to have them be touched non-sexually. A lot of women don't really know what that is like. And I think it's really empowering and it's really... it's just something that I really hope that this conversation inspires women to get more curious and to learn more breast massage techniques. Just to get in there and touch them and love them.

**[1:22:15]**

**Amber:** Well let's just touch on, too, how fetishized the female breast has become in our culture and how much shame so many of us have around our breasts not looking perfect; not looking like Playboy-perfect, porn-perfect.

And especially, like, when I was growing up, I was born in 1981 -- and this is still very much out there -- but **SO** much through like the 80's and 90's, the only good breasts were like Pamela Anderson's.

*(both laugh)*

And, like, you know, there's definitely backlash now with the internet. There's so many more images out there, but it's still the dominant paradigm. And it's -- I, you know, I had A cups, and I was just so ashamed for so long. Like, "They should be bigger and they should look like that!" And it's taken me a long time to unwind the shame around that. Or even, like, feeling comfortable with my husband seeing them sometimes, I'm like, "NO! Look away!" Which is so silly and embarrassing to admit, especially after breastfeeding, just how the breast tissue changes when you've nursed two kids.

**Anja:** But you know, the great thing is, one thing that my teacher always says, "Literally, our tissue, like, we are meat. Our tissue is meat, and it needs to be tenderized. It needs to be massaged." And through doing this work we can allow so much change in our tissue. Tissue that is more saggy or flaccid or what happens naturally to breasts after breastfeeding, through using a gua sha and doing lymphatic work, we can actually tonify and change our tissue. And it's just a way that we can really become more comfortable and learn to love our bodies.

And when I touched on our breasts being this really intuitive center as women and how shut down that been, I've really found that through the practice of breast massage and getting more movement, we're actually, like, becoming more in tune with this intuitive center that's been so shut down. And so the more work that we do on our breasts, the more that we're unlocking this really big powerful tool we have as women to have this be a very intuitive center in our body, and that we don't need to be so shut down around it. We can just embrace it.

**Amber:** And we can stop slouching over and trying to hide ourselves.

[1:24:45]

**Amber:** Tell the good people what a gua sha is.

**Anja:** So a gua sha in Ayurveda it literally translates “to spoon or scrape the lymph,” and it’s a tool; it’s like a flat tool. It’s also made out of stone. You can find jade ones. I really like wood ones, but it’s kind of like a wooden paddle. And you use it at a 45-degree angle.

**Amber:** -- It’s a little handheld thing.

**Anja:** ... It’s a handheld thing. If, I don’t know. Maybe you can put a link in the show notes or something, but I have in my e-book, there’s pictures of them. So you can see that. And I have them for sale in my online shop. And if you don’t have one, you can use a wooden spoon. It’s great.

**Amber:** You know what else is great that a Chinese medicine practitioner told me? She really prefers lids, like, metal lids from jars. And I have a wooden gua sha from DeAnna, but that really works in a pinch if you have nothing else.

**Anja:** Yeah, a lid is great. You just want to get something. It’s actually interesting: I was surprised that you can actually feel more what’s going on with your tissue using the tool, because of the way that it moves over bumps and lumps, dry, crunchy areas, or, you know...

Our lymph is like a river, so we have some areas that are stagnant, and some areas that are more dry, and some areas that maybe are more inflamed. And there’s going to be different parts of our breasts that feel really different. And that’s part of this work is exploring the terrain of the tissue and, kind of, we want to work all the tissue so it feels similar everywhere.

So yeah, the gua sha is a great tool for breast health. You can look online, or check out my e-book and find more ways that you can use that gua sha on your breasts. But that’s my daily practice is using an herbal body oil. I make a really nice breast oil, and I know you do, as well. And you just rub your breasts with the oil and then get in there with the tool and just move the lymph. Get everything moving. And what you’re really looking for is you want the skin to turn pink, because the lymph feeds into the blood. So once we see that our blood is flowing, we know that our lymph is moving, and we’re always moving towards the heart.

So you can use a gua sha on the whole body, but you would move from your hands to your heart and your feet to your heart, and your head, and like I said, because all of the lymph drains there in our chest, we always -- you know, you can always go back and forth -- but once you finish you always want to be bringing the lymph towards the drains.

**Amber:** That is so true what you said, like, you would think that your hand would be able to feel all the little microregions of your body and of your skin and what’s right beneath the surface when you’re massaging it, but using a gua sha you really can feel more; when the terrain changes, when there’s a little bump or whatever there.

**Anja:** Yeah. It's really, really helpful. So I encourage it.

The reason that I love the wood ones is they last forever. Like, the stone ones are great, but I've broken a handful of them in the shower because they, like, slip off and then they break. So I just like wood because it lasts forever. But like I said, wooden spoon, top of a jar lid, you're using it at that 45-degree angle. And you're just kind of moving back and forth and breaking up crunchies and getting the blood and lymph moving.

And you're really not going to hurt yourself. The biggest thing that might happen if you're really, like, going to town is you might notice that you get what looks like a hickey or, like, a bruise coming up. And what that is is lactic acid that is detoxing out of your tissue. And so the more that you do this, and the more tonified your tissue gets, the less that will happen. But if you're ever using a gua sha and you're really working an area and you're kind of getting what looks like raspberries or hickeys, then that's what that is. And you just want to be careful and not go crazy is you have something to do the next day and you don't want to be covered in these.

*(Amber laughs)*

**Amber:** Oh man. I'm realizing I haven't used my gua sha in months, and I'm just remembering how **good** it feels. So I'm real excited to dig it up.

I think we should wrap up. This was a lot of really good information. We could go SO much longer!

*(Amber laughs)*

**Anja:** I feel like we could talk forever.

*(both laugh)*

**Amber:** I feel like I had **so** many more notes and questions written down, so maybe we'll do it again, or we'll figure something else.

Yeah, tell people where they can find you, and if you have anything coming up.

**Anja:** Yeah, well, I'm actually, I don't have anything coming up the next couple months. I'm kind of taking the winter to work on content and regroup a little bit. But you can find me at [manamedicinals.net](http://manamedicinals.net), and there I have information on my private practice, so I have a private practice. I do wellness mentorship combining herbalism and Ayurveda and functional and integrative medicine. I also have an online apothecary there where I make botanical medicines. And I've got a blog, and I write quite often on my blog about all things women's health and nutrition there.

And also, if you're interested in studying herbalism, and you're wanting to study in person, I am going to be core faculty with the Hawthorne Institute, which is an herb school based out of Southern Oregon. And they have a 450-hour Foundations Herbalism and Ayurveda program. So if you're interested into looking into that, you can Google the Hawthorne Institute and find out more about that.

**Amber:** That's awesome. Okay. Thank you so much, Anja!

**Anja:** Yeah! Thanks so much, Amber. Thanks so much for having me on and I just hope this has been inspiring for people to get out there and touch their boobs.

*(Amber laughs)*

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

**[1:31:35]**

**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 my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and past podcast episodes, and a lot more at [MythicMedicine.love](http://MythicMedicine.love).

While you're there, I invite you to click the purple banner across the top of the page to take my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Plant Familiar?](#)" It's a fun and lighthearted quiz, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with the medicine you are in need of.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at [Patreon.com/MedicineStories](https://Patreon.com/MedicineStories). There's some killer rewards there: exclusive content, access to online courses, free, beautiful, downloadable e-books, coupon codes, giveaways, and just amazing gifts provided by past guests of the podcasts. All of that stuff is at the two dollar a month level.

For a little more, you can access my herbal e-book or my small online course, and that's all there as a thank you, a HUGE thank you from me and from my guests for listening, for supporting this work. I love figuring out what I can gift to people on Patreon. It's so fun. And I love that Patreon makes it so that you can contribute for such a small amount each month.

I'm a crazy busy and overwhelmed mom and adding this project into my life has been a questionable move for sure, but I love doing it, and I love the feedback I get from you all. And I just pray that Patreon allows me the financial wiggle room to keep on doing it while giving back to everyone who is listening.

If you're unable to do that, or if you'd like to support further, I would love it if you would subscribe on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts. And if you would review the podcasts on iTunes, too, it really helps getting it into other ears. It means so much to me when I read those reviews. It's, like, the highlight of my week when I check them and see new ones.

People are amazing. You guys are wonderful. Thank you so much.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her song "Wild Eyes." It's one of my favorite songs of all time. Thank you and I look forward to next time!