



## Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 66 with Charles Eisenstein

The Coronation: Fertile Soil for a New Story

April 14, 2020

[0:00:00]

*(Excerpt from today's show by Charles Eisenstein)*

*It's not a deliverance for humanity, but it is an opportunity for us to no longer blindly and helplessly walk down the road that we've been going down.*

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

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[Intro]

[0:00:20]

**Amber:** Hello friends!

And welcome to the *Medicine Stories* podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth, and what a good time to be doing that.

I am your host, Amber Magnolia Hill. Today I am sharing my interview with Charles Eisenstein.

Charles and I spoke a few months ago, as well. That was Episode 60: *The Boundaries of the Unthinkable* are Wavering, which is very much what's happening right now, right?

So this is probably going to be probably the shortest intro I've ever done because I just want to get right into it. The only thing I have to tell you is that I've recorded a special outro for this episode.

I read, first of all, a post that Stephen Harrod Buhner, previous podcast guest, put up on Facebook a week or so ago. It's his response to the — apparently— barrage of emails he's getting, which I can only imagine, since he's been writing about viruses and viral pandemic possibilities for years. His response to people telling him that the virus has been created by humans, bioengineered — it

goes deep into the larger ecological matrix of life, which is also something that Charles and I speak about.

And then I read a second post, written by someone I don't know, and I've never met. Someone just texted this to me. Her name is Katie Lamont, and just beautiful words about the solution, like, actually, the **ONE** solution "one weird trick", "one solution", to everything that's going on right now. But really, there is one underlying solution that I'm coming back to again, and again, and that many of are being pointed towards as well. And that comes up in this conversation with Charles.

And then finally, I tell you about another podcast episode from another podcast that I have found to be the most helpful for me during this time. So you can stick around after the interview, if you like, to hear those wise words and be pointed in the direction of another really, just like, deep-diving, hard-hitting, but heart-nourishing podcast episode all about what's happening right now with coronavirus and all the societal impacts and ramifications.

So there we go. Without further ado, let's listen to this interview with Charles Eisenstein.

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

## [Interview Begins]

[0:03:02]

**Amber:** Okay. Hi Charles. Welcome back to *Medicine Stories*! I'm happy to see you again.

**Charles:** It's good to be back, **Amber**.

**Amber:** Good. Thank you! *(Amber laughs)*

I was stalking your social media and your website ever since the beginning of the whole coronavirus thing, especially, waiting, you know, and you were quiet. And I was like, "Oh, he's working on something. He's working on something big." And I was really happy when you were. And when you published your essay, *The Coronation*. So we'll be talking about that today, but I just want to start off by asking, like, how are you?

How is your community? How's your town, and how has your life been changed in the last month?

**Charles:** I mean. Not a lot of my life.

When I'm home, I'm not traveling and speaking, a lot of my life is already online. So what's changed is Cary can't go to school (our seven year old son), and it's really hard. Like, it's totally unnatural for a kid to have zero social interaction.

And in this day and age, school is pretty much... like you know, you don't have kids running around outside and playing anymore, which is a whole topic in and of itself that we could talk about. So that's been kind of hard.

My wife, Stella, can't see patients anymore. She's an acupuncturist and healer.

But, you know, I'm not, like, super social anyway. So, like, directly, my life hasn't been impacted except for the fact that I wrote that essay that you were talking about, and now everybody wants me to be on podcasts. (*Amber laughs*)

But you know, that's not — my job is still working, unlike some other people in my life. Like my ex-wife and her husband, he can't go to work. He's not getting paid. So in my sphere it's affecting people, but my own day-to-day life has not been changed that much, actually.

**Amber:** Yeah, same here. We're homebodies. We work from home, and a sensitive introvert, who doesn't like leaving the home much, anyway.

But, of course, like you, the people in my life are being deeply affected. And it's scary, and there's — I feel like — most of the fear and the anxiety I feel is more from the collective than from my own life.

[0:05:39]

**Amber:** So let's start at the end (*Amber laughs*) of your essay, and why did you name it *The Coronation*?

**Charles:** Well, it's the idea that this whole affair, among other things, is kind of an initiation. And it's providing us an explicit choice of something that has been unconscious for a long time, which is basically the direction of our society and our own lives, where we've for a long time, been kind of trapped in the rut or on the road that civilization has been traveling on.

And now, with this interruption in normality, we have what looks like a pause or a reset. And we could continue on the direction that we've been going on, which includes things like the migration of life online. I mean, social distancing, in one form or another, has been happening for a while.

Everything that's happening today is kind of an extreme, or an intensification of trends that are longstanding, but we're being shown it in stark relief.

Do we want to continue on that path, or do we want to go on a different path of solidarity, and mutual care, and what about the homeless, and what about the working class, and what about the prisoners? Is "normal" anything we even want to go back to?

We could go on a different path.

And *The Coronation* is referring to: if we step into this initiation into a different kind of society, we are reorienting toward — well, for one thing — cleaning choice (i.e. sovereignty), where we had not been in sovereignty before, helplessly going on this path. And secondly, the nature of this choice that's available to us is a choice toward service of the collective, service of life on earth, which is what the "true sovereign" serves.

The true sovereign is not in it for himself to dominate and overlord over everybody, but that's why he kneels to receive the crown, kneels to a non-political authority. Traditionally, it's a priest who crowns the king, or maybe a wizard (*Charles laughs*).

So I'm seeing this as it's not a deliverance for humanity, but it is an opportunity for us to no longer blindly and helplessly walk down the road that we've been going down. That's... yeah.

**Amber:** A coronation is, like, a rite of passage, right?

**Charles:** Yeah, it's a step into kingship/queenship sovereignty. A crown. And the "coronavirus", I mean, that word, it's the same word. It's a crown. I guess it's because of the shape of the virus or something. I'm not even sure why it's called coronavirus, but it is one of these kind of poetic suggestions about what this crisis might actually be.

[0:09:16]

**Amber:** So, let's start from a place of not knowing. I keep — I'm sure, same with you — just seeing so many OPINIONS online and people telling us what's happening, and how it is, and what's going on. And I keep coming back to a place of - but we don't know for sure, and I don't know if we ever will know for sure in this age. I'm just gonna read a sentence from the essay:

*I don't really know what is happening. I don't see anyone can, amidst the seething virago of news, fake news, rumors, suppressed information, conspiracy theories, propaganda, and politicized narratives that fill the internet.*

Can we just...

**Charles:** — Hold on a second.

**Amber:** Yeah.

**Charles:** I just found a nasty little tick crawling on me.

**Amber:** Oh no!

**Charles:** So I'm gonna squash that little guy...

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

**Charles:** Speaking of compassion and solidarity, bye bye. (*Amber laughs*)

Okay, there we are. Sorry about that. I was distracted there.

**Amber:** Yeah, as you should have been!

There's another pathogen, right? An ecosystem disruptor.

**Charles:** Yeah, for many people this has been, yeah, tremendous disruption. Like, you can't go outside anymore, and yeah. Well, the Lyme bacteria is having effects way beyond the direct effects on health. It's part of, actually, I think it's the same initiation, you know? Because it asks us actually to go deeper than "Here's another enemy to fight."

So anyway, to go back to the quote you were... you recited.

[0:11:05]

**Charles:** Yeah, I mean, I really do not know what's going on.

Sometimes I read some of the theories that people call "conspiracy theories" and I'm like, wow, there's something here, and there's something that doesn't add up. And then, you know, I'll... I don't think the epidemic is fake. People are definitely getting sick in ways they weren't before. Something's happening. I think! (*both laugh*) I'm pretty sure it's not "nothing."

Is it as big and scary as we've been told?

I don't know. Because if it **isn't** as big and scary as we've been told, we wouldn't know that because of the way the media operates and the way the medical and healthcare establishment is trained to see threats. And the traumatic legacy of infectious disease in humanity.

So I really don't know what's going on, and it's what brought me to wanting to respond in a way that makes sense, no matter which narrative is true.

So I just don't know. I mean, I think what's going to happen, after whatever period of time, the most alarming predictions will not have come true. And some people will say, "That's because our quarantines and controls worked." And other people are going to say, "Well, that's because it was never so bad to begin with." And so this question of "Who was right, afterall?" may never get resolved.

And this is not just along this issue, the same dynamic of an official narrative, and dissident opinions, and the inability of both sides to agree on what a basic fact is, what's a reliable source of facts from which we can argue — people don't even agree on that in politics, around climate change, around 9/11. There's so many events that it's almost like reality is bifurcating into two story lines.

[0:13:51]

**Amber:** If not more. And this is something I think about all the time that's getting us into bigger philosophical question, but it's like we used to know, or did we?

A couple years ago I read a book called *The Great Influenza* about the new influenza pandemic of 1918 'cause I've always been really interested in viral pandemics. The author of that book thinks he knows, and reading that book, I think I know what happened during that. Collectively, I think there was a long period of time where humans did think that we understood, and we had facts, and we could make sense of things. And that just feels gone to us now. Right?

Did we actually used to know things? Has the fabric of reality actually changed or has our understanding of things changed?

**Charles:** That's another thing that we don't know. (*Amber laughs*) But it does bring up a deeper philosophical question that — what is the relationship between perception and reality, or between belief and reality?

Traditionally, it was that there was reality out there, and we formed beliefs about reality. Now, we're starting to entertain the idea that our beliefs affect reality in some way. And there's the whatever-law-of-attraction-New Age belief that beliefs **create** reality. I think the truth cannot be that simple because it's also true that reality creates beliefs.

So what I can say is there's an intimate relationship between inner and outer. It isn't just one way, and that we are at the doorstep of a tremendous mystery, and that it's not just a philosophical problem. Because when we realize the story we tell about the world changes the world, then we have to ask what story do we want to tell? Or what story do we want to step into that maybe is already there?

It's not that we make up stories or make up what reality is, but it opens up a whole universe of questions.

I mean, you can go into all kinds of details about that. Like, what does science become when we admit the possibility that the intention behind an experiment influences the result of the experiment, rather than the scientific methods postulate: that there's an external reality that we are querying through the experimental method? Like, maybe if you even perform an experiment, it changes the reality that you're experimenting upon. And how does it change it?

It's not like you always get the result that you were anticipating; people get surprising results sometimes, so it can't be that simple. But what is it?

**[0:17:10]**

**Charles:** This is just a little, one little facet of the mystery that's in front of us, and it seems to be coming up acutely now as it's right in our face, you know.

Do you do social distancing or not? If you believe the official narrative, then yeah! Not only would you be risking yourself, but you're going to be risking other people's lives, too. And if you reject that, the official narrative, and you don't do social distancing, and if the official narrative is not true... I mean, I'm not going to go into all of the alternatives to it, but one of them would be: here you are complying with a program of totalitarian control that has created or taken advantage of a virus, that isn't actually that dangerous, so that everybody willingly goes along with their own oppression.

Like, there's a whole narrative there. I'm just looking at all these. And like you were saying, reading this guy, he "knows." I'm just, as I sample the different narratives and what state of being it puts me into, I just get less and less sure.

Does this narrative appeal to me because it's more coherent and rational? Or is it because it resonates with a part of myself that seeks comfort or seeks security or seeks stability?

And I'm really in a really agnostic place right now.

**[0:19:05]**

**Amber:** Yeah. Let's touch more on this impulse toward control, and on various conspiracy theories floating around about that.

What I always come back to when I'm reading different conspiracy theories is there's some truth in them. But is the truth that a bunch of slimy, old, white dudes got in a room together and decided this is how this is going to play out? Or is it the — as you called it — the “tilt of civilization” been going a certain way for so long, that this is sort of the inevitable end product of that, and then the people in power see they're in and see how they can use that for what's going on?

You write about this really beautifully in the essay.

So yeah, just tell us about civilization's ongoing impulse toward tighter control and ever more restrictions in the name of keeping us all safe, and how this pandemic falls into that greater narrative.

**Charles:** Yeah, you know, I tend to be skeptical of conspiracy theories.

As Bertrand Russell, I think it was, said, “They don't leave enough room for ordinary human folly.”

**Amber:** Yeah.

**Charles:** And they posit this kabbal that are internally, highly disciplined. They must get along with each other really well and cooperate with each other really well for them to perpetrate such evil plot over so many hundreds of years.

**Amber:** (*Amber laughs*) Right. And nothing ever goes wrong. It's just... yeah.

**Charles:** Like, if they're that disciplined, what, did they did counsel training with GG Coyle? Did they do non-violent communication training with Marshall Rosenberg? HOW is it that they are able to get along much better than people...

**Amber:** Yeah, especially if they're like power-hungry narcissists already, what? They're not trying to fuck each other over in this? (*Amber laughs*)

**Charles:** Exactly. Yeah, so that's one thing.

And also just the idea that the world is that controllable.

**Amber:** Yeah, there's no chaos.

**Charles:** And that, therefore, if something bad happens, then there's someone to blame. That's kind of the mindset of modern medicine's approach to pathologic germ theory. “If you're sick there must be something making you sick.

So let's find that and control it: preferably a bacteria we already know how to kill, or maybe a virus we know how to suppress, or some body process that's gone awry and we can control that pharmaceutically or surgically.

[0:21:40]

**Charles:** So that's what we're comfortable with, and that's part of the tilt of civilization. We're comfortable with a problem that presents us with an enemy.

So the mindset of a conspiracy theory is kind of the same. It's like, "Here's the bad guy. Here's the explanation. Here's the thing that we can fight against, win over, dominate, suppress, et cetera, in order to heal the situation."

And I think that sometimes that is the productive way to look at things, but we tend to overextend, overapply that way of dealing with a problem and just apply it to everything so that improving agriculture becomes finding better ways to kill weeds and kill insects. Improving America's security means finding better ways to exert full-spectrum dominance and kill anybody who's going to attack us. Protecting the body means — it's not just in conventional medicine. There's "Oh, it's all about parasites" or "Find the one thing to attack."

And in politics, too, like, "Oh, who's the bad guy here that's causing the problem? Maybe it's Vladimir Putin. There. Finally. Now I understand why American democracy is decaying. Here's the bad guy!"

Like, that whole mindset is part of the pattern that blinds us to the more complex matrix of causes.

Even a viral infection like this, we could ask: What makes someone susceptible to the virus? What are the conditions? Why are so many people so immune-compromised and sick already? I mean, most people who died from coronavirus were already very sick.

And so we can go into terrain theory, which sees germs, like bacteria and viruses, pathogenic bacteria and viruses, as symptoms of the breeding ground for them; symptoms of an unhealthy body ecology, perhaps, or unhealthy emotional ecology, or a body that's been harmed by 5G radiation or something like that.

And so, it doesn't discount completely the role of a virus, but it takes in a much bigger picture, and it allows us to address situations that are not, actually, caused by a "bad guy" or where the bad guy is just a symptom, like terrorism. Is the problem that all of a sudden, out of the blue, decided to become terrorists? If so, 'cause why? Because they're bad? If that's true, then the solution is indeed to kill them or imprison or something like that.

But if we broaden our view and say, "Well, what are the breeding grounds for terrorists? What situation do they, in what situation can they gain traction?" Then we are having access to responses that aren't just about killing somebody.

Same thing with health, and this is one thing that troubled me with the COVID epidemic is, like, there's reams of research about everything from elderberry extract to medicinal mushrooms to N.A.C., these supplements and things that are documented to substantially boost the immune system against flu-like illnesses. Not a word. Is the CDC telling people to do these, and try to make them available to everybody? No! It's totally off the radar.

I see this is part of the initiation, possibly. That, instead of giving us a new enemy, it could give us pause to expand the scope of our vision, and entertain responses other than fighting, controlling, and dominating, and insulating, and distancing, and separating.



**Amber:** Yeah, it's an opportunity to have our illusory beliefs crumble which is something that we need at this time.

[0:26:53]

**Amber:** Could we talk a little bit more about "Our civilization's established institutions being increasingly helpless to meet the challenges of our time" — so, all the different challenges beyond coronavirus right now — and "how they welcome this challenge that they can finally meet?"

**Charles:** Yeah, I'm not saying that anybody is actually happy that coronavirus is happening, but there is a comfort level with a crisis that does very much seem to be caused by a "bad guy" that's not a human, but a virus. Whereas, conditions that are killing people, more people than coronavirus will, I would hazard to guess.

I mentioned in the essay hunger. Five million children a year, dying of malnutrition. These are children. Whereas, coronavirus is killing mostly — not all, this is important to realize. It's a real thing — but mostly killing people in their 70s and 80s. The five million is, what, 50 times more than coronavirus has killed so far. Every year dying of malnutrition: Five million children.

But we don't really know what to do about that. There's nothing.

You can't fight hunger because it's created by an entire system, an entire money system, an entire economic system, an entire agricultural system, the displacement of people from land. There's just so many factors playing into it that intimately involve ourselves in the affluent countries that you can't. It's not like there's this army of evil warlords going around, taking food from people, and that's why they're starving. And if we just killed the warlords, then they would have enough food. It's not a problem like that.

So we don't really know what to do. And so we kind of just, you know, keep going as if it weren't happening.

Same thing that I mentioned in the essay, like autoimmunity, which is an epidemic that's affecting tens of millions of people. Addiction: opioid addiction and other addiction. Depression: I don't know how many people are clinically depressed, but it's like more than 10% of the population. Suicide, which has been going up by double digits every decade.

We don't know what to do about these things because there's no perpetrator that can be easily identified as separate from ourselves. So we don't do anything. No one's saying, "Oh my God! Five million children a year! We have to change everything because this is unacceptable!!"

We don't change anything for that, yet we're changing everything, like, tremendous mobilization from government on down to individuals, in response to coronavirus.

And my hope is that maybe, after it is over, if it is ever over, we'll say, "Wow. If we could change that much for this crisis, maybe these other unsolvable crises that are actually intolerable, and that we're actually becoming more aware of as the empathy spreads along with the fear, maybe these are solvable, too. Maybe we can make gigantic changes and choose a better world."

That's my hope, and that's what the coronation is. That's what the initiation is.

It's into greater power and sovereignty, instead of helplessness; instead of being ruled over by circumstances that we take as unalterable, to come into the seat of sovereignty and say, "When humans, when we forge common agreements and are united in common cause, we can do anything."

So, knowing that, what shall we do?

**[0:31:18]**

**Amber:** Yeah, maybe the destabilizing and chaotic times we're living through will just reset (*Amber laughs*) **everything**. Just reset everything!

I mean, you wrote at the beginning of the essay about humanity being at a crossroads right now, and how you've been waiting for a long time, as have so many of us, for something like this to happen. We've known. We've known we were on an unsustainable path and something big was going to come along. A lot of people were not thinking it would be a viral pandemic, but a lot of people were, and almost wanting it. Like, we need something to shake up if we're going to change in time.

Do you think this is it?

**Charles:** I think it's one of many. I think we're undergoing an initiatory ordeal, and it's definitely a new phase of this rite of passage that we may or may not come through successfully. But we're going to see a lot of repercussions from this that might be worse than the suffering caused directly by the virus. The economic repercussions, for example. The dislocation. The food shortages, perhaps. I was just reading an article today about the disruptions in the food supply that haven't really felt the effects yet.

But, you know, who knows what's going to happen?

Financial collapse, or all of the small businesses whose operations are suspended right now, how many of them are actually going to be able to recover? How many of the yoga studios and cafes and all the small businesses where people gather?

This new normal of you're never with other people, people are saying, "Well, that can only be temporary" but we've been going in this direction for a long time. Maybe this is just an accelerant toward a destination that we've always been going toward, and maybe people will... like, do you actually ever need to interact with anybody in the flesh? We're getting along fine without it. Things get delivered to your house. Like, couldn't we just have a robotified distribution system, where you never actually have to be with anybody? Where you have all your interactions like we're having now over the internet? Why do we ever have to go back to that, to a world of hugs and gatherings, and play in community together?

Maybe we have to consciously choose to go back to that. And that means, then the next question is, because that's what I want. I don't want to live to minimize infectious disease, and have the hug and the handshake be something that's only in the history books. I want — I'm willing to — endure a little higher risk to do a lot of things in my life. I don't want to put others at risk, so this involves a social conversation about values.

[0:35:06]

**Charles:** But if we are going to choose a different path than the direction we've been going, where is that new choice going to come from? What conditions, what psychic conditions, what ideological conditions have to change for us to reverse this course of separation and take a new turn, reverse this course of control, this civilization of reflexive control?

It's all part of the same mentality. What's it going to take for us to take a different path? What is that choice? What — to value something besides prolonging life and minimizing risk, and instead, to pursue values like exploration, discovery, play, challenging of limits, pushing boundaries, like those kind of values; the things that send people off on adventures, that make people attracted to challenges. The child, wandering a little bit past, where he's wandering into new territory. That growth process, that's something you can value instead of minimizing risk.

So this is really asking us, "Who do we want to be? What is important to us?"

And I think, at bottom, as long as we are confined within the story of separation that tells us that we are a separate individual in a world of "other", in an objective universe that is outside of ourselves, fundamentally outside of ourselves, that there is a mysterious, intimate relationship between self and other, between inner and outer, between belief and reality — as long as we live in that, the story of the separate self, then, of course: the preservation of that self, because that's all there is. This is all I am.

From that story, our entire system of control and the trajectory toward distance, isolation, separation, lockdown, that would be inevitable. All that would be inevitable as long as we are fundamentally, primarily, operating from the story of separation.

Therefore, if we want to choose differently, we need to be carriers of a different story. And that might mean actually articulating a different story of interconnection, interbeing, ecology, relational being. But more important than that, it means to be vessels, to be carriers of experiences that violate the story of separation and offer an alternative.

For example, to be an agent of the story of "We're in this together," the story of "People are generous," you can propagate that story by being generous, by being kind, by being empathic, by taking care of others, by exemplifying not just looking out for yourself to make sure you're going to be okay even if everybody else isn't. That's called hoarding: to make sure I'm gonna be okay, and who cares about everybody else?

This coronavirus is facing us with these choices in really practical ways:

What do we radiate out into the world?

What we radiate out in these moments becomes the default. It becomes a suggestion to others about what a human being is and how to live, which means that we're living in a very potent moment.

[0:39:35]

**Amber:** Yeah. This civilizational bent toward control that you talk about is all in the name of, with the goal of, keeping us perpetually safe, which is ridiculous because we're all going die, right? The

ultimate goal of trying to stay perpetually safe is to never die, to keep that separate self intact indefinitely.

I really was grateful that you talked about death in the essay, because here's this looming thing. Here's the worst case outcome of this virus, and it's something that terrifies most humans. At least at times, and especially here in America, we deny death. We don't want to look at death. We don't talk about Death. You write:

*In the world of the separate self, death is the ultimate catastrophe.*

It seems like we can look at this as a lesson in death-acceptance and learning to die well, collectively. And looking at, if we get through this and we go back to business-as-usual, do you share this fear that perhaps this ends, and it will be like after World War II when everyone is like, "Woohoo!" and then the Boom Generation takes off, and maybe we'll rebound even harder to our old ways after this because people are so celebratory and happy that they can live again in the way that they were used to?

Anyway. I'm just thinking of this as, like, a collective lesson in dying well.

**Charles:** Yeah, our civilization is driven by a fundamental delusion. Even the words: "Saving Lives" what that actually means is postponing death. Everyone's going to die, and that is, as you quoted there, death is the ultimate catastrophe for the separate self. It's almost too bad to think about which is why our society does its best not to think about it; to hide it away and to deny it.

When the fact of death is fully incorporated into one's consciousness, then a lot of the behaviors that define our civilization no longer make sense. If you know you're going to die, then what's the purpose of life? You can't survive life. So what else becomes important then? Your contribution. Maybe it's what outlives you that becomes more important. Maybe — and the more that we realize that our being-ness is not confined to these "skin-encapsulated egos," as Alan Watts put it, but that who we are is a holographic mirror of everybody else and everything else, then we don't know.

[0:43:04]

**Charles:** I mean, I don't know what my experience, my subjective experience, will be after I die. My upbringing taught me it would be nothing. The candle flame goes out. Gone.

But most human beings whoever lived on earth did not believe that. Is it that modern science has enabled us to transcend such primitive superstitions and now we know? I don't think so. I just have met too many people who have had near-death experiences, and there's all this reincarnation research, and I mean, who knows? I don't know. But I do know that this story of the separate self being annihilated at death is a story, and maybe it carries truth. I don't know to what degree.

Anyway, one thing that I do know is that the more — I'm not saying forget about safety and be reckless — but I'm saying that the more I am governed by security (*Charles clears his throat*), the more that I am governed by security, the more anemic my life becomes. Like, the less alive I am when I'm just trying to stay safe. I mean, to take it to an extreme, let's just stay indoors all the time.

Risk minimization is no way to live. So it's ironic that aversion of death, fear of death, is actually fear of life. It's actually an aversion to life, to being fully alive, because it puts survival, security,

comfort, et cetera, over so many other experiences that are only available when we step into the unknown. It's almost autology. You're not going to have a new experience if you don't step into the unknown. And the unknown is fundamentally risky.

**And I'm seeing over my lifetime this mania for safety just taking over everything to the point where, as I mentioned at the beginning, like, kids are not playing outside anymore and this did not just start with coronavirus. This has been progressively happening over my entire lifetime. Even starting before my lifetime, even when I was a kid, you know, people were starting to stay inside and watch cartoons.**

**When my father was a kid, there wasn't TV. They were outside** all the freaking time, playing marbles, playing hopscotch, playing cops and robbers. Like, a child's life was one huge collective game with all the other kids. There was still some of that when I was a kid. Very little of it now.

In fact, the things that I did when I was a kid, if I let my kids do those, CPS could come to my house and take the kids away. Like, "You left them unsupervised?! You bad parent!" Yeah, actually, it is more dangerous to let them be unsupervised, let them encounter the dangers of the world, and thereby, develop their judgement and their confidence that they can take care of themselves instead of always staying under the protective safe wing of the parent.

It is riskier, but is it the most important thing that they simply make it to their death bed? I mean, it's going to happen anyway. It's just tremendous delusion.

**[0:46:54]**

**Charles:** This is coming up so clearly when people face the choice: Do I go on a respirator in an ICU, and be essentially tortured with a machine breathing for me that I can't unhook myself from until I die? Or do I die three weeks sooner with my loved ones around me? Instead of — as Lisa Rankin puts it — "Instead of saying goodbye to your loved ones on Facetime" if at all?

This is the kind of thing we need to be talking about now as death is put in our face. What it says is how do we want to live, and how do we want to die? And any response to COVID that doesn't go into those questions is a recipe for more of the same. You know? Let's take this opportunity and go deep.

Who do we want to be? How do we want to live?

**Amber:** Yeah. The one question that sits with me often — that I don't think I've ever shared about before because I know how painful it is for other people to hear it and think of this, too, and in light of everything happening in the world, climate change and everything else, long before COVID — is:

How do I want my children to die? What kind of world and society are we creating for them?

**Charles:** Yeah. It's been so painful to watch my youngest son do his best without playmates. For weeks and weeks now, he's by himself. Like, since when has that happened in the history of humanity? It's not natural.

I do my best. I played with him. That's how I got that tick, you know, that was crawling on my computer. I was playing with him outside. We were rolling around outside.

Yeah, I just... As soon as I feel pretty hopeless about the direction that things are going, but I recognize that the hopelessness, too, is based on a story of separation that names our choices as futile. It says, "You can't do anything about it because you're just a separate self."

But when we understand that there is this intimate, mysterious connection between self and cosmos, then no longer do we think that our — that we are powerless — and our decisions don't matter; the small ones, the invisible ones.

**[0:50:09]**

And that knowing is lodged in all of our hearts.

We all have moments that feel so important and so significant, even though the mind says, "Oh, you know, what does it matter when the sun is going to go red giant in five million years anyway?" (*Charles laughs*) Just to take an extreme example. What does it matter in the face of climate change? What does it matter in the face of whatever global crisis is happening?

The mind can't understand what the heart knows: that we are powerful beings, and that every act has cosmic significance. The heart knows that and can feel it in certain situations, where you know a lot is riding on this choice.

It feels sacred; that moment.

So we all know this: that we're powerless. And maybe as the conditioning circumstances of our culture are temporarily on pause (some of them. Some of them are in overdrive, actually, but some of them are on pause), maybe we can recover some of this primordial knowing of our own power.

**Amber:** Amen.

**[0:51:32]**

**Amber:** So as we, hopefully, are moving further out of the story of separation that has dominated for centuries now, and into the story of inter-being, I was struck by this idea in relation to coronavirus, and to health in general, and whatever other viral pandemics might come our way, that the deterioration in immunity caused by excessive hygiene and social distancing is something to think about.

**Charles:** Yeah, that irony — that all of our efforts to control and to be healthier through isolation and through distancing and domination and insulation, and all of that — it won't even achieve that goal.

Maybe in the short term fewer people will die and we'll be safer. But in the long term, as, like, a general practice, excessive... I mean, there was an article about this I might have cited in the essay about "Is hygiene making us sick?"

When you're not getting your influx of bacteria and microorganisms into your body through touching your face, through having your hands dirty, through being with other people, through traditional eating and fermented foods, like, we're not interacting with the wild world, and we're instead separating ourselves, then we're like a potted plant.

How healthy is a potted plant if you give it just a little too much water or not quite enough water, or then the mites come and attack it or whatever? Potted plants are fragile, compared to a dandelion in a field, which is almost unkillable. Like, that real health comes from community.

Same with mental health. It is the biggest predictor of — this is another statistic I read on Lisa Rankin's blog — that loneliness is a bigger predictor of death than smoking, drinking, anything else.

So, it may seem like we are protecting ourselves with social distancing, and I can understand the arguments for doing it in the short term: to flatten the curve and so forth, but like so much else, it is an illusion that we can thrive in isolation because it is an illusion that we are really separate from the world.

**[0:54:24]**

**Amber:** Yeah, back to the hoarding example:

When the wildfires really started hitting close to home here in Northern California in 2017, we kind of started looking at prepping, and like, "Okay, what are all these crazy preppers talking about?" And for a good six months we were diving into that world (*Amber laughs*), and getting more and more anxious! And starting to have some supplies on hand, but realizing, "We're not going to survive and sort of post-apocalyptic world on our own. You know, the four of us here in this house. It's never going to happen. It has to be in community that we survive anything that's going to be thrown our way."

**Charles:** Right, so there is a sort of prepping for that, which is that you prepare to be of good use to the community. You prepare to take care of other people.

Yeah, I think there's nothing wrong with keeping a couple weeks' supplies on hand.

**Amber:** Yeah.

**Charles:** That might, in case there's somebody with none, you could share.

But yeah, the idea of, like, the bunker mentality, that's not going to work, unless you want to keep a lot of guns. Because if you're in your bunker with your supplies, and people don't have any out there, they're going to come and take them. And the only way that they're not going to take them is if they're your friends, and you're taking care of each other.

And then that takes us back to community.

That's the only insurance policy.

**Amber:** Right.

**Charles:** This is the same principle. That it may seem that hoarding and controlling and keeping for yourself is the path to wealth, and we have a system that seems to verify that, but it's temporary. We could face financial collapse. We could face hyperinflation. We could face seizure of assets.

And then, your investment portfolio would be worthless. What will be... that will not be wealth anymore — what will be wealth is your relationships.

So if you've been generous for your whole life, that is a bank account that cannot be extinguished through hyperinflation or seizure of assets or anything like that, financial collapse.

It's actually much more secure to embrace our inter-beingness and step into the world of taking care of each other. Stepping into community: that's the best insurance policy.

**Amber:** Yeah, I'm gonna add to that: tending our relationships with other humans, and tending our relationships with the earth outside our door and the plants and the soil, and growing food for ourselves, yes, but growing food for others who might be in need. Just extending that idea beyond the human realm.

[0:57:41]

**Amber:** Just want to tie it back into the tick and this proliferation of disease-carrying ticks, proliferation of novel and rapidly mutating viruses.

This is all coming out of the matrix of ecological instability on the planet. And (*Amber sighs*) there's ... we don't know what's next. We're just living in such this moment of not knowing, but such a moment of, like you said, potential change.

And I really, I'm heartened by this idea that you wrote about in the essay that "Phenomenally rapid change is possible." And we're seeing that, right, with the super-reduced pollution levels in China, and it just is a really hopeful, I'm holding that in my heart, and I'm living that story.

**Charles:** Yeah, we are seeing phenomenal change in a very short amount of time. And that was what I was saying before. Can we apply that power to these other crises that are facing the planet?

The ecological crisis, the ticks, like, why are there so many ticks all of a sudden? When I was a kid, you could lie down in the meadow, and you wouldn't get a single tick. Now, if you do that, you're crawling with them. Why? I don't think that this is another situation where you can't necessarily identify a "bad guy" to explain it, but it could be because of the overgrowth of deer populations that strip the understory that would otherwise provide habitat for birds, ground birds, that would eat the ticks.

Or it could be because neonicotinoids, pesticides that are destroying insect and bird populations. Or it could be because of the extinguishing of apex predators in the Eastern forests that have these cascading, ripple effects throughout the entire ecosystem. Or it could be because of changing weather patterns that are caused by greenhouse gases and deforestation.

I mean, I think we talked about this before. I think that the conventional climate narrative obscures a lot of the other causes of climate and ecological disruption, but who knows what's causing this? But it is a symptom of disruption. Like, if one thing explodes into overgrowth, that means there's a disruption happening.

Just like if you disrupt the soil and plow up the soil, you have an explosion of weeds, and they're there for a reason. So this...



[1:00:45]

**Charles:** When ecosystems get simplified, then they respond with a proliferation of certain species that are actually trying to bring it back into equilibrium.

And it's interesting to me, and a sign of deeper intelligence, that a lot of times the species that explodes is something noxious to humans: jellyfish, ticks, this toxic seaweed in Australia. I had some more examples that I could think of — poison ivy, that's like rampant. Like, when I was a kid, you rarely saw. There was poison ivy, but now there's, like, whole forests overgrown with it. So it's kind of, maybe it's nature saying, "We need to take a little break here. Keep out."

But really, the invitation is to step — and this is the same pattern — to step into service of life. That's the invitation that coronavirus is giving us, as well. To step into "we need each other." To step into "we take care of each other." To step into solidarity. This is a part — this is why I say this is just one of a number initiatory crises that we're going to face. Each one of them giving us a different flavor of the same invitation, which is to step in to care for the other.

[1:02:23]

**Amber:** Yeah. Okay. Thank you, Charles.

People can find and read the essay, *The Coronation*, at [CharlesEisenstein.org](http://CharlesEisenstein.org), and you have promised to continue writing about what is going on, yeah?

**Charles:** Oh, you know, sometimes I'm just like, reluctant to add to the pile of words out there.

*(Amber laughs)*

But yeah, I'll... the situation is changing so much that I'll probably be called to write on it again.

**Amber:** Yeah, well your "pile of words" is really a light in a confusing darkness, so thank you.

**Charles:** Yeah, thanks for saying that Amber. How kind of you.

**Amber:** It's true.

*[Interview Ends]*

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[Outro]

[1:03:09]

**Amber:** Okay, as promised, here are these two pieces of writing, followed by a recommendation for my favorite podcast to come out of all of this (except for the one that you just listened to, of course).

Okay, so Stephen Buhner, who was my guest on Episode 8 of this podcast, posted the following words on Facebook. I don't know, last week sometime, early April. I'm skipping the first paragraph

on which he's writing about how people keep emailing him various conspiracy theories, especially about the coronavirus being bioengineered by humans to kill massive amounts of people.

*I've been teaching about microbial organisms for 30 years, writing about them for 20, and going really complex for 10. The beliefs that these are engineered bio-weapons, comes from a number of psychological roots. I understand them and why they get activated.*

*It is true that the powerful keep most of us out of the loop, initiate actions that affect all of us negatively from time to time, while denying responsibility, and don't really care all that much for the common people.*

*What else is new? This has always been true.*

*That plays a part that organisms are being bioengineered, but I think the stronger influence is simply our unwarranted belief that life is supposed to be safe (it isn't), and the natural world is some sort of Disney or parkland background to our lives. It isn't.*

*The truth is that microbial organisms are tightly interwoven into the ecological fabric on this planet, and on this planet there is no escape from global ecology.*

*Very few people understand what the ecological underpinnings of life are, or how far astray the human species has gone from any kind of sustainable habitation of this planet. This virus, and a great many other things, are trying to explain our error to us. They will get more insistent as time goes on.*

*Our technology, which comes out of the discoveries of a science that believes that dissection of the world is a legitimate approach, and our increasing population, which has come from a medical system that takes credit for the good things it does, and ignores the ecological ramifications of its actions, has put unsustainable pressure on the ecological systems of the planet. Under that pressure, the ecological systems of the planet are beginning to fail.*

*One of the effects of that is the emergence into the human population of pandemic diseases. I, and others, who are knowledgeable in this area, have been warning about this for 30 years. We are not immune from the ecological impact of our species' actions. We are ecological beings on an ecological planet, and our belief in American exceptionalism is unfounded.*

*Microbes are some four billion years old. Despite what most of us have been taught, and what most doctors and some scientists still believe, they are highly intelligent, are sophisticated tool-users and innovators, possess language, culture, and are a great deal more sophisticated at what they are doing than we are, and, for sure, our medical systems, which are, for the most part, based on inaccurate assumptions on the nature of disease and microbial pathogens, and have little to no understanding of ecology.*

*In the 1950s we started a pharmaceutical war with intelligent life forms far older than our own, and who have survived challenges far greater than our current ecological mess. These organisms are arising from their ecological background and entering our species simply*

*because there are too many of us, and we have disturbed the ecological balance of the planet.*

*To them, we are no different than a deer or a bird. We are, in fact, prey. We always have been. It is just that we have come to believe that we are not, and by virtue of our intelligence, should not be.*

*The great teaching of our time — despite the pain we are experiencing now, each of us will, as I have already, lose people we love. — is the way we are going about things much change. It is no longer possible to continue as we have been. Each ecological response after this one is almost certainly going to be more extreme than the last if we continue this way.*

*In a sense, you could say that this virus is “bioengineered”, but it has been bioengineered by the ecological fabric of the planet, not people. The lesson here is that there are limits to our behavior that cannot be exceeded without consequences. It is a hard lesson, but one we desperately need to learn.*

*Our children deserve the effort it will take to learn this, as do their children, as do all our kindred life forms on this planet, and their children.*

*In the Spirit of the Plants,*

*Stephen Harrod Buhner*

**[1:07:49]**

**Amber:** The second piece is something that a friend texted me right before I sat down to record this outro, to record Stephen’s words, and I love it. I love it. I had actually just put up an Instagram post, saying something very similar, but the way she said it is much more beautiful and poetic.

So this was written by someone named Katie LaMonte. I don’t know her. I have not seen where she originally posted it. I’ll try to find that before this comes out so I can link to it in the show notes. I’ll link to Buhner’s piece, too.

What she wrote was:

*If you believe this virus was spread human-to-human, the antidote is building the immune system with eating plants and natural medicines, and sitting in nature, alone or with your immediate family, soaking up Vitamin D and sunshine.*

(Which is going to be the subject of the next podcast, by the way.)

*If you believe that this virus is symptoms of 5G exposure, then the antidote is sitting in nature, connecting to mother nature, building your immunity with eating plants and natural medicines, submerging yourself in water and dirt.*

*If you believe this is all a hoax, and you just need to sit back, while Q saves us all, then the answer is sitting in nature, building a garden for the new earth, communing with your*

*divine source, eating plants and natural medicines that strengthen your connection and open your channel to the new earth frequency. Ascend with her.*

*If you believe the economy is collapsing, and authoritarian dictatorship is imminent, the most radical thing you can do in protest is build a garden, releasing dependency on the system.*

*If you believe that Mother Earth is mad at us and purging the human race, the answer is to go outside and listen. Build a garden. Align with her.*

*The answer is always nature. Always. We do not have to argue about the why. The antidote is obvious: alignment with Mother Nature, with our source of nurturance, remembering everything we use and need comes from her.*

*Give thanks. Humble. Slow down. Observe. Listen.*

- Katie LaMonte

**[1:10:01]**

**Amber:** And finally, the podcast episode that has just been blowing my mind and nurturing my heart through all this is — you won't be surprised to hear me say — an interview with Dr. Zach Bush, and it was on the Rich Roll podcast. I believe it's his third appearance on that one, but this one is entitled *A Pandemic of Possibility*.

And I just appreciate everything they talk about in there, but especially the end, when Dr. Bush has a specific message for people in the frontlines, in the hospitals, and healthcare workers, that's specifically looking at death and dying well, and helping others to die well, and embracing the teaching of that and the teaching of this time.

I'm positive, if you're still listening to this, then you've enjoyed the words you've heard so far, and you will take to heart Rich and Zach's words on that episode as well.

I'll put it in the show notes, as well as the link to Charles' essay, *The Coronation*, so you can really dive deeper into everything that we talked about during the interview.

Thanks for listening.

I love you guys, and I hope you're well.

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

**[Closing ]**

**[1:11:23]**

**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://MythicMedicine.love). 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://MythicMedicine.love).

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" 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 and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

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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!