



Dr. Keesha Ewers: Welcome to The Woman's Vitality Summit. This Dr. Keesha Ewers, your host and I am very excited to be interviewing my good friend Mary Agnes Anta... I am going to have to do that over. Antanopolis What a mouthful.

Mary Agnes: [laughs] I just go by Mary Agnes.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Welcome to the Woman's Vitality Summit: Caring for yourself Body and Soul. This is Dr. Keesha Ewers, your host and I have the blessing and the honor of interviewing my dear friend Mary Agnes Antanopolis. She is a social media strategist and expert who attract media strategists and social experts themselves for her expert training along with tons of authors and writers. Why? Because she entered social media five years ago as a vehicle to build her brand and her audience, then for the clients she has worked with like Jack Hanfield, Libby Gill, Christine Comofor and a dozen other Amazon and New York Times Best Sellers as well as thousands of other clients. Mary Agnes does all of this with what many people think of as a crippling issue. It's called bipolar disorder. She's an inspiration for all of us because of her ability to manage this mental health issue with grace and clarity of purpose. Welcome to the summit, Mary Agnes.

Mary Agnes: Thank you, Lisa, thank you so much. I am a little nervous [laughs].

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You know, I realize this is the very first time you ever talked publicly about this and I really want to commend you for that. It shows so much courage that you are able to do this and the reason I wanted you to be because this summit is for women about vitality and of course vitality is our zest and the prana and the life for the moves within us. The juice that we feel and with bipolar disorder, that is deregulated a bit. It's really high or it's really low and so many people suffer from this issue that it literally ruins lives and so I wanted to bring you to the summit for all of the women out there or their family members that have this issue, so they can hear somebody speak about it with this really vulnerable authenticity that you are bringing and I really thank you.

Mary Agnes: I want to thank you for being my friend. I have been diagnosed since my daughter was born. She's 16 now, so for 17 years, I guess 16 years, she was six months old when I was diagnosed. So it's been a long time that I have had conscience knowledge of what was quote on quote wrong with me, but I've suffered with it since I hit puberty. Since I was about 14 years old and, um, you know you aren't the first person who has said that it is okay to talk about this, but you are the first person that I have believed. It's a long time, uh waiting to unbeknownst to my conscience mind waiting to find you. You the amazing leader you are for women.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Aw, well, I really appreciate you doing this. So when you say when you were 14, you know that something was up for you. How was that showing up for you?

Mary Agnes: Well, hm, I definitely had no reign on my feelings, right. Like, we would think of emotions as what shows up for people, but feelings is what happens on the inside and my feelings if. You know, I can paint a picture of what bipolar looks like. So this only came to me like yesterday. I was talking to a friend and I said the thing about bipolar is the human race has a rhythm like dance and if a thousand people have that rhythm if you are in their place and one person is widely out of rhythm you see them. [laughs] You sort of stand out and at first it is really attractive even to others it feels great. You're, everybody else is moving like the waltz and you are like arms flailing, wildly dancing to your own rhythm and, but what quickly can happen is that it takes over and you are like captive of it and you are wildly dancing wishing somebody could help you turn off the music. And everything always feels loud and smells are really heightened, sound and visuals. My peripheral vision is as clear as my regular vision. So it can all be really distracting and flailing at the speed of light just wishing somebody can help you calm down. And that's what it all feels like, emotions feel that way too. You know and so other people would see a dead bird on the street and just walk by and maybe even mention oh that's so sad. I would be standing over the dead bird weeping. You know, and that is what it looked like when I was 12, 13, 14 years old.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Mmmm, that is really a good job you did of painting that picture. You know, at times, like you said, that has to feel good to be out of rhythm with everybody and then other times incredibly painful. So, at what point did it become so painful that you needed to do something about it?

Mary Agnes: I entered 12-step recovery when I was 16 years old, which is really young and pursued different 12-steps programs trying because it was obvious. Like, I knew something was wrong; I just didn't really know what. And so I pursued different 12-step programs as issues around needing 12-step programs, you know, got bigger and bigger.

By the time I was 25 years old I was sober. You know, by the time I was 26 I had been sober a long time and had done my steps. I really started having fewer symptoms. I mean, sober women don't spend money compulsively; they don't act out intimately compulsively. Sober women behave in an honest way and integrous way. So I always knew something was wrong, I was always pursuing a better life and something that actually worked against me. I was never diagnosed until I was much older because my behavior didn't really surface as erratic or bipolar. You can navigate mania to a degree, but in the rare instances of depression, I really, my heart believes, you cannot navigate yourself out of depression.

After my daughter was born, I had postpartum, like the way women do sometimes, but with bipolar it was deadly. I shared that, I am a sober woman, I asked for help. You don't hurt yourself, you ask for help. The OBGYN literally put me in the hospital the same day. Threatening to take the baby away. [laughs] I was like, the baby; I would never hurt the baby. The only one I ever wanted to hurt was me, but I was admitted against my will for suicidal

thought when she was born. That changed my life. I am so, so grateful for that doctor and Dr. Freedman who put me into the hospital.

You know, I will tell you a story. I went in on my own volition and the doctor said if you don't get evaluated in an emergency room, not only will I not continue to treat you, I am going to have the police come and arrest you. I was in shock and I called him for help. I was very honest and I called him back and said, you know, people get sick in all kinds of ways and I will tell you that I would never harm anyone else and I would never harm this baby. That is not what's wrong here. I called you for help, but having no choice, I am on my way to the hospital and the baby is with friends.

I got to the hospital and I answered all this intake doctor's questions. He was very young and I thought he was an intern and answered him honestly with his questions. It was bizarre and it had nothing to do with how I was feeling. At the end of that interview, he was filling out papers and I didn't know what he was doing, but it finally, I finally became aware that something was going on and I said I don't understand what you are doing. He said I am admitting you. I was utterly shocked, and when I told him, I am here on my own volition; I will do anything. You don't have to admit me. I know what the hospitals look like. He said I was saying I knew more than he did. I have 18 years sober, I understand, I am here for help. I will do anything; this is absolutely unnecessary. I am not a danger to others.

He said, I want you to hear me. You do a beautiful job at life, but inside I think you're screaming, and I think you have been for a long time. I have one opportunity to help you because if you leave here and in one moment of impulsivity hurt yourself, I will have lost you and this opportunity will never come again, so I am admitting you. I am admitting you for suicidal intent and I hear you screaming and I am going to help, I promise. And that was my new life. That was life starts right there. You know, I write him once a year to thank him and to tell him that if he wonders whether he made a difference, here I am still.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Wow, that's so powerful.

Mary Agnes: My new life, you know, my new life begins there. Everything happens after that. You know, five years later, ten years ago, actually I started my company and within a year I was working for Jack Canfield and Kristin Cumerford and some really, really big people because people with bipolar have a different way to hear and a different way to speak. Mine is on the page, you know, mine is, I try not to speak like I have bipolar, but I write with a clarity and a profound ability to communicate with other people. It turns out I am able to match someone's voice really well and that was the beginning

Actually, I still tried for five years. Keesha, for five more years I tried to work in a normal life, in a normal office. I was a very high-end executive assistant in New York in different companies, a

mergers and acquisitions firm, white knights. They do private equity. I always worked with the president of the company and every time I would be fired because I was chaotic. Chaotic! You know, but they were right. I am not normal. They were right, but I think trying to be normal is so deadly even to the thousand who move to the rhythm in normalcy is like it's not a life fully lived, but it's not a life I could access anyway.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Before I talked to you as I was getting ready to interview you, I looked at several articles and there was one on the Internet from the Atlantic and it was an author that has bipolar and writes about their experience of working in an intense corporate job for about four years before joining a startup where they could have that kind of maverick energy that startups thrive on. He referenced a documentary called *Of Two Minds*. Have you seen that?

Mary Agnes: I haven't. But I will.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah, one of the things in this documentary that's mentioned is it profiles individuals around the LA area that are living with bipolar disorder, but no one in there that is interviewed or talked about actually lived in the corporate world. One of the interviews, the director mentions that they had a Wall Street banker confirmed to be interviewed, but he had dropped out at the last minute because he was afraid of losing his job. How many people are working inside of this environment that keep it very, very secret and that's actually the title of this article, "Why I Keep My Bipolar Disorder Secret at Work." (From the Atlantic Magazine.)

Mary Agnes: I agree, I agree 100 percent. Catherine Zeta Jones who has become poster child for bipolar absolutely says the last thing she wanted was people to know. She does not want to be the poster child for bipolar. She does very, very well. She puts it down, but once it broke, you saw this beautiful, amazing, talented, successful women navigating this successfully and unsuccessfully, because the ability to stay at a normal rhythm who has what I have is intangible. You just try to figure out the day every single day.

The things that set you off are sometimes even unknown like weather, not enough sleep, being around things that are too loud, grief. I avoid grief like an art form, except you have to grieve, but I try to say to people I can't grieve my mother. It is dangerous. I might not come out of that. My mother would not want me to grieve the normal way people do. I have to be insanely careful of things that could skyrocket me up or pull me too far down. Catherine Zeta Jones when she was diagnosed really, I mean it put a face to what women especially deal with and I never talk about this publicly, because I was concerned that my clients would have to figure out if they could risk working with me. Could I be trusted? Could I be trusted with deadlines? You know, little by little they'll find out that I can and like normal people I will fail. It is just the reality of being a writer; you try and find a thread. You know, a bipolar writer, you find a brilliant thread, but sometimes the deadlines are off.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You know, of course that's normal. In any work environment, somebody with bipolar is hyper tuned to so called failing. That is, I think, the norm. Insurance companies have been denying coverage for years, if people were known to have a diagnosis of bipolar-- depending on the insurance company. So I think that, you know, people who have a regular job with good insurance, feel very blessed to be able to find a way to manage. This requires dedication.

Mary Agnes: It does. Like a religion.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah and adjustments of medication as you go through things, like your mom passes away. Talk about that a little bit, because this is something I think a lot of people feel ashamed of. It's crippling disorder if that cocktail of medication is not found when something big happens.

Mary Agnes: I will talk about the medication, and then I will tell you what happens. I was always, from 16-years-old, fighting what was happening to me. And my grandmother had paranoid schizophrenia, and I had been visiting her in mental institutions. My maternal grandmother for my whole life and I saw what happened to her in those places, and I know what those places look like, so when that doctor was admitting me I was desperate not to be admitted, and when he said I hear you screaming inside, I just stopped. What could I say to him? And he said you haven't slept in eleven days? And he was right, the baby was ill. She had thrush in her mouth, a regular illness. But this isn't a vacation, you are putting me in a mental institution. In a mental ward, in a mental hospital. There is nothing mentally wrong with me.

You know what? It doesn't matter. There is something wrong, so lets just take it a step at a time and the medication I think you need to be on needs to be monitored. They put me on an anti-seizure medication and within 36 hours I did something... I didn't even know why I did it. When I went into the hospital, I made a list of all the things terrifying to me and I scaled them one to five. The first was that my parents would find out I was there was a five. And the list was maybe eight or nine things that were absolutely overwhelming to me that I would always fail my daughter was a five, that I couldn't live a normal life was a five. Everything was a five on a one to five scale.

I didn't stay long in the hospital. My insurance would only approve five days. I was on suicidal intent with an infant and the insurance company only approved five days. At the time it felt like a miracle, it was over Fourth of July weekend and there was no one there. There wasn't one therapy session there so it wasn't talk therapy. I had been in talk therapy for ten solid years at that point and I go into the hospital and they gave me some medication, and six hours later it felt like someone lifted the veil from me and I could see. I could just feel life like a normal person.

The day that I left, the morning that I was leaving, I looked at that list and I redid that one to five. Now I hadn't lived with my parents in many years, since I was 18, and I was 35 years old when I went into this hospital, so why my terror that they would find out being a five? That day I was leaving, I looked at the list and I circled a 2, and I wrote underneath that people get sick in all kinds of ways and this is simply what happened to me. It was a whole different way to experience life.

I will share what happens to most people, happened to me. The shock of losing my creativity was utterly crippling. I couldn't write for three and a half years, but I never stopped taking the medicine. I had faith in me, I had absolute, and it was agony, three and a half years is a very long time. I had faith that my brain and my spirit would find a way to fill my pen with ink again. I would be led back to my creativity and I needed to heal. I needed whatever time it was going to take and I gained 80 pounds. The medicine I was on has a terrible side effect of weight gain because you are always hungry. They have since dealt with that so nobody should worry about that, but at that point in time, 15 years ago, over the course of three and a half years, I gained 80 pounds.

I didn't stop taking it even though I refused to go back to a life of screaming that my daughter needed me and I needed to be needed. I needed my daughter and I needed to be well. At the end of the three and a half years, the medication stopped working and I experienced a lot of the same symptoms that I had, but I was well. I had the grace of seeing a movie in the hospital about why bipolar people go back into the hospital over and over. It was about medication and when it stopped working, you know, I understood what was happening. I found a new psychopharmacologist and he put me on new medication that didn't work. I'm very smart, I'm 180 IQ; I am very smart. I started researching why the medication worked and I went in and demanded to be put on trileptal, which is what I am until this day. It is an anti seizure medication.

So why the medication? That medication gives me a heartbeat between the impulse and the response I choose. It's very fast, so I can decide if I want to say to somebody whatever needs to be said. I get to choose and it has offered diplomacy to my mouth and what I do, my actions, and my words. That is relentlessly valuable. Diplomacy, compassion, and I think it's added a whole different layer to my work and my writing.

So, I am graced, you know, five years when I was well into the Depicote and onto trileptal. You know, five years I decided to walk away from a one hundred thousand dollar career and start my own company as a writer. What can I say? It's like, you would think it would leash you, right? It feels like a leash around you like it's a, uh, prison, but it's the exact opposite. It was like someone opened the prison and handed me wings.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You know, there's a documentary called *The Overmedicated Child* and that I saw several years ago and it's talking about children being diagnosed with bipolar disorder at a younger and younger age. Much like autism and ADHD, Asperger's which is on the autism spectrum disorder, people have well maybe we are just diagnosing more that's it's not actually higher in incidents than it really is. I am on the side of the fence that says, no, there is more of it out there, and we have more highly sensitive people on this planet that are like canneries in the coal mine so to speak because of our food supply.

The way things are going with, uh, preservatives and additives and not really having food and just pulling it out of packages and calling it food. When I was watching this documentary several years ago, it wasn't really about what got out of it. The cameras following this little girl around and some other children. They're following this little seven year old around as sort of a day in the life of this little girl. She had to have had candy in her mouth the entire time. They followed her into a convenience gas station mart, little mini mart thing and there's not one thing in a mini mart, you know, I guess there may be a couple of things, but most of them have high fructose corn syrup in them. I thought, gosh, is no one else seeing this, that food and mood go together? We know this, you know, science indicates this. Food equals mood and that's another component to this that medications can lift that and put that heart beat in between so that now you can actually deal without that impulsivity. Have you found that part of it where your diet can actually help regulate your mood also?

Mary Agnes: Recently it occurred to me after the death of my mom that I was sugar binging at night to have an insulin reaction to fall asleep. So, not that I recognized it before I do it, but I will say that gifted with that heartbeat, I am able to at least recognize what things are and then adjust.

Most days now I don't allow it, or I will move it to something healthy at least like an apple in the microwave with cinnamon, which is a much better choice than, you know, a whole package of cookies. Or I'll even move it to a protein shake, you know. Or what I am trying to do is going to sleep earlier before that absolute compulsion at 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock starts to take over and you are too tired to fight it. The ability to fight is the wrong word; I don't want to be at war with myself, but the ability to make better choices, to recognize the options, you know, that doesn't happen if I am not on medication.

One of the most recognizable symptoms of bipolar disorder, bipolar two, which is what I have, is the impulsivity of it. You'll be able to see that in how people spend money and their sexual activity and their, um, alcohol or drug abuse. Their decision-making is highly impulsive and often self-destructive because we are just meeting an overwhelming urge in the moment without understanding consequences. Now, maybe I've given into the impulse, but I almost always own it first. I am eating all of the cookies; well then eat them. You're in agony; but get it better tomorrow. Go to bed earlier, ask someone to call you at 10 O'clock to remind you to go to sleep. Its just different now, I own my choices, they don't own me.

Children, the thing about children being diagnosed earlier, you know, it's hard to know what's right, right? It's hard to know if the parent is doing this because they are exhausted or they need help. I think parents don't have enough support. I've seen a few things on children's bipolar and the examples I'm seeing are kids who have it. You look at it and you're like oh my God, absolutely that child needs and deserves help, intervention. What I don't see are, you know, the 99 percent who aren't the one percent where obviously the child is ill.

I think children are put on medication very quickly. Are we medicating our youth? I don't know, Keesha. I do know that if there were more support for parents, I think children could go through a natural process and maybe, maybe find their own rhythm. Children are notorious for not following a rhythm. They are children, right? I'll use my own child who suffers from anxiety. I have a great support and she is the first one to say finding a rhythm is important to her. We want her to use coping skills, not medication. She's 16 years old. She suffers from anxiety because she cares very deeply about her life and wants to deal well. So if there is something she is going through, do I want to medicate a 16-year-old child? I hope she doesn't get angry I shared this, she's very open about it. I don't. I want her to find what coping skills she can, but we stay very, very aware. We stay within a supportive bubble; it's not a secret that people around her know. Her school knows, her doctor knows and we watch, we stay in service to her, but I have one child, you know. What happens when somebody has four children and a career? I work from home and I am able to support her. And I also have a well-medicated condition, so I am very, very aware of things like this. I don't know if most mothers have this support, Keesha. It is hard.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You know, I think it is the most exciting time to be in medicine because we can get very precise with treatments because of genetics. There are direct consumer genetic tests now and I read those all the time. To my patients I recommend them because there are certain genes in the DNA cascade that you can get back from a test like 23 and me. Not from what 23 and me gives you, mind you, but from what we get after putting it through enough portals or extract the right medical data. We can find where those genetics are predisposed to these different kinds of depression, anxiety, and the flavors of them, but the things that I find the most powerful about this time in medicine is that we can match genes. We can say, you know what, we can turn this off, we can match lifestyle factors, like you just said, by going to bed by 10 o'clock instead of pushing it.

Mary Agnes: That's right. What a simple solution.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Making sure that you are doing, um, self-care, which is so much about what this summit is. You know, it's taking that time. I am a big one for saying this; we're a magic pill society and a magic pill doesn't exist. You know, we're screwed. We're going to base our idea of help on that idea that doesn't even exist; then there's no helpful outcome for that. That's where

the self-care and the epigenetic component comes into this. What's above the gene that we can turn off and turn on and I think that's really exciting.

Mary Agnes: Oh, it's amazing what you have done in this summit. I am just going to comment on this for a minute, like grief will be something that will knock women off. You have an expert on grief. Susan Mead who's amazing. She wrote a book all about navigating grief. What else will knock women off? Food allergies, so you have JJ Birch, one of the leading voices in food allergies and food reactions, food sensitive is, You know, we got, who else do we? I am going to ask, and then we have to get him on. Did you get Allen Christensen on your summit?

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah, Dr. Christensen is on. We are going to talk about thyroid and adrenal health. Which is really a huge issue. Keith Witt who is a relationship expert, because relationships are everything.

Mary Agnes: A huge, absolutely. They are. The cornerstones of a women's well being is not her partner, but all relationships. Romantic, friends, you know, Dr. Christensen on thyroid health and adrenal. You know, if your adrenal system is off, you can't be well and you can't do well. It's just a cornerstone and, you know, how do you reintegrate your adrenal system and like three or four simple things. Like he talks about, I work with him, so I know. He talks about getting your, what it is called? That rhythm around sleep and awake?

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Circadian.

Mary Agnes: Circadian rhythm. Now I get up in the morning and I walk outside and I stand there for four minutes, so that my body knows that it is time to be awake. It is just the stupidest little things, but the people you have on this summit. I just want to say that I hope everybody gets in here every single day because, these summits are popular now. People think, oh another summit, but this is about women, and how we thrive because we thrive. We have vitality, the world around us changes.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: It's so true and that's why this is so exciting for me because we're talking about the integration of spirituality and sexuality with Dr. Gina Ogden. We're talking about from blues to brilliance, the natural approach to postpartum, you know.

Mary Agnes: Oh, that's funny.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Right? We are talking about getting the junk out of snacks and finding vitality in your food with Autumn Smith. People suffer from things like polycystic ovarian syndrome or other vitality-draining hormone issues. Carol Lawry is talking about that. Kim D'Eramo, about reducing anxiety.

Mary Agnes: I was going to ask. I will tell you some things, Carol Lawry and Kim D'Eramo, I don't think they even know each other, are the cornerstones of how my daughter navigates her stress and anxiety because she has PCOS and we are going to sign up for Kim D'Eramo's program next. It is a little bit of an investment, but it is one of the best choices. I am just going to put a plug in here. I have no financial investment with Keesha, but buying the recording to this summit, I think, is one of the most important things and put this in their home library because there isn't a missed issue in this. You didn't miss one issue around women. I think maybe the one missing was mine and I had to get the courage to say that I would do this. I was so afraid to do this, but I think that if I don't do this, then I don't really claim who I am publicly. You're my leader here, you're my leader. I think the next course you should do is a leadership course.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Thank you.

Mary Agnes: I mean, you're important to who I want to become of the woman when I am 50 years old, so thank you

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You know, Mary Agnes. I am going to reference this article in the Atlantic again and that the very you were just saying, this author that changed their name says I want to be the person that uses my real name and admits what I am going through, to put the face to the stigma of mental illness in the workplace, but I can't. It terrifies me, because, and the reason this author says this is because around the office so many times they heard off-handed comments describing colleagues as crazy or schitzo or bipolar.

This is thrown around and bambied around to talk about people that aren't in control of their mood in that moment that maybe someone who just had too much coffee or is jacked up and they are being called bipolar. Therefore there is a stigma around that still. This author is just saying that this terrifies me for having anyone say anything even though their doctor told them that this is like having diabetes and you are on insulin the rest of your life.

Mary Agnes: You know what I offer to people all the time? That bipolar is not really a mental illness. The medication most people with bipolar take is an anti-seizure medication, and I have a theory around it. Can I share it?

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Absolutely.

Mary Agnes: So here is my theory. The difference between men and women is not really their genitals; it is really in their brains. How close the halves of their two brains are, which is why women communicate differently than men. Not all men, not all women, but, you know its genetics. It's how your brain is formed, so what happens with people who have hypomania, which is bipolar too, is their brain does rapid fire though process. It lands in the same description as epilepsy and migraine headaches. The medication stops that; that's what anti seizure

medication does. It stops many seizures and that will stop the rapid-fire thought process. They call it free-trade brain.

I vividly remember, it still happens sometimes, not often, thank God. Being naked in the shower, leaning against the wall, not able to shut off my brain, not able to stop my thought process, so the medication takes me so far. I have a daily practice to control rapid-fire thoughts because it is my undoing and it never stops for someone like me. People with bipolar won't sleep a lot because they can't get their heads to shut off. I have a practice I do, something called avatar because meditation doesn't work for someone, well I make it work for me. I try and try and try, but I do this little program called avatar. I have great people I work with, I talk to. The sad thing is that it is easy to spot, Keesha. You can't even hide it. If somebody knows what bipolar is, they can listen to me talk too fast, think too fast, solve things very quickly and can spot it. For whatever it is worth, I hope you can chart your own life though. If you get the help, you can chart your own life. You are not the victim of your own brain. Medication is just a starting point; the rest, I have to write everyday or I become ill, physically ill. What is that?

Dr. Keesha Ewers: An outlet for all of your thoughts. In Harry Potter, JK Rowling came up with the idea for Dumbledore where he would take the wand and put it to his head and put all of the thoughts he didn't need to have right then in a penseive. He would store them where he needed them if he needed to go back and reference them, but they weren't jumbling everything up. That's what writing does. It's the penseive. I tell this to all of my patients. Tell them to get a little notebook.

Mary Agnes: You're so funny. That's what it does. There's this often I don't have a camera. I never remember, thank God, we have cell phones, but I am not really a picture person. But I can write like I can paint a picture that a picture can never capture. There's this story I wrote for my daughter. We are on the beach and it says you're eight years old and the water billows around you, it foams at your feet, it tickles you and you move too far to one side and I wave you with my hands. Your skirt is blue and orange and it billows around you like a parachute. Mom and dad, meaning my parents, have long since walked back into the casino ready to spend their fortune. It scares my siblings, but it doesn't scare me. I know where they're coming. I found it recently like and I was like, ahh, in that moment they were still alive and they are gone now. That penseive, you're absolutely right. A picture would not have told the rest of that story. It just would have shown her the water.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: That's beautiful.

Mary Agnes: I can only hope for everyone that they pick up a pen and write. It has been my salvation and my future, my voice, and my past. It has been, I don't even know what to say about writing, I don't even write my own stuff except I am going to for the first time. I am writing a book called "forgive your mother." Yeah, I think for humans we need to forgive our mother. It's

like forgiving the tree you came from. We can't really live this earth as whole until we find the worst thing our mothers did and forgive it.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: That's really powerful, Mary Agnes. When I was in my thirties after I had been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, which I was very sick, I was going through this kind of very negative thought pattern and feeding my baby. I looked down at her and thought oh my goodness, I don't want her to think about me the same way I am thinking about my mom right now. How do I stop this? I realized I had frozen my mom in time in my adolescent years and I hadn't let her evolve. It had been 15 years and we each had our selves stuck like a little bug in amber. I thought it's time to melt the amber and free us, so I took her down to Mexico. I asked for my dad's help and she and I, we had never gone on a trip together, we went to Petaluma. We stayed in this little hut on the beach for a week and cried and debriefed and dealt with all of these things and moved past all of our crap. We have an amazing relationship today and I think the most pivotal time was in the middle of the night looking at my daughter and thinking oh my goodness, I don't want her to think this way about me. What do I need to do? Oh, I need to forgive my mother. That's exactly right.

Mary Agnes: It's funny, it's true. My mother, I miss her. I can't tell you all the stories, but I'll share this. In the rhythm if we could see everyone dancing to the waltz, right, that smooth rhythm of humanity that I don't have, but I try. I can't match exactly, but you can't spot me necessarily unless you're really looking, you can't spot that I've got my own freaky music playing. When it takes over and I can't control it and I am flailing, wishing to get back into the rhythm, and when I am in trouble my mother would watch and wait and then she would saddle up to me and take me in her arms like the waltz, and she could get my rhythm down. She's gone now, but my daughter, my daughter can do it too. You know, my mom is gone now and I think I am so grateful, because when that happens I can at the very least imagine her there helping me get back into rhythm. She was a shining star in my life. Ultimately courageous and beautiful. I am so grateful that whatever mistakes happen they are so long forgiven before she became ill.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Mhm, that is beautiful.

Mary Agnes: I saw her as a fellow women and not just my mother. She was allowed to be a human being by the time she lived with me in her 70s. I cared her through her cancer.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: You know, Mary Agnes, we are at the end of our time and I am having this moment that is very Deja vu where I was interviewing somebody. He is a medical anthropologist and his name is Sidney Rossinger and he wrote Killer Culture, a book that I interviewed him for my radio show and what he had discovered is, cultures that wear bras that constrict our lymphatic system, you know, leave those marks when we take them off have higher incidences of breast cancer. So he challenged me to stop wearing a bra, and I remember thinking that I sit across from people at a desk in a medical office, and I don't want to bring attention to my boobs.

He said, no, you will figure out a way. You will find that wearing a camisole and you put a little insert inside of that will keep you from having that problem. You will see, you will figure this out, and he was right. Now I wear these very soft little genie bras that you can get that don't leave any marks and they don't constrict the lymphatic system. I've got a lot of breast cancer in my family and I had it myself once, and so that is enough of a wake-up call for me. On air he challenged me to throw away the bra and let the girls go free. I said I accept that challenge and so for one month that is what I did. I am going to do the same for you on air today. I'm going to say throw out the sugar for a month and see what happens. How does that?

Mary Agnes: Okay, I will accept the challenge, but you may get phone calls at three in the morning when I am like ahhhhyiiiiieee!

Dr. Keesha Ewers: I will take those phone calls. How is that?

Mary Agnes: Define sugar because sugar comes in so many forms. Define the challenge.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: High fructose corn syrup, fake sugars.

Mary Agnes: White bread? Like white bread?

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Yeah, do paleo. Do whole foods. Nothing that comes out of a package and a can. How is that? And see if it makes a difference, because I know for myself I am a long recovering sugar addict, and I came home from work one day after reading Kathleen DesMaisons book Potatoes, Not Prozac, and looking at the science of what sugar does and realizing, you know, she said, it's the same as being an alcoholic to be a sugar addict.

I came home from work and my girls are bakers and there were cookies cooling on the counter and I said, I am going to ask you not to do this anymore. I will take you out for dinner and you can order a dessert if you want dessert, but if I were an alcoholic, I wouldn't come home to a cold beer sitting on the counter waiting for me. You would be really cognizant of that. We got rid of everything in the pantry and I haven't looked back and I can't say that it was easy, because it was not, but I don't do sugar anymore, and it has made a massive difference for me and the way my moods swing. I am going to say that for you and Kat. She has her own, and she is obviously going to be able to do what she wants to, but for anxiety it is huge. It is just huge to get rid of that.

Mary Agnes: You know what else, I just want to put an asterisk on that. For people, especially women who have bipolar, have to remember that if they make a dietary change like that, then they need to tell their support system. I need to tell my doctor I am doing that because I may need her help adjusting the medication, because going onto a paleo diet will change your metabolism. It will heighten it, because your body will work harder to digest protein. I only

know that because I've done a type of paleo food plan and I have gone completely, not completely, off my rocker. I have definitely had to recognize that I was manic and had to adjust the medication. I am just putting that out there. I am willing to do it. I am happy to. I would also really like to be less heavy, but who knows what that means. We will just see what happens.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: All right, all right. Well I love you dearly, and I appreciate you so much-- your courage and your honesty and your taking that crap from me right now. That I just challenged you on air.

Mary Agnes: You know, if I ask you to step up and lead me, then I am willing to enlist your offer.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: All right, and for anyone else out there. I am going to say the same thing. This is a huge self-care. This is a moment of self-care you have to realize. You work for Dr. Tom O'Brien too and one of the things he says is there is nothing on the end of your fork that is neither is inflammatory or not inflammatory, and there is no in between. That is just truth. Science backs that up one hundred percent, and so does my experience with myself and my patients.

Mary Agnes: Thank you for doing this. I just want to say one last thing to anybody who got this far in our interview. People make a decision when they do summits like this, and there are all the factors that come into it, but who can be a participant who can help support it is huge. Keesha did not make her decisions on that. She made her decisions on who can bring the most valuable content for her audience. We all need to help support this summit. We need to share it with people we love. We need to support other women, and I think we need to support Keesha for doing this the way she did. She is amazing and has high integrity. Should we tell them the first thing that I gave? I was so far away from this topic, I was like, I am going to teach how to keep our kids safe online.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: No, but we are using that because that was important, valuable information. Yes, Mary Agnes. You have two interviews that are going out on the summit.

Mary Agnes: Oh, that is so funny.

Dr. Keesha Ewers: Keeping your kids safe online is invaluable. I am very excited for all of the women listening to the summit to have that information.

Mary Agnes: I just want to thank you. I had a very hard time doing some things I needed to do on our summit and I finally stopped and asked myself why, and I thought because she is very, very important in my life. This woman, women need women who needs us in small, microcosmic communities. Not Oprah, she is too far away. We need to choose accessible leaders, and you are one of mine, and I choose very carefully, so thank you.



Dr. Keesha Ewers: Well thank you, I am going to end that here because that's what we all need, to have our mentors and our people and our inspirers. So remember everybody, to find that for your own life and to live, love, laugh, keep learning, and be the most fabulous version of yourself. Until next time.