

Women's Vitality Summit

Dr. Keesha Ewers Interviews Dr. Gabrielle Pelicci

April 2017

**DR. KEESHA:** Welcome back to the Women's Vitality Summit everybody, Caring For Yourself Body and Soul. This is Dr. Keesha Ewers, and I'm so excited to have Dr. Gaby on for this segment, who is a leading expert in holistic medicine. She's the author of Blissful Business and TV host at the health and wellness channel. Dr. Gaby has traveled to 40 countries, worked with thousands of clients, including celebrities and high profile people, and has more than 2,000 hours of training in yoga, body work, meditation, and energy healing. She's the founder of Women in Wellness dot com, and has more than a decade of teaching experience under her belt at Top Universities in Mind, Body Medicine and Holistic Health. Welcome to the Summit, Dr. Gaby.

**DR. GABRIELLE PELICCI:** Thanks so much for having me.

**DR. KEESHA:** I'd like to start with the word vitality, because this is the Women's Vitality Summit, right? So, if you were to define that word, what would that mean to you?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** I would say it's feeling energized and alive, and not from just external things but from an internal connection to you know, source energy. What makes you excited, turned on, what inspires you, what kind of purposeful things do you do to kind of keep that momentum and that excitement and that joy flowing in yourself, so that you can then have the physical health and the energy to do external things, and the well being that comes with that.

**DR. KEESHA:** I love that you say turned on, because I often talk about women and libido level being, your libido being like a monitor on the dashboard of your car that's a feedback gauge, right? When I talk about libido, It's that energy, that life force, that essence. It's not about having more sex. It's about being turned on. It's about being lit up or energy to make choices about what you want to do in your life. That's a great, I love that you put that in there, so lit up, right? Like a lamp within you.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

**DR. KEESHA:** What do you see as some of the drainers of vitality for women today?

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**DR. GABRIELLE:** I think it's kind of unlimited in our world. I think, there's a constant demand and a constant stimulation, so the computer's pulling at you and the phone's pulling at you, and family members and friends and work colleagues and clients. I think there's this constant need to give, to take in and to give out, and all that processing is an energetic exchange. So, for me personally, I need to have some retreat time. I need to have some time where I'm not doing the phone and the computer and the clients, and the family and all that stuff, so I can recharge my batteries, and regenerate, so that I have something to give.

**DR. KEESHA:** That hits right home with what the message of the summit is, is that if the well in your heart center is empty you can't dip into it to give to other people, which often times I find women in particular do a lot of that and go into the hole, right? So, their ATM machine is overdrawn. I think that that's a really important aspect of all this, is really learning how to take that time, which is about self worth and understanding that you are this beautiful human having a spiritual experience on this planet, or a spirit having a human experience, however which way you want to look at that, that you're connected to the divine, and to make sure that that is always shining out from you. Then, it is unlimited, but you have to go get in touch with it, right?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** I think you have to learn what your needs are. You know, I think we're sort of raised and socialized and conditioned in a way that, you know, when you're little kids you go to school and you sit at this desk, and you have meals at a certain time. Everything is organized for you, and that never worked for me. I remember as a kid, just feeling always exhausted and hungry and that structure doesn't work for me. I'm someone who's very improvisational. I will stay up all night writing one night, and then sleep in, I'm someone who listens to my body. Like what does my body want to do right now? Does it want to eat? Does it want to sleep? Does it want to move? So, I feel like getting in touch with your natural rhythms, your natural preferences, your natural inclinations, trying to feel into that, more and have more self-awareness about your unique way of interacting with the world was something that was important to me, because I didn't know why I was feeling bad until I was like, let me just get on my own rhythm.

My own diet, my own rhythm, and that's much more sustainable for me than being in some other kind of structure, so I think there's a certain level of inquiry and self-awareness and introspection that facilitates the awareness of what makes you feel really good, and what you can do long term. I know

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some people like, they need hot tea in the morning, and other people need to get up and go for a run. You know, other people need to meditate if the sun's coming up, and I think finding those things that serve you is what helps you stay turned on, and that's how it is for me.

**DR. KEESHA:** Speaking of medicinal teas. So hopefully everybody's gotten our tea book by now, and yeah, learning what it is that gets your body, rhythm, spirit, and soul, everybody connected together as a team, right? Heart, mind, body, and spirit. Often times we're so disconnected from ourselves we don't know what our body's trying to tell us. So, I would love to hear your story about how you came to this place, because I know you worked in a very different industry at some point.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** I did. When I was a kid, I wanted to be like a superstar. I wanted to be a singer, dancer, actor, model person. I did theater, and I did dance classes, and I did beauty pageants and all this stuff. I went to New York when I was 17, got a modeling contract, and traveled around. I was in that industry, and it was very glamorous, and exciting, but it's also a really unhealthy industry. It's, I mean, I'm not saying anything that people don't know, but it's really superficial, and body oriented. We were advised to not eat and be as skinny as possible. The lifestyle didn't serve me. The lifestyle was not feeding my mind, body, spirit, like you describe, and so I left and I went back to school and I started studying art and psychology, and I was trying to find myself.

In the midst of that my Mother passed away, when my Mom passed away, I had a spiritual experience of experiencing kind of the energetic nature of life, and feeling connected to things in a much more divine way you mentioned, you know. Like being, feeling, and seeing, and being connected to sort of the energy of things. I didn't know what that was, and I didn't know what was happening, and I was young and scared. I was like 20 years old, so I started seeking out healers and mentors and spiritual teachers, that could explain to me what was going on, and I found my community. I found my healing touch community, which is an energy medicine community. I went to massage school. I learned about my body, I learned about yoga and movement and meditation, and it was the first time that I ever felt really at home. You know, I felt like I had found my calling, my purpose, my people.

So I've been there ever since. You know, it's been like 20 years that I've been in the Health & Wellness industry. I've worked in every corner of the market, from drug and alcohol treatment centers to high end spas to people's homes, to universities. I've been teaching at universities for the last 10 years, and doing research about medicine from all over the world. Then most recently transitioned to mentoring the upcoming healers, like mentoring the

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health coaches and yogis and light workers and coaches that want to do this work, because this is very unique work. This is not becoming a lawyer, an accountant, a real estate guru, right? This is a different kind of work, and it requires ongoing personal transformation and change. You know, it requires an integrative approach to your life and your practice. It requires a lot of business and career savvy. If you're not just going to go get a job, like you're someone who has a practice, I have a practice, so if you're going to have a practice, and you're going to manage clients, you're going to do all this kind of work, there's a lot of things to learn, and I was blessed and fortunate enough to have amazing mentors. I mean, I had one mentor from graduate school, that worked with me for 10 years, and did everything from look at my CV to teach me how to do public speaking, and publish articles. I think that we need that mentoring and we need that community so that we can excel at our work, and be great at our craft.

So, that's something that's really important to me, and that's the place where I've landed most recently.

**DR. KEESHA:** Wonderful. So, I have the Academy for Integrative Medicine Health Coach Certification Program. It was a result of seeing these women come into my office with these big binders, that are tabbed and highlighted. They've got often times their own medical history but then their kids' too, and article after article, and they're so savvy and so smart, and I just thought, my Gosh. You know, and so frustrated because they felt like medical school had passed them by. That ship had already sailed, you know. I thought, you're so much on top of this. You know, more than many, many, many doctors out there, and so I started this program to help people become health coaches, but once they are in a health coaching field, then if they don't have a business background, you know, like you were just saying, or there's going to be some place where how do you start that?

So, I'm so happy to know what you're up to, for all the health coaches that are hearing this, they'll be able to say, okay, I think that sounds like my next step. So that's fantastic.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah.

**DR. KEESHA:** So, as you think about vitality, you know, in this kind of overscheduled world, and the fact that where you came from, I really want to come back to that because recently we brought, have you ever heard of the documentary, embraced?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** No. I'll write it down. Embraced?

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**DR. KEESHA:** Yeah, embrace, not a D on the end.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Okay.

**DR. KEESHA:** So it's the story of Australian who, goes through this, having 3 children, I think it's 3, and winding up with a body that she wasn't happy with. Going through a whole body building process and even winding up on stage at a competition. Then deciding that she had to put so much time and energy into focusing on her body, that she was becoming a crabby Mom and a crabby partner, and you know, not really enjoying the rest of her life. There's got to be a balance to this, you know? So she gained a little bit of weight and she took her focus off of these many hours in the gym. So she posted a picture of before and after, and the before is when she was in the body building competition, so it was kind of opposite of what you normally.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** I remember seeing that.

**DR. KEESHA:** Okay. So it kind of blew up the news organizations, right? It went viral, all over the Internet, and people were kind of, because she posted them of herself naked, and so everyone had, was reaching out to her. All these women saying, oh my Gosh, I have, and she started seeing that body image was an issue, so she made this documentary. She traveled all over the world, and it's a beautiful documentary.

So everybody that's listening, I brought it to our area in Seattle area, and hosted it. A screening, and so you can go to Embrace the Documentary, and it'll have like, and you can bring people together to watch it. It's really incredible, but it starts great conversations because just, she talks about this, she interviews a couple of models. One's a size 12 model, you know, who's just this beautiful, fantastic woman. She's talking about how women on the runway, right, in the backstage, are dipping cotton balls in Gatorade and eating them, swallowing them, to make themselves feel full. You know, people passing out, and it's this whole, like you said, it's not news to most people, but that we drive ourselves to look like pictures that actually don't even exist because they've been airbrushed.

So, this movie, she travels to a plastic surgeon, she goes to see people that have had major major life and body altering accidents and what they had to say about things now. It's this great overview of this issue, so I'm so happy that you talked about that, you know? This isn't the place that I wanted to land. I listened to my intuition and here I am today, right?

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**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah, it's not a healthy industry. I mean, they keep trying to re-brand and say oh look, we've added plus size models. It's not a healthy industry. When I left the first thing I did was I wrote my Bachelor's thesis about body image and eating disorders, and I pulled out images from magazines and I pulled out images with anorexia from textbooks and I put them on poster board and I hung them up in the classroom. I'm like, does this look familiar? I mean, it's just like textbook anorexia. Most of the models now are getting more into kind of like, plus size stuff, but still the hyper focus on the physical and the hyper focus on certain cultural standards of beauty and what that is. It can be very devastating on so many levels for women.

There's actually another documentary that I would recommend. It's called Dream Girl, like the dream kind of girl, and they're interviewing different women, entrepreneurs, and they're looking at if you are an entrepreneur woman and you're trying to envision a business, start a business, get funding for a business, promote your business, and you're interacting with people and you're trying to present yourself as a smart, capable, competent, savvy woman, and you're showing up, and you're at meetings, you're interacting with people, because we're so conditioned to seeing women on billboards and ads and magazines and TV as just like kind of a ditzy beautiful. When you show up, you're often overlooked. It's a lot harder for women to raise money for their businesses, it's a lot harder for them to be taken seriously, they don't get the leadership positions, the management positions that are available to men.

There's so many ripple effects, like psychological effects, career effects, there's so many different ways that this industry can complicate your life, and I felt that a lot when I left. You know, when people interact with me, they make a lot of assumptions that may or may not be true, and so many times if I'm talking to somebody and I say oh, I'm Dr. Gabby. I have a PHD, they're like, what? What do you mean? It's, there's certain benefits and challenges to being beautiful. It sounds like kind of, you know, first world problems, but it can inhibit you. There's also another really great Ted Talk, I don't know if you've seen it, but it's by a woman who's a model, and she talks about how modeling affected her life. She ended up pivoting and going and doing kind of a lot of social entrepreneurship and nonprofit kind of work, but about the expectations and the ways that the images affect us and the way that we relate to women, so I could talk about that for days.

**DR. KEESHA:** So, in 2016 Madonna got the billboard, right? Woman of the year? That speech that she gave was really great, too, you know. It was very well done about, she just starts off with this industry's filled with misogyny, it's filled with gender biases, and this has been my path to where I am today. Gosh, it

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certainly did involve a ton of support. You know, I think a lot of women can say that, when, depending on whichever path that they take, that's been coming.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** We've come pretty far, but we still have a long way to go, because it's the same thing with race and all the other challenges we face. It's so pervasive, and ubiquitous, that you don't even realize the biases sometimes. You don't even, it's not even really apparent until you start to examine it and really kind of bring it into the spotlight that you realize all of the subtle ways that it influences your life, your confidence, your well being, you know, your career.

**DR. KEESHA:** So, Madonna says at the end of this that I'm a bad feminist, right? I've always done that about myself, that I'm not a feminist, I'm not a woman, I'm not a mother, I'm not a daughter, I'm not a teacher, a doctor, you know, I actually am just part of God, as are you and everybody else.

So these roles that we take on and get super attached to, they can cause a lot of suffering if we have expectations of how people are going to act and behave with us, so one of the things that I have noticed is as, I think this whole vitality issue came to a head for me, as I started really examining this in my own doctoral work with women's sexual desire, I was looking at held onto hurt and emotional pain and what it does to you later on in life with your sexual desire. I was finding there was a huge correlation to that. I thought, you know, women of today have really, we've gotten ourselves sort of painted into a corner in a sense, because now we really believe inside of us that we have to bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and look hot at the same time. You know, we have this messaging that's actually coming from within that's based on stereotypes and cultural background noise that now we're believing it. You know, like we really think. We have to do all of this and we have to do it like super women. So, a lot of the messaging of the summit is about, is that really true? You know, do you have to do all of that?

Do you have to be, and in fact, the whole perfect mother syndrome is a big trap, you know. Can you be a perfect Mother? No I think not, you know. So, it's this trap to believe that you have to be, and really relaxing into the idea that being human means that you're going to get dirty and make mistakes, and you have to then say, I'm sorry and please forgive me. Other people for doing the same, and it's this messy thing that we're in, this whole thing called life. So, you know.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** I think we're moving into an age of authenticity around that. More so now than ever they're talking about what it's really like. They're trying, like you

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said, putting the new photos up of like, this is me. We're, I'm surrounded by amazing women in my peer group that are like that, and that's the kind of community that I cultivate because I want us to be able to say when we're happy, when we're sad, when we're a hot mess, I want us to be able to do that and hold all of it. I want other people to hold me regardless of where I'm at. You know, I can be beautiful and amazing one day, and like, falling apart the next because that's how life is. You know, part of the path of the healer is really holding the space for all of those things, and I think I see the emergence of so much authenticity and so much letting go of the pretense and the photo shopping. I don't know if you saw, there was also a, I think it's a calendar that came out with all the celebrities who aren't wearing makeup.

**DR. KEESHA:** I haven't even heard of this.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** It just came out. I want to say it was a few weeks ago, it's a photo exhibition and it's celebrity women, like actresses and stuff, they did these incredible black and white photos, like no makeup, no touch up, no anything, and they're stunning. I mean, the pictures, I think Nicole Kidman, and several other prominent women are in these pictures. So, we're starting to show it more and more in that way, I think.

**DR. KEESHA:** I love that. You know, I mean, and that's really what, to start the Summit out, we started women's groups around the world. I sent out an email and I said, who would like to lead a women's group in your part of the world? My inbox exploded. You know, with women saying, I'm in. So, we sent out this really nice kind of loose leaf based curriculum and guidelines for women to watch this and have these discussions with each other and to be able to be an authentic community with one another with someone who can hold you when you're a hot mess. Right? Who can say, you know, I yelled at my kid yesterday and I feel so bad, you know. Then the others in the room say oh, well yeah, I mean, that does happen. You know? It's just that kind of validation that we get so locked into, that isolation of our own bubble of our head and we just think that no one else is having the same human experiences, and I think that right there is what caused the suffering.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** I totally agree.

**DR. KEESHA:** Alright, so if you were to give women who are listening to this a pearl of wisdom, what would it be, Dr. Gabby?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Well, I mean, what guides me the most, recently, like in my daily life, is staying turned on to what feels good. I think, if you're into personal growth and you're into self-care, you're into self-development, sometimes there can

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be this notion of like, no pain no gain, or you have to work real hard to get there, or like, it's like self-care is another thing on your list of things to do that you're already not doing. I've shifted a lot. Over the last year I took a bunch of comedy improv classes, I started laughing and having a lot more fun, and I started approaching my day, with what's going to be fun? What's going to feel good? That doesn't mean that you have to like, rearrange your whole life, but it means that if it feels better to laugh with your kid than it does to scold your kid, then you can integrate some of that.

If it feels better to put on a song and dance around your house than it does to let you drive to the gym and get on the StairMaster. Just feeling into what feels better, what feels good, what makes me laugh, you know? I have like, all my bookmarked YouTube channels that are comedians and comedies and things. You know, in a moment when I'm getting cranky, I can watch something for a few minutes, and snap out of it, so I'm on the feel good train these days. I just go with it.

**DR. KEESHA:** That's a good train. That's a good train. Good. I'm so glad. So how was improv? I've been wanting to do that, so.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Mind blowing. I'm a different human being than I was a year ago, I'm like a totally different person. I can go anywhere, say anything. I grew up in the beauty pageant world, right? Obviously, that's very mannequin. I was a straight A student, and so, I didn't know until I started doing improv, but I was kind of uptight. Like I was kind of like, a perfectionist, and improv, because you're like, rolling around on the floor and you're making weird noises, and you're saying whatever crazy thing comes to your mind, and you're acting inappropriately because you're forced to act inappropriately, like ways that you wouldn't act.

So, because that was so liberating and so much fun, I just stated to adopt more and more of that into my daily life. I felt more relaxed in my own skin, and like it wasn't so much work to just be my daily self. I found that it was easier to laugh at myself instead of criticize myself when I would do stupid things. I'd be like oh, this would make a great improv scene. I'm like, spilling coffee on myself while driving the car or something like that, I'd be like, oh my God, this would make a great improv scene. So it re-frames a lot of things that I would kind of dramatize in my life. It's completely transformational for me.

**DR. KEESHA:** Okay, so right now, in front of you and all of these witnesses, 2017, I'm going to do this. I have been wondering, I think I would be good at it. I've been thinking about taking improv classes.

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**DR. GABRIELLE:** Amazing.

**DR. KEESHA:** So, I'm doing it. You guys are all my accountability partners now. We do a little bit, you know how you said you were a theater girl when you were growing up. All my kids are too. I have 4 children and they grew up in the theater. So, we took a lot of it at home, anyway, spontaneously. We had these little bits we do all the time.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Like where you do accents?

**DR. KEESHA:** Totally. In fact, I invented a kind of therapy, you want to hear it?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah.

**DR. KEESHA:** Accent therapy.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Nice.

**DR. KEESHA:** Yes, so when your partner and you are starting to get a little uptight, I should have used it this morning. I got in a fight with my partner today.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** You have to talk in an accent now?

**DR. KEESHA:** Yes. I adopt this kind of sassy, cocky English one, and my husband does this Indian one. It's pretty funny. It takes everything into a different part of your brain to have to stick to the accent, so you come out of the fight or flight. It works really well.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah. Yes. I've made these ridiculous parody videos, that if you go to my YouTube channel you'll find them, where I impersonate different insane healers. Like one of them is celestial bliss, she is a spiritual healer, and she's talking about how she's saging her house but really she's like, smoking pot and like, blowing it around her house and stuff. Like, I make these crazy videos. I never would have done that a few years ago. Everybody goes crazy for it. They're like, oh my God, that's hilarious. I Just don't care anymore.

**DR. KEESHA:** Yeah, so we do all that stuff at home, but I haven't had to do it with other people that are not in my circle of trust.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Exactly.

**DR. KEESHA:** So to speak, so I get to be random, and kind of be really, really good for that.

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**DR. GABRIELLE:** Exactly.

**DR. KEESHA:** Thank you, for the inspiration.

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah. You're welcome.

**DR. KEESHA:** Alright, all of us, we're going to get on the fun train this year, right?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah. I'm on the feel good train. I'm sick of the rest of it.

**DR. KEESHA:** Ride it with Dr. Gabby. Get your ticket this year. Alright, well thank you so much for spending some time to share your wisdom with us. We've got your bonus material and contact information on our bonus page here at the Women's Vitality Summit. Is there anything else that you want to end with here?

**DR. GABRIELLE:** Yeah, have more fun. Whatever you're doing right now, just have more fun. That's my advice.

**DR. KEESHA:** Fantastic. Thank you.