

Women's Vitality Summit

Ajayan Borys Interviews Dr. Keesha Ewers

April 2017

AJAYAN: Welcome back, everyone, to the Women's Vitality Summit, Caring for Yourself Body and Soul. For this one interview, I am going to interview Dr. Keesha Ewers, who happens to be my wife and I'm pleased about that. Dr. Keesha Ewers is board certified in functional medicine and Ayurvedic medicine as well as being a doctor of sexology, a psychotherapist, energy worker, yoga teacher, and founder and host of Healthy You radio network.

After curing her own autoimmune disease and discovering the key to low libido in women through her innovative research, Dr. Keesha developed the Freedom Framework, which is designed to get to the root problem of any disease or imbalance. You can learn more about the Freedom Framework in her new best-selling book, Solving the Autoimmune Puzzle: The Women's Guide to Reclaiming Emotional Freedom and Vibrant Health. Dr. Ewers is the founder of a field of medicine called mystic medicine and another called functional sexology. Through The Academy for Integrative Medicine, she offers a certification course for those passionate about and wanting to become integrative medicine health coaches. Her online programs and videos can be found at drkeesha.com.

DR. KEESHA: That's weird to have your introducing me.

AJAYAN: It's weird; it's the way it is. You have created this whole Summit on women's vitality. We like to start every interview with the question what does vitality mean to you?

DR. KEESHA: Vitality means to me being able to wake up in the morning being full of desire and passion and juice for living the life that is your life path and knowing what the purpose is. That, to me, is full vitality where you're full-on awakened to what your purpose is and you're living it.

AJAYAN: Great. If that is full-on vitality, the question comes to mind what keeps us from that? Obviously, that's something to aspire towards. Does that mean that we're not all living that and if so why?

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DR. KEESHA: I don't think we all are and those are the people that come to see me in my office. I have a maybe 18-page intake form and what I'm doing, when I'm asking all the questions I'm asking of patients, is I'm trying to find out where they are in this milieu of what we just talked about. One of the questions I ask is, "Do you know your life purpose?" and often times people will say no. I stay on there also, "Do you notice patterns repeating themselves in your life," and sometimes they'll say no and sometimes they'll say yes. Then I can start with where they're at, I know where they are. But the truth of the matter is that everybody has a wheelhouse of expertise, their own skill set, their own wheel of genius that they are meant to be giving as the gift onto this world. Sometimes what will happen is women will know what that is or think what they know what it is and over give, over caregive for several different reasons and burn themselves out or they'll be frustrated because they feel stuck in patterns of self-sabotaging behavior that aren't getting them anywhere and they get sick.

Joseph Campbell talks about the hero's journey and in that journey, you get a call to wake up. Often times illness is that call; it certainly was for me. Rheumatoid arthritis was one of my makeup calls. When you think about illness in that way, it becomes a spiritual experience. It's the call to pay attention to whatever is going on in your life that's creating imbalance so that you can then move into the goddess that you're meant to be, the wise woman elder you're meant to be, the teacher, the mother, whatever it is that your roles are on this planet and whatever you think your life purpose is. That you move into that fully lit up and shining and acting in harmony with the earth and the people you're sharing it with.

AJAYAN: That sounds really good. I'm sure it doesn't happen all at once. I'm wondering if you could share your story so we can get a feel for some of the stages or steps that you've been through in order to come to that.

DR. KEESHA: Yes, that's a great point because it doesn't happen all at once and that's why the hero's journey takes several steps and sometimes people get stuck in some of these places. When I was 30, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. A lot of my viewers and listeners have heard this story before, but that rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease, it's considered incurable by Western medicine. One day, as I was learning

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how to meditate, because that was part of what I learned to be my path out of illness and disease and imbalance, I started contemplating what the word autoimmune meant. I realized I was actually turning on myself; my immune system was attacking me, which meant I was committing suicide in a societally acceptable way is the way I describe it. That being said, I had to say, "I have these four gorgeous children, I have a life that I love, why in the world would I decide I don't want to be around anymore? What is it that my body is trying to say to me and what messages have I given it that made these genes turn on me?" Because one of the things I realized is that my grandfather had had rheumatoid arthritis, it was in our genes, and I knew that genetics were not a death sentence, so what could I do to turn that around?

As I went through that meditation process, I started going backward to the first time that I wanted to die. The first time I could remember was at 10 years old when I was being sexually abused by the administrator in my elementary school. At that age, I told my parents, I told my teachers but not in a way that probably they could get because they didn't do anything about it, so, obviously, they didn't get it. I didn't even probably know the word sex back then and I certainly didn't know the word abuse and I didn't understand what was going on. I thought maybe I somehow maybe deserved it because I was being told I was misbehaving and that's what this was doing. Here's this person in authority calling me out of class, so there's this meaning I made up in childhood, at the age of 10, that I have to really be perfect in order to stay out of that principal's office. I took that on as my belief and my behavior, "I have to be perfect, not only to be loved and be worthwhile but to survive."

I can't tell you how many women that I see in my office have that same pattern, perfection. For one reason or the other, it's the meaning and belief they carried forward from childhood into adulthood and it is a bully, it's a taskmaster. It keeps you so locked into trying to achieve and be productive, that you don't take time to care for yourself, which is why this Summit became so important is trying to help women make sure that they make it onto their own task list at the very top, as being the most important thing of the day. It's the oxygen mask when the plane is in the air that you get taught to do. Breathe in the oxygen first then put it on the child. That's so accurate. If you don't have a functional brain with good oxygenation, you're not going to be any good to anybody. That's the

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same way it is that I'm talking about, self-care is so important if you're going to be useful in all the parts of your life when you needed.

AJAYAN: Yeah, without that it's very easy to get out of balance.

DR. KEESHA: You're guaranteed you'll get sick, guaranteed. Which is what happened to me. My cells took on the agreement that I created when I was 10 that the world is not safe, I'd really like to leave and I can't figure it out, so, therefore, I would really like to go. I got in touch with my angels and my guides at that time, because I would sit after school and I could just go into the spiritual world. It was a safe place and I could feel the love that was provided there and I thought, "Gosh, I'd really rather be there." So there was one foot in and one foot out.

I've seen that a lot of women that are highly intuitive have had trauma in their background and this is one of the reasons. A, you become super high radar for reading other people. You become very intuitive because you're trying to keep yourself safe and you want to read people. And, B, you spend so much time with spirit that you become so fluid in being able to go there and return because it's safer there and it's nicer there and children aren't hurt there. I've seen a lot of that in my patients. I used to teach intuitive developmental classes and I started teaching those because people would come to me and want me to read and tell their future and medically intuit what was going on for them and they were becoming dependent on my vision and what I was seeing and I was wanting them to develop this in themselves. This is part of that call that every person has, is becoming really powerful inside of yourself and awakening that part of you in you.

AJAYAN: This was the missing piece to the autoimmune puzzle, to solving it, because there's more pieces to that puzzle.

DR. KEESHA: Right. There are three known root causes to autoimmune disease. Here's my rheumatoid arthritis and I had leaky gut, which we've got Jordan Reasoner talking about leaky gut on the Summit so I'm not going to delve too deeply into that. If you don't know what it is, you'll hear that discussion. We have toxic exposure, we've got a couple of speakers on toxicity and what's going on, like Robin Benson, so you can check out those talks; I'm not going to go deeply into those. And then you've got your genetics, and I just talked about that. You've got your genes, but you

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can turn them on and you can turn them off. That's not really, literally accurate; you express them differently or in a healthy way or in a way that causes disease. The study of epigenetics tells us that our lifestyle factors and our thoughts impact how those genes are expressed.

Here I have this fourth corner. I call this the puzzle, we have these four corners, a leaky gut, toxic exposure, and genetics, and then the missing piece is trauma. There was a study, and I write about this, call the adverse childhood experiences study that was done between 1995 and 1997 by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control. What happened is Kaiser Permanente had this obesity clinic and they were successfully helping people lose weight, but a lot of women were dropping out after losing weight but not completing the program. So they got curious and started interviewing them and saying, "What's going on? Why are you leaving when you're getting closer to your goal but you're not there?" and what they found is that all these women had a history of sexual abuse.

They started looking a little deeper and doing a bigger study, over 17,000 participants were in this study, and started finding out that over two-thirds of those participants had an adverse childhood experience that the study identified. The ACEs study is what it's called and there are 10 different kinds of abuse and neglect that they were asked about. Anything from a parent being incarcerated, divorce, loss, addicted parent, like alcoholism or drug abuse, and then watching their mother be a victim of domestic violence was another one. And then personal neglect and abuse in terms of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, all of those forms of abuse. Over two-thirds of 17,000 plus participants said they had at least an ACE score of one.

AJAYAN: When you have an ACE score of one or more, it increases your chances of autoimmune disease, correct?

DR. KEESHA: Yes, of chronic diseases of all kinds, cancers, heart disease, also behavioral problems and mood disorders, mental health issues, depression, anxiety, obesity, self-sabotaging behaviors, self-neglect, the inability to do self-care is part of it. This is all part of what I call capital T Trauma. What I found, when I did my study several years later, I did the HURT study, which is called healing unresolved trauma study. What I was looking for is I was seeing a lot of women who were saying they didn't

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have any sexual desire and they wanted hormones for it, and yet, when I would ask them simple questions like, "Do you like your partner?" they would start to cry and talk about a history of some kind of emotional wounding with their marriage or their partner that actually had been triggered by their partner, but existed as a button that had been created in childhood. What I started discovering is that you can push the same button that got wired when you were a kid over again in adulthood and that affects disease process and also sexual desire for women big time.

That was interesting, and as I was going through, in my doctoral work, I was mapping the brain and seeing what parts of the brain are required for women to have desire. What I discovered is the same parts of the brain that are required for a woman to have desire for her life, not just necessarily her partner and sexual intimacy, but to get up in the morning and be excited and jazzed to get the kids off to school or to play with them or to go to work or to write their book or to run their marathon, all of those components that are required for desire are actually taken over if they've had trauma; PTSD lights up the same parts of the brain. That was interesting. That was the first "Oh my gosh, no one has written about this," those part of the brain in women, so overlapping and so important for us to understand.

Then I came across this study that showed that the brain changes and, actually brain damage that's caused by PTSD, past trauma, actually shows up in people, women and men alike, also children, that have chronic, daily stress. If you perceive yourself as overwhelmed, if you perceive yourself as having so much to do that you can't keep up, that actually causes the same brain changes as someone that's had that capital T Trauma from the past. We can call this lower case t trauma, which is how I refer to it in my book. This is really interesting because those two kinds of trauma, trauma and Trauma, actually affect how you express your genetics; that's why there's this link between stress and chronic illness.

It also causes this form of toxicity. We always think of toxins as these chemicals or electromagnetic energy field, the EMS that we have, toxic food. But actually, toxic beliefs and meanings that we carry forward from childhood are just as damaging as eating large amounts of sugar or snorting large amounts of cocaine or drinking large amounts of alcohol. They also cause cortisol to be released in the body as a stress response, which breaks down the lining in the gut and causes leaky gut, causes

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toxicity, and has your genetics express themselves in an unhealthy way. All of those things interact together so they are the four corner pieces of the puzzle.

AJAYAN:

Interesting. You know what it reminds me of? Maybe only I can relate to this, but I remember, when I was in high school, I had this insight one day that it would just be wonderful to be totally normal. When I thought that, I was really thinking about having that free flow of expression of your vitality basically. Looking back, I had an ACE score of three. I knew something about this from my own experience, I could feel that. I had been traumatized in different ways, I was not "normal" in the way I was thinking, and I just felt, "That would be so wonderful." What I love about your system that you're unfolding and that you talk about in your new book, is that it's so holistic. These four pieces of the puzzle are really the cornerstones that you have to take care of to be fully actualized, fully normal, to really be in a position to have that free flow of your innate vitality. I think that's just amazing; it's a wonderful expression of mind-body medicine and cutting-edge medicine, functional medicine, Ayurvedic medicine. It's really brilliantly woven together.

DR. KEESHA:

Thank you. But you know the thing of it is you found meditation as a result of your trauma; I found, as a result of rheumatoid arthritis as a result of my trauma, my toxic exposure, my leaky gut, years of antibiotics for strep throat, Epstein-Barr infection, all of these different things that I had that combined together with my trauma and tipped my genetic expression, that became the gift. That's the true hero's journey is the wake-up call is the illness, but then do you find the gift? Do you find the mentor to help you to understand how to turn it around? And then with that, can you reverse it and find the gift? The gift, for me, is that I learned how to forgive, I learned how to clear my stress in such a way that traffic doesn't bother me ever; not sweating the small stuff.

Learning how to regulate your response, how to understand how to self-soothe, how to spend time in self-care is the gift. The gift is that I became who I am today as a result of all of this. It's not bad, it's not good, it's just this is my life path, this is my life journey, this is my life purpose. I think people get really hung up on healing. I just worked with a patient on this in my office not too long ago. She asked me, "Dr. Keesha, am I ever going to be healed of my Hashimoto's thyroiditis?" an autoimmune disease where your immune system is attacking your thyroid. I said, "What does

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healing look like? What does that mean to you?" and she said, "Never having to take supplements and not having to watch what I eat," and I said, "Well, then no." Because if I were to go back to eating the way that I ate when I was diagnosed, I didn't know I was allergic to gluten, I didn't know I was allergic to dairy and sugar, and I used to run marathons. I didn't understand that those things were also contributing to this. If I were to return back to eating in that way, then I would probably activate that gene again.

If you think that healing is not having to watch what you eat or not having to take a supplement again, then autoimmune disease means you will never be healed. But you can reverse it by spending really special attention on what your body is trying to tell you and giving it what it needs. That's the gift of any kind of illness, is learning how to tune into your body and really listen to it, and operating with it as a team member rather than in combat with it or feeling that it's betrayed you or something is wrong with it. It's just trying to get your attention. In our culture we don't know that, so we get so far down the road of imbalance that it's had to scream.

AJAYAN: I love what you're saying here, this message that healing is not returning to a state of blissful ignorance where you can break all the laws of nature related to your body and mind and your life, but it's actually a self-discovery that aligns you more with those subtle principles that will lead to health and wellness and balance in life. It really is a self-discovery of learning and that's really a great message.

DR. KEESHA: And never forgetting it's bringing nobody along.

AJAYAN: I will say, because you've actually guided me towards "healing" Hashimoto's or reversing, I had Hashimoto's and we were able to reverse that and now it's as if I never had it, but I'm gluten free, I do take supplements religiously and feel better than ever, really better than ever. In effect, it feels like a healing to me, just to clarify it. Reversal feels like healing plus knowledge.

DR. KEESHA: It's going forward to something better than what you had before. When you were diagnosed with Hashimoto's, I was the one that had diagnosed it, you were already meditating a lot. It's that combination, you had an ACE score of three. When you think about it in that way, then you've

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learned so much about the impact of trauma, your belief systems you had. You had a belief system that sugar was good.

AJAYAN: Sugar was good for you; it was part of my religion.

DR. KEESHA: You really actually believed that. But I don't mean just that, I mean also that you didn't have enough energy, so there was a lot of scarcity complex in you when I met you and you transformed that to this abundant vitality. It's amazing the difference between when I met you and where you are today. Your cholesterol was high, you were a heart attack waiting to happen, which was in your family genetics, right?

AJAYAN: Prediabetic, high cholesterol.

DR. KEESHA: Darn near diabetic, yeah.

AJAYAN: Yes, and all of that has been reversed, normal class draw.

DR. KEESHA: And you're 65 and on no medication, which you are an anomaly in Western medicine. Usually, by 65 people are on an average of 12 medications if you can believe that.

AJAYAN: Wow. I hate medication, so that's good.

DR. KEESHA: It's great because understanding, like you're saying, you got in touch with your body. You already have the meditation part down, but you didn't have the dietary component, and you also didn't have the mental belief structure and the emotional healing done that you've done now.

AJAYAN: Right, and this is part of what I saw when I was in high school about normal. It's all of these pieces put together, which you really present beautifully in your book. I really just appreciate that. I think that book is a fantastic summary of all of this.

DR. KEESHA: Thank you. I'm glad you say that, but the thing of it is it also doesn't have all the information. When we take those four corners of the puzzle and we talk about genetics and we talk about toxic exposure, you do things automatically in your life that a lot of people, our listeners maybe haven't even heard of. For example, we detox four times a year, which Ayurveda tells you to do every time the season changes, we do detoxification

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program. That's not something I did before I reversed my rheumatoid arthritis.

I got rid of my RA within six months of diagnosis, but I learned how to meditate, I learned how to heal my trauma, and I learned how to detoxify the toxins that I'd been exposed to over 30 years. That's one of the things about our world is it's just ubiquitous the level of toxicity that we are exposed to. That's another component of this in healing your leaky gut, which often times, again coming back to this patient of mine that said, "Will it ever be healed?" and I say, "Define healed," because once you have had an imbalance, once you have leaky gut, once you've had an autoimmune disease diagnosed, actually you're fragile for the rest of your life. It doesn't mean that you're fragile from that point forward, it means you've always been fragile and you haven't known it. That's what's so important to understand. You do have to watch out for your gut.

Ancient systems of medicine have told us that for thousands of years, that wellness starts in the digestive tract and disease begins in the digestive tract too. So watching out for your gut health becomes important. That's why I do the whole individualized life detox program or WILD program. I'm going to invite all of you to take the WILD program, become a WILD woman because it addresses all four these four corners of health and vitality in a way that a book can't do; it's individualized. You really do need to test, don't guess. When you heal a leaky gut, you can't just look on the Internet and say, "This supplement is good," and take a supplement; it doesn't work like that. You really need to do some of the testing.

AJAYAN: One size doesn't fit all in these things. How would people find out about the WILD program?

DR. KEESHA: It's on the bonus program and it's offered through the Summit, so they'll get an email about it. I would encourage you to do this because this is the doorway into vitality from all four corners because each of us has trauma from childhood. I don't care who you are, if you have failed a test ever or got left out on the playground or had trouble in the lunchroom, your parents weren't there to pick up one time.

I remember my second son just crying on the curb when he was in fourth grade because I was late to pick him up. I remember pulling up and he

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was just sobbing. Here's this 10-year-old little boy and he's just devastated that I'm not going to come and get him and that he is bereft, no caregiver. I realized, as I saw him as I pulled up, I'd gotten stuck in traffic and there were no cell phones back then, he's 26-year-olds old now, that there was a trauma. That was a traumatic experience for him; we all have those. No matter how good our parents try to be, we can't be completely attuned on all levels every place we go. We all come out of childhood with some kind of trauma. I think it's really important to understand that, yes, that causes problems, it makes us create beliefs and meanings that aren't healthy and health promoting and vibrant and vitality producing.

The great news is that, after your brain is fully developed at the age of 26, you can actually go back and look at those and reframe them and throw out the ones that don't work and adopt new ones. That's part of what this program does, is it helps you see do you have self-limiting, self-sabotaging beliefs that are getting in your way of vitality? We all do to some level. Sometimes moms that are watching this Summit might think, "I'm going to mess up my kids," or already have. I just say, "No. They signed up for you, they're supposed to go through hard, hard experiences because, like the butterfly coming out of the cocoon after being a caterpillar, it flaps its wings and it's weak and it can't fly and it's to make those wings stronger."

All of these experiences are what I call going through the spiritual gymnasium; they're resistance training. It's the resistance of life to help make you stronger and more resilient. In fact, your kids need to have some hard experiences. It's your job then to help them by being attuned to them, redesign their belief systems in response to them if they're willing to share that with you. Then it's their job, once they get into adulthood, to heal them for themselves and your job to give them tools to do that. I think that's one of the greatest gift you can give to a kid, are the tools for them to solve their own issues as they get older.

AJAYAN: In that WILD program you offer those tools. What does a person have to bring to that to really have that program succeed for them? Because I know it's challenging. What do they need to have?

DR. KEESHA: Really just intention. The biggest thing I say is willingness. I always say that there's this misery to motivation ratio before people make change in

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their life. Unfortunately, this is true. I've seen it, over 30 years of medicine, that the more miserable you are, the more motivated you are to give up things that aren't serving you and to adopt new habits that are that will be vitality producing. I'll somebody that comes in and says, "I've been meaning to come and see you for four years, but my friend that sent me to you said that you were going to make me stop drinking coffee and I wasn't ready." I say, "That's not necessarily true; everyone's different. Coffee might be great for you, so let's find out." What they need is to be able to, hopefully, not be so miserable to be that motivated to change, but be willing to roll up your sleeves and get excited about noticing what are the places in your life, where are they, that are getting in your way? And what are the blocks? So we can find them and we can fix them and then you can be on fire. You can be girl on fire and that's what I want for you.

What you need is that willingness and then the other thing is to be able to say, "I want to really test. I want to test so I don't guess." And being able to adopt the lifestyle changes that are suggested as a result of your testing and be just like you're in a science fair project. When we were kids, we all did these science fair projects and we were taught to do an intervention and watch to see what the result was, what's the outcome? You yourself are the biggest science fair project that you've ever embarked on, so having that curiosity is really super important.

AJAYAN: I know you also have a program for people who are interested in maybe helping others through their suffering, the health coach program. Do you want to say a couple of words about that?

DR. KEESHA: Sure. Over the years of doing this, 30 years in this, I've learned a few things and I have been able to synthesize and put together protocols that are really precise. I work with genetics and I work with testing and I can get super precise and individualized. I started teaching people how to do that for others, and it's through the Academy for Integrative Medicine, and it's a health coach certification program. You can become an integrative medicine health coach and have an amazing career being in service to others in doing this. A lot of you that are watching the Summit might be a Summit junkie. There are a lot of Summit junkies out there that are so excited about knowledge and research and you're already doing it anyway and sharing it with everybody that will listen; you can make money at it.

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I think health coaches are the missing link in the medical system right now, I call it the Uncle Sam model of medicine, which is standard American medicine. It has its place, but it's not for disease prevention and it's not for reversal of autoimmune disease. The Uncle Sam models says autoimmune disease is not reversible and indeed it is. You can do this for yourself and you can do for others. It's a fantastic program with an incredible tribe of people that have graduated and they're still in the program because their coming back for the mentorship. It's the only program that teaches you how to do the lab testing that I teach, teaches you how to do the business development that I teach, this is one of the things that makes us stand out from so many programs, and it's also, another thing that makes it stand out, is it's integrative medicine. It's combining Ayurveda and some psychology and some energy work and functional medicine, and you get this incredible array of scientifically proven protocols to help people reverse their own disease.

AJAYAN: Great. And if people wanted to know more about any of these things, drkeesha.com, or where would you have them go?

DR. KEESHA: Yes, drkeesha.com; you've gotten plenty of email from me. They can go to certification and take a look at that because it's really, like I said, very empowering. I always said that for abundance mindset, which is that free flow of friendship and vitality and finances and energy, you want all of that. For that to happen, people really want autonomy and they want money and they want time and they want freedom. By being your own boss and learning how to do something that's fulfilling, this gives you everything you could possibly desire. And you can work from home, that's the coolest thing.

AJAYAN: Dr. Keesha, thank you so much for joining us on the Women's Vitality Summit.

DR. KEESHA: Thanks for interviewing me. You are so good; I can tell you have a radio show.

AJAYAN: My pleasure. Really, the Summit is a great thing and I'm just so delighted that you're bringing it out again, so thank you for doing that.

DR. KEESHA: Thanks so much. Have a good one, everybody.