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## Transcript

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### Podcast:

[#106: Dr. Jill interviews the founders of Malachi's Message, Emily and Elizabeth](#)

### Text:

Dr. Jill 0:13

Hey, everybody! If you're live with us, hang tight. We're getting Elizabeth on. We just lost her for a moment, and then we'll get started. I know we're live streaming now. So hey everybody, while we're waiting for everybody to get back on board here, tell us where you're from in the chat box. Let us know where you're listening from.

Dr. Jill 0:29

This is going to be a really amazing interview on Dr. Jill's live episode today. I'm with new friends, Emily and Rachel, and I'm going to introduce them in just a second. As you know, you can find all of the podcasts on YouTube, on Stitcher, on iTunes, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Please jump in there and listen and review so more people can hear these episodes.

Dr. Jill 0:54

Today I am so excited to introduce Elizabeth Cripe and Emily Rachel. They're both from Texas, and I will introduce them each personally. But they founded an organization called Malachi's Message, and today we're going to hear all about what they are doing to help mold victims.

Dr. Jill 1:09

If you're out there, a lot of my patients, colleagues, friends, and followers have had mold-related illnesses. I've become somewhat of a mold expert due to my own experience. Today we're going to talk to these two beautiful women who are actually doing something for those of you out there who are suffering and maybe need some assistance. We'll talk all about that today.

Dr. Jill 1:29

Let me first introduce both of my guests. First I have Elizabeth. Elizabeth studied psychology in California. Is it California, Texas? That's a city in Texas, right?

Elizabeth Cripe 1:41

Oh no, I did my degree in California.

Dr. Jill 1:44

Okay, I got it. I saw that and I was like, "Is there a city in Texas [with that name]? She completed her teaching credential program in California. She taught junior high school and continuing high school students for seven years before becoming a stay-at-home mom—one of the most important things on the planet. Her family moved to Texas for a better life and a new job for her husband. After her second daughter turned one, they moved into an apartment that set her on her mold journey. We're going to hear about that today, so stay tuned.

Dr. Jill 2:13

Elizabeth and Derek, for a short time, were homeless and had no savings left to spend. Again, I know so many of you listeners know what that's like. They knew, after recovering, that the help of people in the position they had been in was the only option. Elizabeth's life was forever changed by the diagnosis of MCAS, PCOS, and celiac disease after mold exposure. She's not only co-founder of Malachi's Message but also serves in the capacity of executive director. Elizabeth, first of all, I'm so happy to have you here. We're going to hear your story, so stay tuned if you're listening.

Dr. Jill 2:45

Emily, I want to introduce you as well. I'm so excited to have you here too—both from Texas. She studied journalism in Austin before she found her passion in helping people build or customize their perfect homes. She loved everything about real estate until she and her family became victims of their home's toxic indoor environment. Her family suffered greatly, and she lost her second son, Malachi, who is the namesake of the organization Malachi's Message, in whose memory this foundation is. He inspires her to help people the way she wished someone would have helped them.

Dr. Jill 3:19

She and her husband Josh, since their mold exposure, have dedicated their lives to helping mold victims through their company, Texas Mold Inspectors in the Houston, Texas area. She is also a Co-founder of Malachi's Message and serves on the Board in the capacity of Board Chair.

Dr. Jill 3:33

You guys reached out to me, and we'll talk about how you connected to me. But I was delighted when I saw your fire and your message about what you were doing to help people.

Dr. Jill 3:42

There are a couple of areas, as a doctor, that I can't do a whole lot about. One is that I am not an environmental expert. I know a lot about the technicalities, but I can't go into a patient's house and find the mold and help remediate it. I have to rely on other professionals.

Dr. Jill 3:57

The other thing is, I always literally get a check in my heart when I'm sitting across from a patient because, as I tell them: "I really think there's mold in your home and it's making you sick. I know it's going to cost thousands of dollars either in remediation or moving"—or some people lose their homes. So I literally had tears in my eyes when I read the brochure and the things you guys sent me about Malachi's Message because I know those of you listening have had your own stories. And I want to hear both of your stories because so many people are suffering and it's just devastating in so many ways: emotionally, physically, mentally, to relationships and, as you know well, Emily, even loss of life.

Dr. Jill 4:38

So let's start. Tell me a little bit about both of your stories with mold and how you first encountered this kind of dark toxin. Then we'll talk about Malachi's Message. And maybe Elizabeth, do you want to start first with what happened to you?

Elizabeth Cripe 4:51

Yes, I'd love to. My husband was a fabricator in California for about 13 years. When the drought hit, he thought we needed to go into something more sustainable, so he got an apprenticeship in Texas as an apprentice lineman to climb power poles and make sure everybody's electricity is left on.

Elizabeth Cripe 5:08

I just have to clarify [something since] a few women have asked me: "Oh, you're married to a lineman? What football team does he play [on]." I have to go, "No, if you saw him you would know he's not a lineman."

Elizabeth Cripe 5:19

We moved here with great intent. We wanted to build an incredible life for our kids. We ended up in a studio apartment on an apprentice scale, and I had a high-risk pregnancy. I was on bed rest, so I was not able to work at the time.

Elizabeth Cripe 5:35

A year after living in Texas, we found a two-bedroom, two-bath apartment, and we thought, "Perfect!" We had two daughters; one had turned one the day before we moved into the apartment. We thought, "This is great. Privacy would be amazing." Within December 1st to July 9th, we had—my husband said he counted a week ago—over 200 doctor visits, ER visits, and specialist visits. We saw neurologists, ENTs—a long myriad [of] so many people.

Elizabeth Cripe 6:06

I was taken by ambulance three times to the emergency room for my throat closing with anaphylaxis. My daughters watched it every time, to the point that my youngest would just grab my leg if I went to the store because she was so scared that another ambulance was going to come and take mommy away. We just thought: "Oh, maybe it's the humidity. Maybe it's the stress of moving. Maybe it's just the stress of a new job and less sleep, or a new baby." She was still one. She was kind of difficult. Then all the symptoms started.

Elizabeth Cripe 6:35

My youngest, who was starting to talk when we moved into the apartment, stopped progressing at all. It got to the point that she stopped making sounds and she would walk into walls. She actually got kicked out of her daycare because they said she was too much of a liability because her daycare workers never knew when she was going to

fall and she would gash her head, she would scrape her arm. They said, "I'm sorry, we don't know what's going on." We took her to her pediatrician, who sent us to a neurologist. They said "Everything is fine," and we were like, "No, something's not okay here."

Elizabeth Cripe 7:07

My oldest was three at the time, and she was having bloody noses almost daily. I remember once in the shower pulling her hair and going, "Mommy, is this normal [for me] to lose my hair?" I'm thinking, "No, this can't be normal," and I'm asking doctors; nobody's giving me an answer. Both were hallucinating. Both would take four-hour naps in the middle of the afternoon after sleeping for 12 hours straight through the night.

Elizabeth Cripe 7:31

She was advanced for her age with speech, so she actually regressed to the point that she couldn't form a sentence. She was trying to say the word 'cat' and she would start yelling just sounds at us. We were like, "Baby girl, what are you trying to say?" She would get so mad because she couldn't understand why we didn't understand she was saying that there was a cat.

Dr. Jill 7:52

That's classic word finding for a three-year-old. We talk about word finding, but that's like a three-year-old's version of it.

Elizabeth Cripe 7:58

That's exactly it, the brain fog and everything else she was experiencing at a young age. My husband and I were very passionate people. We're very independent, but we're very respectful of each other, and we were experiencing mold rage. It's real. We were getting angry and yelling. We were like: "What is going on? This is not us."

Elizabeth Cripe 8:18

I was getting debilitating migraines. My OB told me I needed to probably have a full hysterectomy because they couldn't figure out where the pain was coming from. I was 35 at the time. It was not enjoyable, to say the least. I had hives on my back for months straight, and I'm like: "This is not normal. Oh my goodness! Everything's bigger in Texas, but nobody told me about all this."

Elizabeth Cripe 8:53

We talked to our landlord at the apartment and they said it was just dust. Then, I went to my allergist and got my shots and my throat closed again, and he said: "I can't even give this amount to a newborn. There is something in your environment." I thank God for that allergist. I went home and told my husband. That same night my daughter slipped; our AC was leaking. My husband started to go through every vent. He [said]: "Your doctor just said it's in our environment. You guys are home more than I am. Our AC is leaking. There's got to be something in our ventilation system." So he pulled all the screens off and looked, and he was like, "This is not dust."

Elizabeth Cripe 9:20

We searched online and read the reviews for inspectors, not knowing at the time the difference between a licensed mold inspector and somebody that was just doing it. Thankfully we got a hold of Texas Mold Inspectors. My husband called them. My daughters and I left. We came back and Josh was standing out there with my husband, who at the time had just had surgery on both wrists due to the exposure too. He just said, "Well, if you want to heal your family, you need to leave and not look back."

Elizabeth Cripe 9:49

At the time, I remember that my husband was on unpaid leave as an apprentice, and we had a total of \$111 in our bank account. We just looked at each other and went, "Well, then we have to leave." My oldest looked at me and communicated, "Can I go get my doll inside the apartment?" I had to tell her no, and that was heartbreaking. We didn't know. We called family. A good set of friends took us in on their floor that night. My daughters and I flew to California to stay with family. My husband still had physical therapy. So, unfortunately, for the next four months, he slept in his truck, on his buddy's couches near Galveston Bay. The buildings are older and they had a lot of mold, so he would leave there and go sleep in his truck. Then he tried to go back to the apartment once or twice, but he's like: "I just couldn't. I could feel it just suffocating me, knowing this is what tore our family apart. I just couldn't be in that place."

Elizabeth Cripe 10:45

We tried to pursue legal action and we found out there are some corrupt lawyers, unfortunately. We lost that battle, which was not great, but we tried. I have to say we kept trying, we kept fighting, and we eventually found a doctor in California. We found one that we thought was helpful, and it turned out they weren't—20 grand later. We found a second doctor; I call her 'my unicorn.' She is amazing. She found our toxins right away. She worked on my gut; she didn't detox us super hard. She was the one that actually diagnosed my mast cell activation syndrome.

Elizabeth Cripe 11:27

I have to say thank you to you at this point too, though. I know we talked before a little bit, but while I was searching and doctors were telling me there was nothing else wrong with me, I was looking at mast cell activation syndrome. I remember looking at some of the stuff you would put out there and going: "Okay, I'm not crazy. There's actually somebody out here saying this is real." It gave me the boost to keep going, keep fighting and keep trying to find somebody that would listen to my story. That was huge because I was still going through brain fog.

Elizabeth Cripe 11:55

We're five years out now, and I'm functioning enough to run Malachi's Message. But Emily knows that we became very fast friends, more like sisters at this point. Three years ago, I couldn't walk up a flight of stairs. My body was still so inflamed and I used to run five miles a day. So it just destroys you and almost tries to tear your identity and reformat who you are. And you're trying to look in the mirror and go: "No, I swear this is me, this is me..."

Dr. Jill

"... Still inside."

Elizabeth Cripe 12:25

Yes, like: "I'm still here. I promise."

Dr. Jill 12:27

Thank you for sharing. There are so many things in your story that I can relate to, my patients can relate to, and I'm sure everybody listening who's been through it—the brain fog, the relationship issues. I'm in the midst of writing my book, which is a partial memoir and also about environmental toxicity. And the same thing. I talk a lot about how the limbic system causes dysfunction and the ability to express ourselves, even inside, and to know what's happening, especially [when] communicating with other people.

Dr. Jill 12:53

You had this great relationship, like, "What is going on?"—because the mold affects our ability to communicate and even the emotions are crazy. Then your daughter with the words—that's so classic for many of us, word finding. Then, even the five years—I'm six years out and I feel I'm back to my baseline. I usually tell patients six months [at a] minimum, and often 18 months. It's a very long course.

Dr. Jill 13:18

So wow, Emily. Do you want to share just a little bit about your journey?—because you had a similar journey and then you guys got to Malachi's Message. Would you like to tell us a little bit about your journey, what happened, and then how you guys connected?

Emily Rachal 13:34

Sure. I'll start it before we went into our toxic home. I used to be that person that used to think everybody was crazy if they said that mold was dangerous. I used to work for home builders in Austin. I used to run their communities. I had this one client who, if I had actually looked at anything she had given me, I probably would not be sitting here today. But I had this one client who went crazy about mold. We were just about to move, and her window had broken during construction, and she was so afraid that if it rained, water was going to get in and create mold. [She'd say], "Oh my God, it's so dangerous!" I was like, "Oh, blah." She was sending me all these links to look at. I was like, "Mold is not that dangerous." That's what we're taught to think. I never looked into it.

Emily Rachal 14:20

A few months later, we moved into this townhome. I quit my job because I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom to our son, Sebastian, who was 10 months old at the time. So we moved to Livingston, Texas to take a different opportunity that would allow me to stay at home. Unbeknownst to us, we moved into this townhome that had all this toxic mold in the wall cavities, the HVAC system, and the floors. You couldn't see it, so it wasn't obvious. We also couldn't smell it, but it was so toxic. And this is where it was a blessing because, unlike a lot of people, when the mold starts to grow, only one or two people start to get affected—we were all affected that first week. Even my dogs were having issues. They were potting in the house when we didn't have any issues with them. They were scratching at themselves like they were infested with fleas. One of my dogs was gagging and throwing up.

Emily Rachal 15:12

The first symptom that I had was my menstrual cycle. Out of nowhere, it shifted from a very easy, non-painful one to an extremely painful one [with] very heavy bleeding. I also had terrible GI issues out of nowhere. Then, I developed this cystic acne all over my back, face, and neck—I'm in my 30s. Of course, a lot of people are saying it's stress. My son and my husband both developed sinus issues in that first month.

Emily Rachal 15:38

As we stayed in this environment, my son, who was already saying words, stopped speaking. He went to grunting and just making noises. The light in his eyes literally went away; it was like nobody was even there. He wouldn't respond to his name; he was



tired all the time; he was hitting his head on the walls and the floors; he was running into walls; he was walking on his tiptoes; everything set him off all of a sudden. You couldn't turn the lights on [or] make loud noises. He developed these symptoms sooner than I did.

Emily Rachal 16:10

About six to seven months in is when I started to really downhill fast. That's when I developed debilitating anxiety out of nowhere—the kind that puts you on the floor. You can't control it. [I had] hair loss, dark circles under the eyes, fatigue, joint pain to [the point] where you can't even close your hands because it hurts so badly. [I also had] breathing issues. Of course, the doctors couldn't figure out what was going on.

Emily Rachal 16:36

My husband—who was literally on edge with me because he was like, "What's going on with my family and more so my wife?" I was thinking, "Maybe I should just start thinking about divorce." But at that time, that's when he decided to stay home with me more to help me, and that's when his exposure level went up. All of a sudden, he started having random nosebleeds and fatigue. He developed terrible GI issues. He developed joint pain to [the point] where he could barely stand up in the mornings, so he knew something was wrong.

Emily Rachal 17:08

How we figured it out was that we left the environment to go visit my brother after 13 months, and that's when we all started to feel better. On our way back home, we had another God[-given] blessing. We got a text message out of nowhere when I was searching for everything but mold. These tenants, who rented a home from the same landlord just down the street, texted us to let us know that their son, Cody, who the doctors were saying may have cystic fibrosis, didn't, and that it was actually mold exposure. We had been praying for this little boy, and that's why they texted us. We knew right then that that was God saying, "It's mold."

Emily Rachal 17:54

So when we got home, we tested the townhome, and sure enough, we had extremely high levels of Stachybotrys, chaetomium, penicillium, and aspergillus—all of them at very high levels. So we left the townhome, and we thought that was when our nightmare was over. But then, we found out the remediation contractor was lying to us, the landlord was lying to us, and our mold inspector wasn't even properly licensed. We were taken advantage of left and right.

Emily Rachal 18:22

Because of my background and my husband's background—he had his own remodeling company—we decided to just go to the person who could give us the answers. We found out that we qualified to become a licensed mold consultant. We didn't plan on getting into the industry; we just wanted to get somebody to give us the answers. So my husband went to this class and while remediation was going on, I was giving them all the details. The instructors were telling us all the rules, laws, and regulations that were being broken.

Emily Rachal 18:49

Then, when he got back, we found out we were expecting our second child. That's when the landlord said everything was perfect and we could move back in. Josh went in. He did his own assessment, and, of course, we found out it wasn't ready for us to move back in. So we left and quickly found out how expensive going through mold can be because we got depleted financially.

Emily Rachal 19:13

Then we found out that we were losing our second son, Malachi, at 23 weeks because he had developed a terminal birth defect called anencephaly, which has been linked to fusarium mold. Thirty-one anencephalic children have had the whole correlation, and the species that were in my body also correlated. What happened was that my body stopped absorbing folate, which is what he needed to close his neural tube.

Dr. Jill 19:42

Absolutely. It makes perfect sense.

Emily Rachal 19:45

So we lost him. Landlords don't have to pay any price for any of this, unfortunately. But when we lost him, that really is what solidified our whole destiny in this industry, because we now knew the truth about mold and we also knew how corrupt this industry is with contractors. We wanted to go into it and be that honest voice and do everything we could to help people.

Emily Rachal 20:14

Then Elizabeth came along. It's very lonely when you go through mold [exposure]. Nobody really understands. So when I met her, she was my blessing to have a friend while going through it.

Dr. Jill 20:27

How did you two meet?

Elizabeth Cripe 20:29

No tears, Emily. No tears! [wiping tears away]

Dr. Jill 20:31

It's okay if there are tears. This is a big deal. I'm the same way. Both of your stories make me want to tear up, and I just want to reach across and hug you both. But to take something that's so tragic—both of you went through your own tragedies—and to turn around and try to help people, there's no better [more] beautiful thing that could come out of this. Back to: How did you guys meet?

Emily Rachal 20:58

I can tell you that because I'll never forget the phone call. It's interesting because I had actually just gone to their apartment complex with my father the day before because my dad was looking for an apartment. When we were touring the complex and they were taking us through the model apartments, you could see mold in the vents. I pointed it out to the lady and she told me, "That's not mold, that's just dust." So I was like, "No, that's mold." Then, she got mad at me.

Emily Rachal 21:29

The next day, I got a phone call from Derek, Elizabeth's husband, and typically, whenever people call me, it's usually the mom; it's rarely ever the dad. So I remember when he called and he just sounded defeated, like they'd been through such a nightmare, and he told me what had happened. I was like, "Yes, mold can cause that." Josh went out there the next day and found that what they were living in was an extremely toxic environment.

Emily Rachal 22:03

A few months later, Elizabeth sent me an email; I forgot why. But that's how we reconnected and we just started talking. Then she and I both, after going through what we went through and honestly seeing everybody else who goes through it on this side and by being in this industry, the number one hurdle that keeps people from recovering is the lack of finances. There's nobody there financially to help you; there's nobody to give you money to get a hotel. There's nobody there to help you replace your belongings; home insurance doesn't cover that. No health insurance is going to help you go to the proper medical doctors to get the testing and treatment. There's no financial assistance.

Dr. Jill 22:48

Let me just reiterate that because it's so important. And you listening out there, I know you know this if you've been through it. But fires, hurricanes, and all these kinds of things are typically covered; mold is not covered. I do believe insurance has gone to bat and created a state [where] most companies don't cover it because it's so common. They would go bankrupt if they covered all of the [cases of] mold.

Dr. Jill 23:10

Especially with you guys, you both had stories. As the contractors go more quickly, things get built more quickly and materials get water damage in construction. There are so many more things. You both probably have more knowledge of this than me. But it's so common. Especially the cheapness—now we make things instead of out of brick and stone and concrete—it's more cardboard. It's not [actually] cardboard, but it's like a porous material like particle boards or drywall that really absorbs moisture and can be just a nidus for mold. Or if they get damp while they're sitting on the lot getting ready to be built and they get put in your home, all it takes is a little more moisture and that mold will start to grow.

Emily Rachal 23:47

I was honestly shocked when we got into this industry because I thought we would be going to more flooded homes or older homes. But our number one clients [have] new homes. People don't know that. That's because the builder's contract has that arbitration clause that keeps all their lawsuits out of the public [eye]. But new homes are actually the number one home that we go into.

Dr. Jill 24:11

Wow! Now my thought is that [this is happening] because of more quick instruction, more shoddy work and stuff. But, did you see anything in particular that [has to do with] the materials or the kind of construction, or the reasons why we're having so much more trouble with new construction?

Emily Rachal 24:24

Yes, well first off, they're not all following the building codes. Air infiltration is one of the biggest issues. Using the wrong grout in the showers, a lot of times the builder's not checking and the contractor that they hired is using a porous grout and not a non-porous grout. So every time they take a shower, that water goes right through and right into the wall.

Emily Rachal 24:49

The HVAC system is another big one—improperly installed or not properly sized. So those are the three main ones that we find, and also the weep holes on the outside. I can't tell you how many times builders will put phony weep holes. They don't go all the way through because they forgot to do it.

Dr. Jill 25:03

What does that mean? Tell me more. I don't even know about the holes. What's that part of it?

Emily Rachal 25:08

The weep holes on the outside of the brick veneer at the bottom, that's supposed to allow for moisture to evacuate, because the stone or the brick isn't non-porous. So when it rains, moisture does get behind that brick. Those weep holes are supposed to allow for that moisture to evacuate properly and not sit inside of those wall cavities.

Dr. Jill 25:31

Okay, that makes perfect sense because of that exterior environment. Wow. I could hear [the far-reaching effects] in your stories, like with your children, even the regression of language and the relationship issues, which I think any of us who've had mold have gone through because we're not ourselves. Like I said, I was writing about the limbic system, which is the fight-or-flight response, and there's a lot of literature around chemical toxic exposures, and mold is no different. As you mentioned, Emily, people don't realize that these mycotoxins are immunotoxic, so they crush our immune systems. They are teratogenic, which can cause birth defects, as in your case. They can cause malnutrition, malabsorption, mast cell activation, and neurological brain dysfunction.

Dr. Jill 26:19

Dr. Dale Bredesen teaches on Alzheimer's and he says about one-third of the younger—50s and 60s—Alzheimer's patients are related to mold to one in three. He actually said that's probably an underestimate. So even new-onset dementia, in many cases, is mold-related. This doesn't surprise you guys because you have both experienced some of this stuff.

Emily Rachal 26:40

I believe it. I couldn't remember anything when we were in the thick of it.

Dr. Jill 26:46

Yes, me too. I was there too. People have heard my story, so I don't need to share all that. Interestingly, just a little bit about that was, I never thought I would go into [researching] mold. I mean, what doctor is even really taught about that? I knew enough about it to know it was real. My own experience after the Boulder floods and my office got flooded, I got severely ill, very similar to both of your stories, and I realized: "Oh my gosh! I have to learn everything I can, not only to heal myself but [to help others also]."

Dr. Jill 27:13

After I recovered, I've been seeing patients. I started going back to patients and really asking them the questions. As you well know, if someone had just said, "You have mold in your home," before you knew it, everybody's like, "No, I don't have mold in my home." So you have to get creative: "Have you had any water leaks in your dishwasher or your showers? Or, "Is there ever a musty smell?" Or, "is the attic vented properly?"

Dr. Jill 27:34

There are so many questions that get to the heart of this that people don't realize they have mold or they might have exposures because, like both of you said, initially it's usually not visible. We don't see it; it's not like there's black mold on the walls. It's hidden behind walls, under floorboards, all kinds of places that we don't think to look at, and often we don't even smell it. If it gets bad, there's a musty smell, but frequently you can be massively affected by mold and have no signs [of it] outwardly in your home. That's the scary part—not knowing.

Dr. Jill 28:04

So then how did Malachi's message come about? I know that it's after your son passed [away]. It was at 23 weeks, you said? I'm so sorry that you had to go through that.

Emily Rachal 28:17

He was diagnosed at 23 weeks. The hospital that we were at, due to their Christian beliefs, would not induce me like other hospitals would have for terminal pregnancy. So we carried him to term and he died at 35 weeks; we delivered at 35 weeks.

Emily Rachal 28:34

The way that the name came about for the foundation is when my husband and I, before we found out about the birth defect, were trying to figure out what we were going to name him. We finally decided on the name Malachi. I looked up the meaning of it and we just found that it was perfect for us at that time in our season because his name biblically means "our angel" or "my message." So we felt that he was like our angel from God, letting us know that everything was going to be okay and that he was also the message that we were going to get through this. For the foundation, we named the foundation in honor of him. But we also found that the name was fitting because we hope the foundation serves as an angel of assistance for those that it helps and also that it gives people a message of hope that they aren't alone and that they can get through this.

Dr. Jill 29:29

You're going to make me cry again. It's so beautiful. This is why I want to talk to you on here because I want to share your message. I want to share what you guys are doing. If more people could be like both of you and take something that was completely tragic in your lives—loss and suffering and all kinds of things—and then turn it into a blessing to other people, that's what our world needs more of. So then how did you found the foundation? Tell us more about what you guys do with Malachi's message.

Elizabeth Cripe 29:56

We started a conversation at that point, I think. It was probably more out of rants of "This shouldn't be happening to people"; like, "Our kids should have toys"; like, "We used all of our GoFundMe on medical bills that didn't help." It kind of started that way, and then we both healed enough to think a little bit clearer and go: "Okay, you know what? Maybe we should actually do something about this."

Elizabeth Cripe 30:19

Emily originally took on the legwork of all the paperwork and got us cleared with Texas and with the IRS. In the process, we were creating a lot of resources. At the time, we had some other women involved with us, and we were at an impasse on which direction to go. Should we just go resources or should we go foundation? It was really heavy on my heart that I just wanted to be the hands and feet that helped people. So at that point, I said: "Would you guys mind voting me in as executive director of Malachi's Message of the foundation side?—because this is really where I feel my calling is right now. I want to help people."

Elizabeth Cripe 30:56

At the time, I felt it was really important for my daughters to see that, to see that even though you go through tragedy... We're big on: Failure isn't shame; it's something that happens; it's a part of your journey, but you move forward from it. So I wanted them to see that you can make something really beautiful from something really ugly. We'll go into how we help people and the first kids that we helped. My daughter, the only thing she remembers losing are dolls. So she has a very, very unhealthy attachment to them, and we just let her have them at this point. She wanted to actually give some of her stuffies to the first kid that we were helping and asked if she could mail them to him or if we could go deliver them because she wanted to make sure no kid went through what she went through. At that point, I'm just sobbing in the store trying to get gift cards. Personally, that is why I looked at it.

Elizabeth Cripe 31:44

And Emily and I... we just clicked. It was bizarre, and genuinely, we are best friends. We do life together. It's weird. We joke and we're like, "If we don't talk and it's been three days, something's wrong; somebody must have died." But we just clicked and we both had the same heart, the same passion for being credible, for being above board, for being above reproach, and for making sure we did it the right way. So we worked on it for three years before we went live. March of last year is actually when we went live online with Malachi's Message. It was a three-year process of learning and growing and talking to people that had been there before us, and [we are] really still learning from failure but doing it as co-founders together. It's been a fun adventure.

Elizabeth Cripe 32:27

We decided on eight forms of assistance. We basically sat down as a team and went, "Where do we need the most help?" And from the people they've talked to because they are in the industry, going, "Okay, where are you hearing that people [have] the most need?" We went through, we had a very long list, and we went, "Okay, that's a little much!" So we brought it down to eight forms of assistance. One is specifically for military and one is specifically for minors.



Elizabeth Cripe 32:52

We said, "Okay let's do this! We're not sure how it's going to work or what's going to happen." We didn't have investors behind us. We're very grassroots still, and we went live. By word of mouth, we started talking to people. That's honestly how we're slowly growing is [by means of] our reputation and word of mouth and people going: "Oh okay, you're legit. You're actually helping people. You're trying to do this the right way." So that is how we started.

Elizabeth Cripe 33:17

We've been active for a year. In the last year, we've helped 18 different kids or families in four [different] forms of our assistance. Currently, we help with mold assessment reimbursement of up to a thousand dollars. We help with toy replacement for minors; we send them on shopping sprees with gift cards. That is a lot of fun. We've had multiple moms call us and be like, "My kid just cried and went, 'mom, why would they help us?—they don't know me.'" Nobody should go through that as a kid. You shouldn't have to wonder where your next game board is going to be. We help with clothing replacement and furniture replacement.

Dr. Jill 33:50

As we well know—people probably know this by now—you can lose everything. Not everybody loses everything, but [when it happens] it's a very huge loss. It's the same [inaudible] as some of these things, right?

Emily Rachal 34:04

Except you're all alone because it's not a fire or a hurricane. You literally go through it alone.

Dr. Jill 34:11

Most people don't understand, right? That's the worst part because they're like: "Mold—how can that be?" It's way easier to have cancer or have a fire in your home than it is to have mold because everyone understands.

Emily Rachal 34:23

Yes. It makes you [feel] even more alone because you can't talk about it because you feel people don't understand.

Elizabeth Cripe 34:35

My husband worked Hurricane Harvey here right after and a bunch of guys on his crew knew we had lost stuff to mold and they just blew it off until they all saw a line of people coming out of housing from a flooded neighborhood with their kids on their shoulders and one bag of stuff. One of his buddies looked at him—I'm going to keep it censored, they're linemen—and went: "Man! That's really got to suck losing everything like that without knowing about it." And the cab went silent, and one of them looked at Derek and went: "Oh my gosh! That is what you and your family just went through, isn't it?" There's no connection that does the same thing as a massive hurricane or a flood.

Dr. Jill 35:10

You're right. Absolutely, you're right. Literally, in my neighborhood on December 30th, we had a really severe wildfire come through, and about a thousand people in my area lost their homes. But it's the same thing. I mean, obviously, this is a horrible tragedy and we've been able to try to help the community, but it's very similar to that situation. So you guys just went official this year, did you say? Or March of last year?

Elizabeth Cripe 35:36

March of last year.

Dr. Jill 35:41

Here and anywhere you're listening or watching, I'll put links to Malachi's Message. If you're listening, I believe it's [malachismessage.org](http://malachismessage.org) and Facebook, the same thing—[Malachi's Message]. I've linked those here where we're live, but anywhere you're listening you'll find those. How can people support you guys? Are you a non-profit? Are you in the process?

Elizabeth Cripe 36:08

Yes, we were fully certified as a non-profit before we went live. We were certified in September of 2022 through the IRS, so all donations are tax-deductible. You can donate online or currently, we have our 'Pie In the Face' fundraiser going for a toy replacement fund. Then any funds over that go towards our mission where you can pick from, I think we have 22 people that have donated their faces. So you can purchase a pie and on June 5th they'll be thrown in their faces. It's fun.

Dr. Jill 36:38

What else is it that you guys need support with? Obviously, I want to get this message out, and hopefully, that will be a little help. But what else? What are your next goals? What kinds of things can people support your mission with?

Emily Rachal 36:52

Spreading awareness about the foundation and donating towards any tours of assistance funds would be very helpful, especially the military fund. I don't know if you've seen the military and what's going on there, Dr. Jill, but it's just horrible—what they're having to be put through. Have you seen that? Those conditions?

Dr. Jill 37:13

I've had patients that have come through that, and then my daughter's in the army. She's a captain, so I've heard her stories too of [being] on bases and stuff. But I don't probably know the extent of it. Is it really significant what you're finding [with] the housing?

Emily Rachal 37:26

I've never seen more toxic environments than the homes on base.

Dr. Jill 37:32

Wow! Is this all over that you're finding it?

Emily Rachal 37:37

Yes. They're not just dealing with mold but sewage, level 3 water contamination, lead, and asbestos. So getting them the answers that they need to know if their home is healthy is very important, not just for them, but [because] they're our military, our support. Those are the people that protect our country.

Dr. Jill 37:56

Tell us real quickly—I want to be really clear about what pieces [of assistance are provided] because you've got a couple of different parts: the kids, replacing toys and things, the military. We talked about support, and I'm going to come back to that at the end. Say someone has a need. How could they contact you? And what kinds of things are you helping out with specifically?

Elizabeth Cripe 38:19

They can apply online if they go to our website, [malachismessage.org](http://malachismessage.org), and they can click on 'apply' and all of the forms of assistance are listed there. They simply click the 'apply' button, enter their information, and then I review all the applications once a week and we get back to them. Currently, because we're still so young, we've got big dreams of being all over, right now we are working with Texas residents. We're doing that intentionally because I looked at it before this interview and we have over a hundred thousand dollars' worth of people on our wait list right now that have been

accepted and are just waiting for assistance—a lot of it with medical bills or with temporary housing. They can go there and apply.

Elizabeth Cripe 38:59

If they also want to donate to a specific person, we have two people more right now on our wait lists that are joining where they can donate directly to a specific person that's on our wait list, which is really helpful. So if you want to donate to a face and you want to hear their story, you can just click on their campaign and donate directly to them. Those are the main reasons; they're the main ways, I guess. The other one is our monthly [donations]. We have a few people that donate \$5 a month, and that's huge for us for our morale to see the monthly donation come in. It helps create sustainability and it makes me smile every month when I see it come in.

Dr. Jill 39:33

I love that you said that. There's no amount too small, right?

Elizabeth Cripe 39:37

Exactly, yes. Anything helps. We're a non-profit. We do this because people care, and the people that cared about us took care of us. Now we want to turn around and help people take care of other people. That's literally all we're about to the core. We're not doing this for selfish gain in any way, shape, or form. So yes, even \$5 a month is a huge help because it goes to help somebody else that just lost everything.

Dr. Jill 40:03

I want to put a challenge out there to you guys. I did not plan on anything like this, but as I'm hearing your story, I knew that what you were doing was important. The moment I got the brochure and Elizabeth contacted me, I just knew that you two were special and that your message and all that you went through [was also]. Like I said, I love people who take suffering and tragedy and pain and difficulty and turn it into a way to bless other people because I think that's part of why we're here on this earth.

Dr. Jill 40:30

All of us have loss and suffering. Not everybody has a mold-related illness, but when we can take something that's a tragedy and find purpose and meaning in that, not only does it give us excitement about life because we are able to turn that around, [but] we can go back to something really tough and say, "Well, that allowed me to get here and to really help people."

Dr. Jill 40:48

As you can tell, I almost get choked up because I'm so passionate about living my life that way to the best of my ability and also if I can [inaudible] people like you and help you out, I am so excited [to do so]. I love what you're doing. So what I'm going to say publicly—live—is that I would like to match any donors. I don't know if they can just put my name in the donation so that you guys can tell me what I match, but up to \$20,000. I would like to donate up to \$20,000 and I'll match anyone who will donate up to that amount. I will match [it]. I'm going to say this publicly. I didn't plan on doing it. But I would like to do that for you guys. So I'll put that out there and then if you're listening here, you can just donate. Malachismessage.org—is that the best place to go to put a donation in?

Elizabeth Cripe 41:31

That is. Actually, I'll put a form on our home page for that specific thing as soon as we're done here.

Dr. Jill 41:35

Perfect, perfect! So there'll be a form there. You can donate. I will match [it]. I've said it live—scout's honor. But hopefully, that will help you guys make a dent in the pile of people that are waiting to get help. I really believe in what you're doing.

Elizabeth Cripe 41:54

Thank you! Thank you so much; It's huge!

Dr. Jill 41:55

You're welcome.

Emily Rachal 41:56

Thank you!

Dr. Jill 41:59

Any last parting words of encouragement for people who are going through this? Or anything else that we can do to support you both?

Elizabeth Cripe 42:10

We have a podcast that we just launched, so you can check that out. We're really big on reminding people: you're not alone and you're not crazy; we both felt that way.

Dr. Jill 42:19

I love that!

Elizabeth Cripe 42:22

You're not alone. You feel it; you're not. So that's why we created the podcast, honestly, so that people can hear other people's stories too. And we love what you're doing; I love listening to your stuff. So just spreading awareness and helping us meet your matching goal, my goodness, that would help so many people right now on our wait list.

Dr. Jill 42:41

I love it. Any other bits of wisdom that you learned in this that you want to leave us? Say someone's out there and they're right in the midst of this and they've had a big loss, so they're trying to find safe housing. What would you tell that person? I'd love to hear from both of you, Emily and Elizabeth.

Emily Rachal 42:59

If they've just had a big loss and they're trying to find safe housing, I would say, "Listen to your gut instinct." If you are trying to find safe housing and you go into an environment, a lot of us have been sensitized; literally, we know that we're being exposed again. Unfortunately, this industry doesn't have a set protocol for inspectors to follow. So if somebody comes in and says everything's safe but you feel that it's not, listen to your gut instinct. I feel like that's a god-given gift; use it. That's trying to tell you that it's not a safe environment. Get out or go get another opinion. And don't lose hope. You can recover from this. You may not recover fully, but you can recover enough to regain your quality of life back.

Dr. Jill 43:45

Awesome! Elizabeth?

Elizabeth Cripe 43:46

I would go the other direction. This is why we work well together [we're] very yin and yang. I totally believe that emotions in your body play a huge role; they correlate. So I think grief is a big thing for me and encouraging people to remember to grieve what they've lost, even if it's in little bits and pieces. But acknowledge that you've lost something; that's also going to help your body be able to handle what's coming next. So I'm very big on grieving. If you're doing it with your partner, give them space to grieve. In the last year, my husband just started that process. Remember, everybody grieves differently and everybody grieves at different times. But it's necessary for your body to heal to be able to actually grieve and walk through the steps of grief.

Dr. Jill 44:29

I love that you said that because so many of us push it down and we suppress it and we don't really heal it and it comes back in our physical body to cause illness in some way. So that's a really important point to actually let yourself cry, let yourself grieve—whatever it is for you—to let those emotions flow through. Sometimes they feel overwhelming like they're going to take over, and they won't. It's like a wave where it'll come and go, and it'll probably come again and again. But I love that you said that because even for physical health, that's such a core thing.

Dr. Jill 44:57

Well, I am so blessed to have time with both of you. I love what you're doing. I'm so excited to hear more today and to support you. I wish you the very best in all your endeavors. Thanks for your time today!

Emily Rachal 45:10

Thank you, Dr. Jill!

Elizabeth Cripe 45:11

Thank you!