

Transcript

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Podcast:

[#117: Dr. Jill interviews Dr. Jeffrey Rediger about Cured: The Science of Spontaneous Healing](#)

Text:

Dr. Jill 0:13

Well, good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to another episode of Dr. Jill live! I am here today with a special guest, Dr. Jeffrey Rediger, and you are in for a real treat. I know you've heard me say that sometimes before. But today it is just an honor to bring this doctor here who's really talked about some cutting-edge science around spontaneous healing. I know if you've listened to me, you understand that there's more than just the physical body and that often, even through our thoughts, the way we emotionally interact with our environment and all the things that have happened to us affect our health and our journey in that process. We're going to dive deep into that, but also just into the science of how the mind affects the body and how the mind affects the immune system.

Dr. Jill 0:57

Many of you know my own story, overcoming breast cancer and Crohn's. So this is a topic that's especially personal to me because I've been on that side of facing my own mortality at 25 years old and not knowing if I was going to survive. Now I'm one of your stories. I could have been in your book. As far as how this happens, I've lived it, and so I am related to those things.

Dr. Jill 1:19

Let me just introduce him formally, and then I want to let him talk. Dr. Jeffery Rediger is a physician, bestselling author, and popular speaker. He's an assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, the Medical Director of McLean SE Adult Psychiatric and Community Affairs at McLean Hospital, a licensed physician, and a board-certified

psychiatrist. He also has a master's in divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary. His research on remarkable individuals who have recovered from incurable illnesses has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show and the Dr. Oz Show, among others. He's been nominated for the National Bravewell Leadership Award and has received numerous awards related to leadership and patient care. His best-selling book, "Cured: Strengthen Your Immune System and Heal Your Life," is available on Amazon and in local bookstores in multiple languages. I want to be sure, if you're listening here, you will have the links to get that book because I just think it is one of those things you will not want to miss reading. I just finished myself.

Dr. Jill 2:15

So, Dr. Rediger, what I always love to start with is a story because, as you know, a story is so profound not only in our own healing journey but even in how we get into doing what we're doing. So tell us a little bit about you and your background. How did you get into this journey to where you're writing a book about spontaneous healing?—especially with regards to the fact that you're a very conventionally science-grounded, well-respected physician, and this is kind of bridging those two worlds.

Jeffrey Rediger 2:43

Yes, well, this has been a very personal journey as well as a professional journey for me. Similar to you, I grew up in the Midwest on a farm in a very conservative tradition. My father came out of the Amish tradition; my grandfather was a blacksmith in the Amish. We left the Amish community outwardly when I was two, but my parents didn't so much leave inwardly. So we moved to a small farm about 35 miles away, and we had tractors, a car, and those kinds of things. But there was a lot of suspicion and rules against listening to the radio. I was supposed to be on the bus but tune the radio out [mentally] on the school bus.

Dr. Jill 3:24

Not many people know this, but I didn't have a TV growing up either. It was in the closet and it was like this big secret. So even with television, I understand that because even though it wasn't the exact same tradition, there was that thing [where] you don't listen to a lot of the media. So I totally get it.

Jeffrey Rediger 3:38

That's right, yes. It took me years, actually, before I started letting myself psychologically hear the words of sinful rock music. But yes, a lot of restrictions and fears around TV, around science as being evolution and the tool of the devil. And so, the long and short of it: I was growing up in a very different culture at home than I was

experiencing at school. There were a lot of good things about growing up on such a conservative farm. My parents grew some of their own wheat, so we had whole wheat bread. We had a lot of very healthy foods. But it was also a very emotionally constricted and physically and emotionally violent home. So I think that also fed a lot of my questions. My life has been an effort to study the things I needed to learn in some ways. I was trying to figure out what's was true. When the worldviews at school and home are completely incompatible, it's challenging, so I began at a really young age trying to figure out: how do you know what's true?

Jeffrey Rediger 4:47

I was pretty rebellious as a kid, mostly because I just wanted the freedom to think for myself and went to college. Then in college, I had these wonderful professors who helped me begin thinking about: what are the interdisciplinary underpinnings for how you understand what's true? These different disciplines are all next to each other, and they are trying to answer similar questions from a different vantage point. So, then I went to a seminary at Princeton. That was a continuing journey to figure out: how do we know what's true? And then I began to study the relationship between science and faith, and theology and spirituality, and became convinced that science is a great tool of truth. It's a partial and limited tool of truth, but very important.

Jeffrey Rediger 5:40

Then I went to medical school. I came home one weekend to Indiana, and my best friend's mom from high school asked what I was going to do with all my education. I was in seminary at the time studying a lot of great ideas, and I said, "I'm going to be a professor." And she said, "You're going to get all that education and not do something to help people?" I was still living in two different worlds, so education was suspect. So when I then decided to go to medical school, that's something that people from the world I came from understood much more easily. It was a world that they valued and made more sense. So, going to med school was a perfect solution for me. It gave me something practical to do that the world I came from understood. But it also left me free to study ideas—theology, spirituality, psychiatry, and all that. So that's what I did.

Jeffrey Rediger 6:32

Then, right after I finished my residency at Harvard, back in 2002, an oncology nurse from Massachusetts General in Boston came to me and asked for help explaining to her son that she had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. That's a devastating diagnosis, as you know. Usually, people die shortly after diagnosis with a brutal, painful, really difficult death. And so I helped her explain that to her son, and then she took off to her healing center. She began to write and call me, saying that she was seeing some amazing recoveries, and she was hoping I would look into it. I declined, thinking that nothing likely was going on that couldn't be explained through normal medical science.

But I owe a lot to Nicola because she was very persistent and she began telling people to send their stories to me, to send me their medical files.

Jeffrey Rediger 7:31

I continued to decline for a while, but I did begin to look at the reports. And although most of them I could explain through being a great chemotherapy responder or something like that, the upshot was that there were some of the stories and medical files I had no explanation for. So, in 2003, I began to study this formally. The last 19 years have been a journey of incredible professional and personal transformation. We talked about turning worldviews upside down; it's turned upside down many of the assumptions I had learned in med school, even in seminary, in my residency in psychiatry. It's been a journey that has meant the world to me because it's improved my own understanding of what illness is, what healing requires, what our lives are about, and what my life is about. So, I've been a slow learner, but I'm very grateful for the opportunity.

Dr. Jill 8:38

That is amazing! And in hearing your story, there are some things that are really profound. I could tell from the book that number one: I love that you're a truth seeker. I feel the same drive in my own heart, because if we really, truly desire truth and to find it, then we can take things from all different backgrounds, philosophies, religions, and even scientific backgrounds and pull them together.

Dr. Jill 9:03

And what I loved, you said something else that I've always found: I have a very strong spiritual belief and faith, but I also have a very strong scientific background, and I never feel like one is more important than the other. Like we talked about right before we got on, I'm a medical doctor, and I feel like in the allopathic world I'm still well respected because I use great science in how I treat these patients. But I'm open-minded enough to say, "You know what? I don't know why this happened or how this works"—which is what your journey has been—"but I'm willing to look at it and maybe ask the questions [such as], 'what else is possible with your healing as my patient?'" And those things, honestly, I see among our colleagues, are kind of rare.

Dr. Jill 9:41

I saw your book and heard you and I'm like, "This is a man after my own heart" because I know that seeking for truth—and faith can be whatever background, we're not saying it has to be how you or I believe. Wherever you come from, that idea that there's more to life—that meaning, that purpose, that depth, which we'll talk about, and the

science—you don't have to take one or the other; you can actually have both and have a deeper, more meaningful understanding of life, right?

Jeffrey Rediger 10:09

Yes, that's so well said; I think that's fundamentally true. There are things that science can study because science is about the evidence of the five senses; it's about the things we can see and touch. And that's really important for understanding our world. It's the gift of Western culture to the rest of the world. But, there's also more than our hearts can tell. And those are things that are harder to prove. We can't prove the existence of love, we can't prove what it means to have a really quality relationship. Not all of those things can be captured by science, but yet they're really important. So being able to use both our left brains and our right brains is harder, but really important and very meaningful.

Dr. Jill 10:51

It's so true. It sounds like you started the journey kind of like me. I was a bioengineer; I was all analytical. I was completely left-brained, very masculine, driven, and all of that. My family were all engineers—farmers—definitely high-level. I've been practicing for a little over 20 years, and what I've learned is that the most important ahas in healing and things that I've seen are actually trusting that intuitive side and that things don't always make sense. And I always say, it's almost like this old analog computer, the analytical mind can do this process of data calculation and can do maybe thousands of data points. But when we go to a heart-centered, intuitive place and take both, I feel like millions of pieces of data in an instantaneous second, our subconscious can come up with answers that aren't possible through just purely analytical [thinking].

Jeffrey Rediger 11:37

Yes. I think that's absolutely true and so well said. There are different ways of knowing, and science is important, but it's not the only path to knowing the truth. And you're right, intuition and what we know at a deeper level in our hearts and our guts is pivotal and critical.

Dr. Jill 11:54

You've got so many stories in your book, and you clearly encountered something amazing. And now you probably have a mailbox full of people wanting to share, right? But tell us just maybe one or two or a few of the things that maybe were changes, because I want to talk about maybe a story. And then, what are some of the foundations that you saw in healing that were common? And I love that you said it wasn't always diet; in fact, many times it wasn't. There was this deeper—so let's talk a little about,

first, maybe a story or two that got you thinking in a different direction on one of your patients.

Jeffrey Rediger 12:27

Yes. There are so many stories, it's hard to know where to begin because every story is kind of a universe unto itself. And there's no way to capture that magnificent, nuanced universe in one short story in the book. And I did the best I could to capture as much as I could—to capture the essence. But these stories are amazing. I start off by talking about Claire, who was diagnosed in 2008 with pancreatic cancer. Actually, [it was] the worst kind of pancreatic cancer—pancreatic adenocarcinoma—[which was] diagnosed by five biopsies. So we know she had it; we know that is the right diagnosis. I started off with her story because there's something about the way she tells it that's universally human. It's both very specific to her but also touches on so many universally human parts of our journeys.

Dr. Jill 13:22

She was the one that was about to retire, looking forward to her... ?

Jeffrey Rediger 13:25

Yes, that's right. She believed in science, but after investigating what the Whipple surgery was—which was going to remove a lot of her abdomen and leave her with side effects for the rest of her life and probably still not leave her with a clear path to recovery but with chronic pain most likely—she decided that, in spite of her deep belief in science, she didn't want to pursue the surgery because she didn't want to live with that kind of pain and complications.

Jeffrey Rediger 14:00

[inaudible] ...whom you have a grudge, for example. She had struggled with some issues with her mother, for example, and that was in 2008. Time began to go by. She had been told that she had a year to live or so, and before you know it, it was 2013. She's been making a lot of changes in her life, not immediately, but progressively and steadily. She had an abdominal CT in 2013 for unrelated reasons, and the cancer was gone; that was a shock. So then she began to backtrack and figure out how this happened.

Jeffrey Rediger 14:52

One of the reasons I started off with her story is also that she has a website and so people can go into more detail than I had room [for] in the book. It's livingwithpancreaticcancer.com. Claire just writes very humbly and humanely about her journey, about the mistakes she made, about the things she learned. She's one of

the people that taught me that [it's] not [that] one diet fits all, that it's not about a particular dietary approach. It's not about a particular type of meditation. It's really about finding the steps towards healing and well-being that work for each one of us, and there's a lot of variation around that. But there are some very common threads and pillars. So that's what she did. She faced death.

Jeffrey Rediger 15:50

She was one of the people who taught me, among many others, that facing death can often become its own release, its own doorway into a different life because if we die to a less authentic version of who we are and become more authentic in our lives and relationships, that death then renders a person with a different kind of life, different boundaries and relationships, and even changing relationships, letting some relationships go, letting toxic relationships go, letting more emotionally nutritious relationships come into one's life. So it's just a fascinating journey. I was very touched by her story.

Dr. Jill 16:30

I love that. I deal a lot with environmental toxicity, whether it's heavy metals or mold or infections or things, and those complex chronic cases that end up being chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, or cancer. But what I've found is kind of what you're talking about here is that transformation. So I'm writing a book right now, too. But the bottom line was, it was going to be about environmental toxicity and toxic load in these things, but what I found is the biggest and deepest healing, even in these patients who maybe don't have cancer, is the toxicity of relationships, personal trauma, identity—all these deeper issues. Those things are so powerful to shift the needle even more so than living in a clean house, breathing clean air, drinking clean water, and eating clean food. I really liked that you said that because there are a lot of books out there about cancer that say, "This one diet does it!" You and I know that's not true. Maybe it worked for a few people, but the truth is, it's not a one-size-fits-all [approach]. And I really love that you talked about that because a lot of people still think, "Oh, maybe if I would have eaten perfectly or done all the right things..." And, it sounds like to me, where your book has gone, it's really the level above that—how we think, our relationships.

Dr. Jill 17:37

And like you said, when we face death—I know that because I've been through that at 25, facing cancer really did almost shed a level of caring about—I could just be like: "You know what? I've already faced death." And I always joke that it's like I have nine lives, so what the heck, why not risk it a little bit more? So often we're afraid to risk and we can be afraid to risk even in showing up as our true selves. Tell me more about that because it feels like that's such a root that was really underlying most of the healings was something about finding the true self, living authentically, or we can also go into the

default mode network, one of my favorites. But talk about this deeper piece of identity and relationships—how does that play into this healing that you've seen?

Jeffrey Rediger 18:20

Yes, it's certainly true that of the four pillars, whether it's healing one's nutrition, healing one's relationship with stress, or healing one's immune system, those are certainly important. But the pillar of that, over and over, was the point in the conversation and in the interviews where people would sit up, they would get a light in their eyes, and they would say, "This is why I'm so grateful for the illness because this is the thing that changed my life." I became convinced that some people could eat cat food and still get better because they made such deep changes in their understanding of their value and the elimination of false beliefs. It's shocking how deep this goes. One can walk around this, trying to get a sense of the size of this.

Jeffrey Rediger 19:11

It's shocking, for example, how often when a person is diagnosed with cancer, they will be, of course, terrified at one level, but sometimes at another level, more often than you would think, there's this kind of relief, like, "Well, I guess if I only have six months to live, I don't have to take over the family business like the pressure is putting me on from my parents," or "I don't need to go to law school because everyone is expecting me to." Or, "I don't need to do this" or maybe "I don't need to be taking care of everyone else in my life because now I have a reason to focus on my own needs and I have," in their minds, "a legitimate excuse" for beginning to finally focus on what they need for their own well-being. That decision to begin letting go of a false self that's taking care of everyone else instead of also paying attention to our own authentic needs and our own right to have a life that has well-being to it; that shift is what I believe is about the healing of identity and waking up to the value, the magnificence, the goodness of what we each bring into the world; and beginning to focus on that and to heal our traumas, to heal the critic in the back of our minds who's telling us we're not good enough, that we don't have value, there's something wrong with us, or there's something defective with us. And those false beliefs cripple us more than I think we can easily see and limit us.

Dr. Jill 20:44

Yes, it's so well said because if I had to put it in a nutshell, some of this really amazing healing, not only in my own self but in my patients—I grew up in a culture, maybe similar to yours, maybe not, where loving yourself was frowned upon. You're supposed to be humble, love others more than yourself, love your neighbor, and there was this real emphasis on giving of yourself, sacrificing yourself, and martyrdom, which is all beautiful. It creates wonderful, loving, beautiful people. But if those same people, including myself, don't first love and value themselves as a unique individual that has a

voice, has a reason for being, and has a purpose and meaning like you said, then what happens is that at the core, there's almost this self-loathing.

Dr. Jill 21:29

I'm sure that, especially with autoimmunity, there's a metaphorical connection between self-love and [self-]loathing. And it makes sense that it's the body attacking itself, right? The physical body is just mimicking the mindset of that attack. I realized that and had to really shift. It started with not only that, but trusting that I knew what might be best in a situation versus relying on everybody else to tell me what I should be or should do, and then also actually loving myself, realizing that I was valuable.

Dr. Jill 21:56

Those [steps] seem so simple. For those of you listening who may already have found that, it's maybe not that big a deal. But for those who haven't, those shifts are profound because you can start living then from an authentic place, saying no, setting boundaries. And it sounds like you've seen a pattern, probably more with cancer—I know for sure breast cancer. I think Gabor Maté talked about those overly nurturing, overly caring individuals. Is that a common theme with cancer, taking care of everybody else and neglecting your own soul and self?

Jeffrey Rediger 22:25

Yes, and it's a huge theme. Now that my eyes are starting to open to seeing illness in these ways more deeply and to ask questions about what is underneath the illness and perhaps contributing to it, it's really helped me begin to see illness and recovery through a completely different set of eyes. Cancer is an autoimmune illness, right? All the major killers are autoimmune illnesses: heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, autoimmune illnesses, and cancer. These are, by and large, autoimmune illnesses, which basically means that the brilliant cells of the immune system, all these specialized battalions, have turned against the body they swore to protect and have begun to attack the body.

Jeffrey Rediger 23:19

That's part of what chronic inflammation in our bodies is—whether it comes from poor nutrition, or from toxins in the environment, or from the constant release of stress hormones like cortisol, norepinephrine, or adrenaline—the chronic inflammation is the immune system going awry, which leaves us so much more susceptible to cancers and autoimmune illness. If we have mixed beliefs—both true and false beliefs, conscious and unconsciously, about our value, about our bodies—then that's what the immune system is reflecting in some ways, I believe. And certainly, that's a complicated, multifaceted discussion. But our deep beliefs about ourselves, the beliefs that are true, the beliefs

that are false—if we have mixed beliefs, some true and some false, we will have mixed results in our lives, in our minds, and in our bodies, I believe.

Dr. Jill 24:21

Well, I love that you say that, because I think that's another core is that the subconscious stuff that we're maybe not even aware of, if we have these parts that are kind of fighting—unbeknownst to us, we're like, "I believe I'm worthy, but I'm not worthy," or "I believe I love myself, but I really kind of hate myself and hate my body"—those things are probably warring on the inside. I had breast cancer at 25. I got over that and then Crohn's disease a year later—and again, autoimmune in nature—and I remember, like, "I'm fighting."

Dr. Jill 24:51

Now this will make sense to you. I grew up on a farm with our three brothers and a sister too, but lots of male [influence], lots of "Pull up yourself by the bootstraps," "work hard," "don't be lazy," "be strong," "don't complain," "don't cry." All those things were part of the culture, and it made me a very strong, resilient person, so I'm grateful on one hand, but what happened was that I happened to be—now I know this, but I didn't know back then—I'm really sensitive and very highly intuitive. I suppressed that part of myself so that I could be strong and tough and everything.

Dr. Jill 25:21

So I was this fighter, and I came to [have] cancer and Crohn's, and I did the mental thing. I always knew the will of the mind; Victor Frankel's work on the mind is so powerful, right? And I knew in my heart, "I can beat this, I can overcome it"—I was so confident and I did. But that whole fight kept me sick until I got a mold-related illness and got really sick with cytokine inflammation, an innate immune dysfunction. I realized about 10 years after the cancer: that fighting analogy and that fighting mentality that I had grown up with were actually killing me because what I was doing was revving up my immune system. All my cytokines were off the charts. And I was like, "Wait, I have to change this message to my immune system!"

Dr. Jill 26:01

I literally started that day meditating on my blood cells and meditating on them being peaceful. I remember just thinking of the little minions, those little yellow guys in the movie Minions. They were these peaceful warriors, but they were whistling; they were escorting the toxins out of my body. There was no fight. And that's the day, Doctor Rediger, that I felt like my health really started to shift. And there's been a lot more than that. But I love that you say that because these messages subconsciously, yes, helped

me survive cancer and Crohn's, but had I kept going with that mental message of fighting, I would probably not be here today.

Jeffrey Rediger 26:35

Yes, that's such an important point, I think. Many of the women who talked to me about their recoveries spoke about consciously shifting away from the militant battle language towards a language that was more about loving the body, loving the immune cells, and a much more compassionate and inclusive way of understanding. I think some kinds of language work better for different people. I wonder if there's some gender specificity here. I mean, we all have both masculine and feminine aspects to us and different kinds of sensitivities. I remember Jerry, this battle-axe of a Texan. He was Jim Bowie in the Alamo reenactment every year in Texas. He talked about beating two kinds of cancers. He used the battle imagery a lot to create images of him going after the cancer cells in his body. That worked for him. But so many people, including Claire, felt they needed to have a more loving and inclusive energy.

Dr. Jill 27:50

I love that you say that both are needed, though, because, at 25, I think I needed that fighting mentality. So I think you're right, there's this place for it. But then for me, it ran away and got way too [intense], and my immune system went way overactive. Let's talk specifically about the immune system because—neuroendocrine immunology—we have this new science that actually brings it all together. So the great thing is that the stuff we're talking about now is getting more and more researched; it's very grounded. But tell us a little bit. What does that mean?—because there really is this connection of mind and immune [system], and endocrine [system] and how they all work together.

Jeffrey Rediger 28:26

Yes, and you're right. And it must be so great for your patients and your listeners that you know the science around being able to test for cytokines and things like that. It's just a really exciting time that there are different worlds of what's going on in the lab and the ability to detect these in ways in which our immune system is impacted by stress or different kinds of toxins. It's a really exciting time. These things are now just starting to be able to be measured, tested, and captured in real-time in people's bodies. But yes, it's a big subject.

Jeffrey Rediger 29:01

What we do know, on the basis of both laboratory data and clinical experience, is that there's a huge difference between a body that is being bathed day in and day out with stress hormones like norepinephrine and adrenaline or cortisol, and what that does to the beautiful immune cells of our body. They become sluggish, they begin to fire

incorrectly, or they begin to attack the body instead of the pathogen, for example. And we know that a body that is in a more parasympathetic mode, where the mind is more relaxed, where a person can experience more uninhibited loving and compassionate feelings for both themselves and others, that's a very different neural chemistry. Dopamine is about pleasure pathway and purpose, and oxytocin is the love molecule, the antidepressant molecule is serotonin, etc. So, those are two really different sets of neurochemistries, and the body reacts really differently. In the parasympathetic mode, the immune cells wake up, function correctly, and hit their proper target instead of the body. It's a very different physiology, and that's what allows the body to heal.

Dr. Jill 30:20

As I'm thinking just listening to you, what happened in the last couple of years, the pandemic, loneliness is at an all-time high with isolation. Now everything is back to normal. But I feel like what I've seen—at least in my clinical practice—is that the stress levels and the stressors in life have been at an all-time high, right? I feel like we're going to see more and more illness because of this, and unless we have the tools to deal with it... What are your thoughts on that?—because I feel like the stress levels are really escalating, probably more than they were in decades past.

Jeffrey Rediger 30:53

Yes, I think they are. I think we're pressing towards the need to change the way we live. I wish and I've tried unsuccessfully to get a more national discussion going about these kinds of things that you and I believe and talked about. I think it's ridiculous that we put the whole burden of dealing with COVID on just the three strategies. If the only things in our toolbox are masking, quarantining, vaccinations, and a few things like that—I mean, those are important and they are valuable—but that puts a lot of burden [on people] when we have a lot of other strategies like healing our immune systems. We have a culture where we weaken immune systems regularly, even in the way doctors [such as] you and I were taught to treat patients: we need antibiotics to bring down the fever that's fighting the infection; we give anti-inflammatories too easily; sometimes we give immunosuppressants when battling cancer. There are so many ways in which we could fire up the immune system.

Jeffrey Rediger 32:04

Back in the days of Louis Pasteur, the father of the germ theory, he did this great thing, and it was a really important step forward. But it was a partial step because he and a few others, like Claude Bernard, argued for their entire professional lives: Is it the bacteria that causes illness?; Is it the pathogen, the bacteria and the virus, that causes illness?; Or is it more that we are surrounded by millions of bacteria and pathogens inside and outside of our bodies all the time, and it's just when something in the body breaks down that the pathogen can invade? Claude Bernard stood up in front of his

class, drank a glass of cholera, which was a terrible plague at that time, and he [basically] said: I know how to take care of my immune system. "I know how to take care of my inner terrain," what we now call our microbiome, and so "I'm not going to get sick." And he didn't. We have well-documented evidence that Pasteur—who said it's all the pathogen, it's not how you take care of your body—on his deathbed admitted that Claude Bernard and his colleagues were right, and that the terrain is everything. But that's not what we did. We took the easy answer and said that it's all about taking an antibiotic or taking an antiviral. Those are important, but they're just half the story. And so we also need to create healthy bodies that can fight off pathogens, and we don't do that in this country.

Dr. Jill 33:30

I love that you're talking about this because, like you said, we know there were great measures. Especially in the early days when we didn't know what was going on, we were perpetuating a lot of fear, right? And we know fear is so harmful. The second thing is fear—there's so much evidence about fear versus love. If you think about loving your immune system just like the man you just mentioned who took the cholera, he had no fear. He was all about loving his immune system in a way; you could almost imply it that way.

Dr. Jill 33:53

In the early days of the pandemic, we were pandering fear, and the other piece was isolation. If you look at loneliness and mortality, that's a bigger risk factor than smoking, alcohol, or all the things that we think of as high risk. Loneliness is epidemic, especially [in] the elderly and some of those [groups]. Again, we did the best we could. I'm not trying to comment on the rightness or wrongness of the measures that we did take; I don't think they were wrong. But, there's more, right? You and I know that. I was looking and saying, "Wait a second," and I remember talking about vitamin C and writing about vitamin C and getting curtailed. I was like, "Wait a second, vitamin C—what kind of risk are we taking?" It's just unbelievable that we weren't talking more about what we could really do. And that's a minor thing for the immune system, right? There are other things that we can do.

Jeffrey Rediger 34:44

But these factors are important. Antioxidants do play a really important role.

Dr. Jill 34:48

Vitamin D and some basics on...

Dr. Rediger 34:50

Yes, exactly. So yes, I appreciate that you can also walk these two worlds and see what's true and what's distorted in both. That's so important. We need both worlds.

Dr. Jill 35:03

Absolutely! I can see all sides; I understand, and yet, there's more. Can we bring more to the table? I hope you and I can bring up that discussion for sure. So you mentioned the pillars. But just so people listening are clear, all you listeners, if you haven't gotten enough [time yet] to buy this book, I really want to say that again, we will have links. Cured is the name of the book; it's so worth your read. You'll have lots more stories than just here today. But go ahead and mention the four pillars again. I want you to briefly talk about those, but especially the last one.

Jeffrey Rediger 35:36

Yes, so the four pillars are about healing our nutrition—and that's a big topic, because there's so much misinformation about nutrition. I can remember where I was sitting and what the, basically, short paragraph of nutrition education we received in medical school was.

Dr. Jill 35:54

Yes! It was about IV TPN for surgery, right?

Jeffrey Rediger 35:58

Right, exactly! Completely upside down. In my case, it was completely wrong. I think the trifecta of industry who pays the academics for certain results with nutrition research and how that interacts with the lobbyists and the food recommendations that are published by the government is complicated. Science is important, but it's also a bit of spin science or business science. And so we need to just be aware that there's a lot of distortion and misunderstanding there. And doctors, nurses, and nutritionists have been given a lot of misinformation. So studying these people who got better and had medical evidence for recovery from incurable illnesses was a really helpful window for me into a truer understanding of nutrition. It helped me begin to understand the importance of eliminating most sugar, which is the favorite food of cancer and is highly inflammatory for the body.

Dr. Jill 36:57

I just want to say that with my breast cancer, that was a big turning point. That wasn't the only thing, but I totally agree with you. I think it's in mice studies with sugar and cocaine that they chose sugar every time. It's more addictive to our brains—the [effects of] dopamine.

Jeffrey Rediger 37:11

It is, yes. Over 100 years ago, the average person in the United States ate five pounds of sugar a year—not a big deal. But now the average person needs 154 pounds of sugar a year. Our bodies are not made to take in that level of load, and [yet] it tends to be in so many things. I was at Whole Foods recently; it was in the salmon that I almost bought. It's in soups, it's in tomato sauces, it's in so many things, and it's highly inflammatory. As doctors, we're taught to basically attach a radiolabeled marker to glucose, inject it into a person's body, and if there's a place in the body that's actively sucking up that glucose, sucking up that sugar, there's a strong likelihood that's cancer because that's cancer's favorite food. So the fact that we don't translate that into helping our patients change what they eat, or we dismiss dietary or nutritional changes, is ridiculous. And I can tell you story after story about people who changed their diet significantly and eliminated a lot of sugar and the effect that had on their health and how it contributed to the disappearance of cancer, for example.

Jeffrey Rediger 38:20

So the first pillar is nutrition. It's important, but like I said, the healing of identity and beliefs can be even more powerful, I think. The second pillar is the healing of our immune systems. That's a big deal in a world where we tend to be taught to do things that weaken the immune system and certainly don't buff up the immune system and make it the powerful workhorse that it can be. Healing our stress response is the third pillar, and that's a big deal.

Jeffrey Rediger 38:53

I'm always a little bit against the idea of just simply eliminating stress because sometimes stress does need to be eliminated, but we also can't eliminate all the stresses in our lives. Sometimes we don't really want to eliminate—I mean, raising children can be stressful; taking care of aging parents can be stressful; having a job where you have to drive in rush hour can be stressful. I think we all have to decide what's the toxic stress in our lives or what's the challenge stress that allows us to reach into our higher self and become a larger being able to manage more stress. I'm a runner; running is really good for me. Running a marathon can be challenge stress or toxic stress depending on who you are and how you take that in and process that. So I think challenge stress helps us reach into our higher self and become able to manage more stress.

Dr. Jill 39:59

Yes, I love that you say that, because if people think like: "Oh my gosh, I have stress in my life, I'm going to die" or this fearful mindset—it really is our relationship with stress, isn't it? If we can just have a [relatively] calm [life]. For me, it's knowing that things are

going to be okay and that I will have the resources that I need. So I can have really stressful events, but there's a deep inner well that's like, "I know I'll have what I need when the time comes, even if I don't at the moment." And that really relieves that risk. It's really how we perceive stress that allows the chemicals like cortisol to go up, right?

Jeffrey Rediger 40:29

That's right. Yes, if we relate to that stress with fear, you're right, it creates a whole neurochemistry of fear and stress. If we can relate to it in a way that we don't feel like we have to be in control, we can relax, we can feel compassion for ourselves and those around us, and if we can experience it as challenge stress instead of toxic stress, that's a whole different neural chemistry. I think there are times when we have to help people leave toxic stressors and toxic relationships. If a person comes home or goes to work every day and they're just taught in direct or indirect ways that they don't matter, or there's something wrong—they're not good enough for who they are—that can be a form of toxic stress where a person just simply has to leave and set up boundaries against that. I think understanding the difference between challenge stress and toxic stress is really important.

Dr. Jill 41:23

I love that you mention toxic relationships because I could not agree more. [Concerning] my own healing and the healing of so many patients, like you said, when you come to a life-threatening diagnosis, you realize, "Okay, is this relationship really good for me?" Sometimes you make it better and you heal the trauma. And sometimes you say, "No, I'm walking away," and those are both good responses. But often, it takes a pretty life-changing event, or at least some awareness, to be like, "Okay, this is not good for me." Again, this is beyond our conversation, but often we have patterns from childhood or other times in our life or other people that have conditioned us to feel like that's normal. And maybe they're really, really toxic, but our physiology is used to it, so we think it's normal and healthy, right?

Jeffrey Rediger 42:04

Yes, that's a really important point, I believe, because a fish doesn't know what wet it is, it doesn't know anything else. I think back to how many of the stories I see [are] of people whose stories are invisible in our culture. And that's particularly relevant in some of the areas of real social injustice, where we have whole communities whose stories are not heard, they're not valued properly, they're oppressed for having a certain kind of faith, a certain color of skin, or a certain kind of sexuality. The deepest form of oppression in our world, I think, is when someone is treated as less than someone else. And the truth is—different spiritualities talk about this differently—we all bring the light of the Divine into the world. And it's not like some of us have more of that light than others; we all have the same degree of value, the same quality of light

that we bring into the world. We need to see behind the masks that we wear to see the value and goodness of each person. I don't think we can really heal anything until we understand that.

Dr. Jill 43:19

Oh, I could not agree more. And tell me about the last pillar.

Jeffrey Rediger 43:25

And that's related to this. It's about healing our beliefs, our unconscious and our conscious beliefs, and healing our false beliefs so that we can wake up to the value and the dignity of what we and others bring into the world. I think we all grow up in the world and we pick up beliefs, some of which are true, some of which are false, from our parents, from kids on the playground, from our teachers, from our partners, from peers, and from the way we interpret different experiences we have. Some of them are traumas, whether they are major traumas—shock traumas like child abuse; physical, emotional, or sexual abuse—or just the drip, drip, drip of feeling like we're not good enough for being told we're not good enough in some way. I think there's something in the deeper self that doesn't rest until it experiences unconditional love—unconditional positive regard. I think something in us is always scanning for that, and there's something in us that doesn't rest until we can find that. Ultimately, we have to be able to give that gift to ourselves. But we also need an environment where we limit the access of people to us who are overly judgmental or critical. There's something in us that does not do well with criticism and judgment.

Dr. Jill 44:48

Oh, I love this. And I love falling on this [topic] because again, in my clinic, it's science and testing and doing all this stuff, but at the core, I realized this, and I'm sure you've seen this as well: if I create a space for someone to walk in, and know they are loved and accepted... And I'll even tell them, "I love you." We were taught in medical school, first of all, don't share your own experience—there's this barrier, right? But I feel like when I show up more authentically and give them permission to do the same... And then also, it's little things like giving them a wine glass filled with water when they walk in. They're like, "Wow, I must be [special]." It's just silly little things, but they feel like they're valued and that I really do care about them. And that, I think, is a container for healing. I don't know if I could scientifically prove it, but I know it's true and I'm sure we'll have more and more evidence. It's creating a space for them to be heard, for them to know that nothing they can say is going to be judged by me—I can be open to anything—and that they truly are, by my staff and myself, loved. That, I think, is the true secret to helping healing.

Jeffrey Rediger 45:53

Yes, I really believe that's true. Science is validating that more every day as it learns how to touch and test these deeper, more intangible dimensions. Science has come a long way in that regard in the last 30 years. So our science is getting better; our understanding of the importance of intuition is getting better. The cross-fertilization of different cultures is helping us realize that the Western left-brain approach is not the only way to understand the world.

Dr. Jill 46:19

Right, there's more.

Jeffrey Rediger 46:21

There's more, yes. From my standpoint, one of the things that people often want to talk about when we talk about these things is that all of our institutions for thousands of years have been deficit-based. They're based on what's missing from us or there's something wrong with us, and then we need some kind of external expert. In medicine, it's all about the disease. We now know that the elimination of disease is not really where it's at. The person needs and deserves a level of well-being that's far beyond just getting rid of the disease; it's not just focusing on the disease. Psychology has historically been about childhood deficits instead of focusing on what's right and good about us. Psychiatry has been awful about reducing human problems of living to neurochemical defects.

Dr. Jill 47:25

And you see the evidence [of what you're saying] just a few weeks ago [with experts weighing in] about "does serotonin deficiency really exist?" and the questioning of the science behind all of what we put on for SSRIs.

Jeffrey Rediger 47:34

That's a false idea. That whole thing of a chemical imbalance was thought up by pharmaceutical companies, but it doesn't exist. So, our human problems of living and suffering, and trauma and healing—yes, there's a place for medicines, but those only treat symptoms—if you want to heal, you need a new and truer experience of your value and your goodness. But then religion for thousands of years has focused on things like original sin instead of original blessing—the fact that we're all created in the image of the Divine. But I think our whole world is trying to grow in the direction of a more positive understanding of who we are and our value, and to liberate the individual and communities from these deficit-based beliefs. So we're in a very exciting time where there's a lot of fear about those new beliefs.

Dr. Jill 48:27

You're right—the shift is happening, and the science is following that. And the fact that you could study this when, even 20 or 10 years ago, it was extremely difficult to talk about this and still be respected in our field [is a sign of progress].

Jeffrey Rediger 48:46

That's right.

Dr. Jill 48:48

I remember years ago in medical school, people thought I was crazy because I was always open to other things. I was still enmeshed in the traditional allopathic training model, but I would always be open. What happened was that they thought it was crazy. But now, 20 years later, when there's a problem, they'll call and say, "Jill, we haven't been able to figure this out. Do you have any ideas?"

Jeffrey Rediger 49:09

Yes, you were ahead of the pack, and it's so important now. So what 20 or 10 years ago looked crazy, now we know that that was on the path of what's really important.

Dr. Jill 49:25

Thank you for all your work. You had a lot of people coming to you first, and you're like, "Oh, I don't know if I want to go there with that study." And then eventually, you immersed yourself and wrote this brilliant book. I love what you've written and want to share it with everybody. But what would you say on this journey has been your biggest shift in thinking or your biggest aha?—there are probably many. But if you had to pick just one, what was the biggest turning point for you in all of this?

Jeffrey Rediger 49:54

Well, I think there are different ways to say this, but one way of saying it is that in all of my training—I think part of this is because I was trained in a western way of thinking both in medicine and also in theology—I was taught that the body is who we primarily are, and I don't believe that anymore. I believe that now we are basically these invisible selves or souls walking around and the body is an instrument for something we're trying to learn because when you see these amazing shifts, where a person will have a new truer experience of who they are, the body changes so quickly sometimes to catch up to that new understanding. Sometimes healings take 10 years, sometimes they take 10 months, and sometimes they take a really short amount of time—I mean, we're talking like a day or less, or hours. So it's shocking when you see some of this stuff and can document it. So I think when the deeper self or soul in us has a new and truer experience of our value and the dignity we bring into the world, then there are a lot of

implications for that, because now when I'm ill, or when I see people who are ill, I'm curious about what the deeper self is trying to say to them through these symptoms—is there a message? The body keeps the score. The body tells the story—we just have to listen.

Dr. Jill 51:17

Let me just paraphrase because I think I totally get what you're saying. I remember this with the cancer. Early on, it was confusing. I was in my 20s—I didn't know much. In fact, for me, there was a scripture: this isn't for death, but for a greater purpose. That's basically paraphrased. I remember hearing that and getting curious, and then I realized, even though I didn't know anything back then, I had this sense, like, "Okay, this is here to teach me something." And I grabbed on to that, like a raft boat for dear life. And I'm like, "I don't know what this is—I might die—but I'm going to try to learn something on the journey." But that is kind of what you're saying, and that truly in all of my illnesses and overcoming has been such a core. Even now, this morning, my refrigerator broke, my internet wasn't working, and I wasn't sure about all these things. I'm like: "Okay, what's going on here? Am I not paying attention?" Not that everything bad happens to teach us a lesson, but if we can always look for meaning and purpose, and transformation in the journey, it makes it a fun, exciting ride.

Jeffrey Rediger 52:19

It really does. Yes, I think that's well said. I think sometimes our illnesses are speaking to us about what we are afraid to see or understand. They speak to us out of the shadows of our lives; they speak to us out of what we're afraid to see. So, that for me requires a very painful death sometimes. I have to die to old ways of believing; I have to be willing to surrender and let go of some of my beliefs so I can see something differently. Honestly, I resist doing that with every fiber of my being. So there are things I do not want to see and I want to keep them in the shadows. I don't want to see the parts of my life where I've hurt people, or where I need to make reparations, or whatever it is. I think good and evil cut through the hearts of every one of us. They're not outside of us, they're in us. I view evil as something where we make mistakes. It's not something we often do consciously, but we can hurt others without realizing that. So, finding ways to begin seeing what we don't want to see or what's hard and painful to see and dealing with those—which are often rooted in trauma, in my experience—that's where liberation and healing, and restoration can occur. And that's not a simple process.

Dr. Jill 53:43

No, and it's so true. And then at the same time, the other thing we were just talking about is self-compassion. I literally learned years ago to kind of say: "Oh, sweetheart. You know what? You might have messed up this time. But let's get up and try again." [I

learned to have] that compassion because I didn't have that when I was growing up. But then I started to shift and know: "Aw, I messed up; I did something wrong; I want to make it right"; or "I want to shift my thinking." But also, at the same time, having that compassion, which you just described so well.

Jeffrey Rediger 54:09

Yes. You mentioned Gabor Maté. He says [that] "if you don't know how to say no, your body will" eventually "say no for you."

Dr. Jill 54:19

Yes, it's so, so true. This has been one of my favorite interviews. I am so grateful for your time and all the goodness you put into the world, and even the self-searching and trying to find truth because that's where it starts. So first of all, thank you from me and, I'm sure, from all the listeners. Where can people find you? What's your website? Where can people find your book? Tell us more about you.

Jeffrey Rediger 54:40

Yes, thank you. DrJeffreyRediger.com is my website, and *Cured* can be found in local bookstores; it can be found on Amazon. It's in lots of languages at this point. It's confusing because it's got different subtitles but it's the same text. It has lots of different book covers and lots of different subtitles because of the different translations, some of which are still English. But [there are] different sensibilities in the UK versus the United States, I've learned. So it's all different but it's the same text.

Dr. Jill 55:13

We'll put links to your website. Thank you again for your time today. I really appreciate it and all the work you're doing!

Jeffrey Rediger 55:19

You have an amazing journey yourself, it sounds like. Thank you for having me!