

[Resiliency Radio with Dr. Jill: The Making of the Movie Doctor/Patient with guest Aaron Carnahan](#)

Dr. Jill 00:00

Welcome to *Resiliency Radio*, your go-to podcast for the most cutting-edge insights in functional and integrative medicine. I'm your host, Dr. Jill, and in each episode, we dive deep into the heart of healing and personal transformation. Join us as we connect with renowned experts, thought leaders, and innovators who are at the forefront of medical research and practice, empowering you with knowledge and inspiration and aiding you on your journey to healing.

Dr. Jill 00:25

Hey guys, if you've seen some of these special episodes, today is no different. I am so excited to announce that you can now watch my film, *Doctor/Patient*, at [DoctorPatientMovie.com](#). You can rent it, you can purchase it, and you can share it with friends. Today is part of a special series of episodes about the making of the movie. You've seen a few episodes already, and today is a really special episode with Aaron Carnahan, who, no, he's not my brother; this is my ex-husband, who actually worked with me to produce the movie. Welcome, Aaron. I'm so glad to be here talking with you about the movie!

Aaron Carnahan 01:04

I am so excited to be here! I'm so excited to be talking with you, and I'm excited that we're at this point. Finally, we're able to share the film with other people! So, thank you.

Dr. Jill 01:14

Me too! And before we jump in, let's watch this clip to set us up for our conversation.

01:24

Dr. Jill: We had just gone to Aaron's father's funeral. And when he came home about a week later, I remember being excited to see him again. And when I opened the door, I didn't even recognize this man that I had been married to for 20 years. His eyes were like, hollow, and there was no... there was no connection. And he didn't waste much time. He said, "Jill, I don't love you anymore." I think my mind couldn't handle how that shattered my bubble of

what I thought was true.

02:32

If I had to describe the feeling, it was kind of like a trust fall with nothing behind you and like a free fall that just keeps going. And the place I tried to go immediately was: "Maybe I can fix this. Maybe there's something I can do."

Dr. Jill 02:53

Whoa! [laughter] That's crazy watching this.

Aaron Carnahan 02:59

Okay, where do we go from there? [laughs]

Dr. Jill 03:00

[laughs] We just happened to dive right into the heart of maybe one of the most poignant and painful moments of the film, so there's a lot here that we have to unpack. I'm just delighted to be here. Here you and I are years after the tragedy of our divorce, but also [because of] the beautiful transformation that it did in both of our lives. And we're friends, and we just made a movie, right?

Aaron Carnahan 03:29

That's right.

Dr. Jill 03:30

But today, one of the things we really wanted to talk about—

Aaron Carnahan 03:33

And I appreciate you saying that right now because everybody who just saw that clip's going, "That son of a..." [laughs]

Dr. Jill 03:38

[laughs] Right. And it's just genuine. I love you; you love me. We have great respect for one another. But I want to start with that. People are out there and they're in breakups or they're just post-breakup. They're maybe in a relationship that's not great or they're struggling. This is real life, and it's connected to our health and mental state.

Dr. Jill 04:00

I want to just put that on the table because what happened was the rupture of a relationship after 20 years of marriage. We had a good marriage, but at the end, it was a clear rupture. What happened, though, as we look back, was that rupture caused us to get a divorce and go really, really, really deep into our own—your own and my own—personal trauma around connection, intimacy, and relationships. What happened was so beautiful because it was painful and hard, but the places we went to allowed us to be the people we are today who are in other relationships but also have deep respect and admiration for one another and can actually work together in making a film. What's your thoughts on that, Aaron?

Aaron Carnahan 04:55

First of all, I think those were some of the most beautiful things about making a film with you and making a film [in general]. We didn't set out to make the film—and we said this in the podcast with Daniel—to make a film about Dr. Jill. It was more about functional medicine and the way you do medicine. So it was, but it wasn't. And then the story just turned. Like so often happens, a movie just becomes what it wants to be, especially a documentary. It just becomes what it wants to be. Even inside of that, man, this was a huge turn—putting all of this in and our story and our relationship into the film and all of that.

Aaron Carnahan 05:39

The thing that's powerful about it to me is realizing the work that we did and the trauma that we both worked on independently after we divorced—how it not only affected our emotional state but it [also] affects our physical health. And that whole concept that if you want to get well, you have to feel that you are worthy of being well—that's powerful, powerful stuff.

Aaron Carnahan 06:13

To me, it was an interesting choice to put that into the film. But I think it was so right and [that it was] the right choice to put into the film because it has a lot to do with healing. Healing isn't just physical; it's also emotional and spiritual. A lot of times, those emotional and spiritual things can affect your physical health. So I'm super glad that we put it in. It's hard to watch at times. Every time, it's super hard to watch, but I know it's right because it's real. It's real life.

Dr. Jill 06:46

Yes, me too. From my perspective, we were going to do this—a film on environmental toxicity, mold-related illness, and complex chronic things—because so many patients are suffering. We wanted to bring awareness, patient stories, and just a little bit of my story. Then, as we got deeper and deeper into it, we realized: We have to share at a deeper level than we were initially comfortable with.

Dr. Jill 07:08

What happened was that in the final cut of the movie, you and Dan, as director and producer, went to places that I was afraid to share. Some of the scenes in this movie you're going to see I call the 'ugly cry scenes.' I'm raw and real and it's so authentic because none of this was scripted, you guys. [It was] literally me sitting in that chair.

Dr. Jill 07:27

If you can imagine this, Dan and Aaron are on the other side of the camera. I'm sharing about the trauma and tragedy of the divorce when my husband told me he didn't love me anymore, and he's standing on the other side of the camera. The real deal is that this is happening in real life.

Dr. Jill 07:44

I did a first take and Aaron and Dan were like: "No, get real." And you sat down with me. You were right in front of my face and you were like: "Jill, I know I'm here and I know this is going to be hard for you to say with me in the room, but I need you to be brutally honest. I can take it. You can say anything you want." You gave me permission, Aaron. I mean, you were behind the camera right there with Daniel. You gave me permission to share because, before, I was like: "I don't want to hurt you. I don't want to say things that put you down. I want to honor you and I always have and hope I always will." But you gave me permission in the filming to say: "This hurt. This was devastating. This was so hard." So what people don't see is the fact that you're in the room as we're filming. How did it feel to hear it that night we filmed?

Aaron Carnahan 08:34

It's interesting because once we made the turn and realized that this was the film, this was your story, I knew instinctively that what that meant was that it couldn't have any of my perception of what happened. Or, it couldn't have any of my

perception of what you should have been feeling or anything. So when I said those words to you, it was coming from a place of: "It doesn't matter if what she says hurts. It doesn't matter if I don't remember it that way. None of that matters because this is her story." So that really helped me to be able to deal with it.

Aaron Carnahan 09:19

I will say that there were times when my nails were probably digging into my leg as I was sitting there or whatever. Not out of anger or anything, but just out of deep regret for the way I had ended things because I did realize where I was and that I was a shell of myself in that moment and all of that type of stuff. But the really cool thing is that after we would film, I probably asked for your forgiveness—oh, gee!—20 times throughout the filming. [laughs] And you would just reassure me.

Dr. Jill 10:08

We had healing in this filming, didn't we?

Aaron Carnahan 10:10

There was so much healing. There was so much healing for us. There was so much healing for us. It was so beautiful. It was so beautiful. I would say I love that you went in those places. It was very difficult but I knew I had a job to do and my job was to hear you and hear your voice. And I knew that it would not translate unless you were authentically you, which meant that you were allowed to say what you authentically felt.

Dr. Jill 10:36

Yes, and not screening it or—

Aaron Carnahan 10:37

That's what you did. I was so proud of you for doing it. I was so proud of you. Dan and I just looked at each other like: "There it is! There it is!"

Dr. Jill 10:47

Thank you for allowing that, because for most of my life, part of it was saying what I think people want to hear or trying to be the person people want me to be. And in this filming, you gave me permission to say the hard things and not filter them. I don't want to hurt you or anyone else.

Dr. Jill 11:08

And this is what's relevant too: If you're listening out there and going through a difficult time in your relationship, we're all broken people. We're all human with the trauma that we bring in. And we bring in trauma to heal. If you can think about your relationship as a container for you to transform into the best version of yourself instead of it being about your happiness, all of a sudden you're going to find amazing things happen.

Dr. Jill 11:32

I believe the divine brings people into our life who are going to poke us at the deepest wounds, and it's going to be the most painful. This could be friends, business relationships, and definitely spouses and partners. In those relationships, if you could know that those people who are closest to you are going to probably poke your wounds, that's part of the healing. If you can take that old wound—that old pattern of living, thinking, or being—and take this poking of that wound and start to transform it and act differently, you get to heal and you get to experience things.

Dr. Jill 12:06

At the point of the divorce, which was around 2017, we were both broken, traumatized little kids. And we got to go to those places after the divorce separately and deal with the healing. So much happened that we could, years later, when we started filming in 2021, come back together as friends and [be] truly respectful—deep friendship and deep admiration. It was hard but I think that through all of it, I saw that there was a brokenness. I knew there was to me, and I thought there was to you too. I think this is the key of healing and forgiving—when you see the other person as doing the very best that they can despite their trauma and their wounds. And there's this thing called unconditional positive regard. When we extend that grace to someone and say, "I know you're doing the best that you can," that's powerful, isn't it, Aaron?

Aaron Carnahan 13:03

Absolutely. Absolutely. The beauty in capturing it... Even when we decided to put this in the film, you still don't know if it's right. You don't know if the audience will understand, see the importance of it, or whatever it might be. Even for me, just so you know, you even went deeper into some of the stuff with me in the interview

that hit the cutting room floor. I remember telling Daniel. It just devastated me because you were just being real. I said: "Dan, let's put it in the film. I'm not worried about me. I'm not worried about what people think of me. Let's just get this story right."

Aaron Carnahan 13:55

He made it clear to me: "You don't have to put in every single wart and thing. You don't have to. Not everything that you did wrong needs to be said. It's not important to the story." He was a really beautiful check and balance to say: "You're just saying that because you want to make sure that you're taking responsibility for what you did wrong. I get it. But it's not needed for the story, so you don't have to go into every single detail or whatever." And I loved that so much.

Dr. Jill 14:30

Yes. And I want to just say, to your and Dan's credit, I could not have possibly had a better... Number one, you knew my story through illness. And we're going to go next to that—how a spouse deals with illness from 19 years old when we met all the way through 40. So you saw this journey in real life. And to have someone on the other side of the camera who had been there with me when I was vomiting from chemo, when I had no hair...

Dr. Jill 14:57

Speaking of that, I'll never forget that time when you looked at me after the surgery and I was all scarred up and everything. You said, "I don't care." You said, "I don't care." You said, "I will love you no matter what through this." And I remember that. So to tell that journey with someone who was there...

Dr. Jill 15:12

[With] Daniel, the same thing: Nothing but compassion and kindness. You guys created a space in the filming—and I think you guys will feel this as you watch the film—that is so raw, authentic, and vulnerable. But you cannot have your actor or the person who's on-screen do that unless it's safe. And do you know what you did? You created great safety. And do you know how we did that? It's unconditional love. It's like creating this space.

Dr. Jill 15:39

And I love this definition of love for partners, spouses, or filmmakers: It's creating a space for another person to be the optimal transformative version of themselves. You create the space for transformation to happen. How was it or what do you think about [how] you and Dan brought that to the crew, the movie—everybody who was there—and even the patients? What was it about how you filmed that brought that vulnerability and authenticity?

Aaron Carnahan 16:07

I think the key was that right from the start, with Dan's and my company, even before we turn on a camera, we want to be a source of love and light. We want the experience for anyone who is a part of it to be a beautiful experience, not necessarily painless—because it gets difficult to relive your past and for some of your patients to relive their past—but to extend love and to share with them that we want to honor them and everything that they do. So we were able to do it by being intentional. It's what we want to do in our daily walk in life and every single thing that we're doing. We just want to love and honor people and lift them up. So that was actually easy. I'm glad it translated. That's your hope, but you don't know that it will translate.

Dr. Jill 17:08

I remember literally powwowing with the team on different shoot days and really sharing with them. Our intent was just to love people, transform lives, and inspire. And you could see the crew themselves. We had some incredible experiences with everybody we worked with because it was on the set. I think you and I talked about [how] we had the idea of this film that now is reality, but when you're filming it, you're still in the pre-stage. And you, Daniel, and I decided: It's about the filming today. It's about the transformation today. It's about the experience today.

Dr. Jill 17:41

I think that intentionality [is] around: How do we love people today on set? How do we make a safe space for Burke, Alyssa, Jamie, Ryan, and everybody who showed up in the film and others to just be themselves and know that they're going to be loved and accepted? I think you guys did a phenomenal job of creating that space.

Aaron Carnahan 18:01

Thank you for saying that. And you were a part of that as well.

Dr. Jill 18:04

And it's interesting; I think people get this when they watch it, but this is not scripted. You asked questions, of course, but everything you see in this film is literally like, "Jill, what do you think of this?" And I spout out this or I start crying about this. It's very raw and very real. How did you, as a filmmaker and even ex-spouse, think about that as far as bringing that vulnerability to the screen non-scripted?

Aaron Carnahan 18:36

It's really difficult. Daniel and I are also writers, so you want to script it; you want to write it. You're like, "Oh, that would be amazing!" And you just can't do it. The key is being in the moment, being present, and allowing it to be what it wants to be. I think for me, that is a very difficult thing to do normally. So it was a process of really pushing myself to be okay with it not being what might be in my head—especially when it goes back to "This is Jill's story," "This is Burke's story," or "This is Jamie's story"—just allowing it to be and unfold as it's supposed to. It took a lot of practice and a lot of patience to do that. And it's much different than doing a narrative feature because you can't draw the lines. You've got boundaries, and things are bouncing inside of those boundaries, and it goes in ways that you can't imagine.

Dr. Jill 19:39

I love how the end product turned out. It's almost scary, which means we're probably on the right track with how vulnerable it is. I think people who know me and have watched it are like: "Oh my goodness, I can't believe how much you shared!"

Dr. Jill 19:52

We just got off the call with some of our marketing team, and one of the comments was that there is an earlier version out there. It was good. But then we all went back to the drawing board. I think you and Daniel first said, "Hey, Jill, we've got to go way, way deeper," and you started pulling some scenes and things that were very scary for me to share. What happened was that on this call, right before this recording, she was like: "Oh my goodness! This version I watched—I was bawling like six times [inaudible] because it's so much deeper and touches me much more on that level." So what we realized is that we had to go there because that's the humanity of us all.

Dr. Jill 20:31

Do you remember the point where you and Dan said: "This isn't the movie we're going to make; we have to switch and shift"? And then the scariness of opening up a film—from a filmmaker's perspective, what happened there in that shift? Because we were done. We had submitted it, right?

Aaron Carnahan 20:45

Yes. I think instinctively as a filmmaker, you know: "Oh, we did a good job. It's good." But it's not what it could be. It wasn't exceptional from my standpoint. That's subjective. But for me, I wanted it to be exceptional. I wanted to make something I'm proud of and that I could be like: "Yes, I was a part of that. I was part of creating that." I knew instinctively that it had to go to greater depths. And I knew instinctively that it might mean that we needed to put stuff about our relationship into it. That meant I needed to be okay with that—not okay with that but desire it.

Aaron Carnahan 21:38

If I remember right, we just had to build it and say, "Jill, this is going to scare the hell out of you, but you have to watch this." And we were like: "There's no way it's going to fly. There's no way it's going to fly. There's no way it's going to fly." I remember that—knowing it was so much better but not knowing if... We had told you from the beginning: "We will not release anything that harms you," because it's released like that. So I remember that moment of sharing it with you and you being like: "Ugh! This scares the hell out of me but it's so right."

Dr. Jill 22:14

I knew when I was crying at watching myself cry. I could feel that girl. I call it the 'ugly cry scene.' I see that scene and I'm so touched. It's so real, it's the heart, and it's some of the most vulnerable stuff I said there. I knew it needed to be there, but it's ugly. But that's my ego in the way.

Aaron Carnahan 22:35

Yes. The irony is that all those things that we're worried about [have to do with] what other people think. People can only connect with those parts. It's hard to connect with Dr. Jill, the rock star, on stage. That is a part of who you are, and you connect with an audience. But that's you on stage and everybody else is in a seat. Where people connect is: "I've had ugly cries like that! I've been hurt in a

relationship like that. I've been sick and no one understands." That's what really relates to people—those dark moments. It's just that most people don't share those dark moments with the rest of the world like you just did. But those are the things that people can really connect with. And that is where the true healing begins.

Aaron Carnahan 23:26

Ironically, I think—having now sat in your office as you're talking with patients—what makes you a fantastic physician is the fact that you're willing to go into those deep places with people and share and be vulnerable even about your own life with them inside of those places. Not always, just when it's right. But I think that's something that, because you're able to be vulnerable with them, they're able to share deeper and go deeper with you. And I think that's pretty darn amazing.

Dr. Jill 24:01

Thank you for that. I think you're right. There are so many levels. You, as a filmmaker, created this safe space where it was okay to be totally vulnerable. I knew I could say anything—and of course we could edit it out—but also that it was safe for me to express my deepest fears, joys, sorrows, and hurts in a place. If I can do that in the patient realm too, where I create a space for them that is full of unconditional love and unconditional positive regard, then that is the start of healing. It was healing for me in the film, and it was healing for patients. So it's this reflection all across.

Dr. Jill 24:44

Let's shift because one of the themes upon themes here is that... We were actually surprised. We did a premiere last year and as people walked out of the movie, we interviewed [them] and found out: What touched you in the film? What impacted you? Something that we were both really surprised at was that there were two or three incidents of spouses that had seen it together where one spouse had been chronically ill with Lyme, mold, or some autoimmune or complex chronic illness. And the spouse came out with tears in their eyes and said: "I understand now what my wife" or "my husband has been going through." "And you would not believe, I was" either "ready to leave," "divorce," or "I was at the point of not even understanding. And seeing this film allowed me to have deep compassion." Talk

about that, Aaron. We were shocked. But we also saw: "Oh, there's another level here of partners understanding the suffering of the one who's ill."

Aaron Carnahan 25:39

Yes. Number one, I remember that so clearly. And it's happened in subsequent other interviews, conversations, or questions and answers with people at film festivals or whatever. It's come up a few different times. It was like this beautiful thing of knowing that, yes, it was right to put that stuff in the film about our relationship. As hard as it was for you, as hard as it was for me, to think that that could help not only the healing of an individual who's sick with chronic illness but [also] the healing of a relationship inside of that person being sick with chronic illness and how that could help heal their chronic illness... Like, are you kidding me? The layers! You talk about functional medicine being root cause—the depths of that are just ridiculous!

Aaron Carnahan 26:42

There is that sense of loss when you... I've considered the end of our marriage like another death to me that I had experienced. And there's that sense of loss. And all of a sudden, you're like: "Oh! But out of the loss of our marriage, what if we helped other people not to lose that? And what if we help people to heal through that?" It was an amazing thing.

Aaron Carnahan 27:06

As I think about people who need to see this film—yes, people who are chronically ill, people who maybe do not have answers for why they're sick. Maybe this gives them hope that they can get answers. And maybe it's for physicians who don't know functional medicine or know this way of medicine, and it causes them to look into it. Or maybe it's for physicians who do know functional medicine and can think about being a little bit more compassionate and open. All of that—yes, yes, yes, yes. But to me, this part right here—to think that you can potentially help people to heal, whether it be a spouse, a mother, a father, or a child...

Aaron Carnahan 27:51

Being the spouse of a chronically ill person—someone dealing with mold, environmental toxicity, Lyme [disease], and all of these things—is hard. It's really hard. So [it's] for them to be able to watch this and have more compassion and

empathy for their spouse, for their loved one, but at the same time, to maybe feel like a little vindicated, like: "Hell, if they even broke because of this, maybe there's a reason why I'm hurting so bad and feeling so isolated and alone."

Aaron Carnahan 28:29

For me to be able to say to other spouses out there: "You're not alone. There are other people who have been here and understand where you're at..." I was blown away by those Q&As and how vulnerable they were. Because we were vulnerable in the film, in a Q&A, and with the movie theater filled with people, [we heard people] say: "I've been just about to hang it up and get a divorce because I can't do this anymore. And now I feel like I can do this, and I understand better." Like, "What?"

Dr. Jill 29:03

I know, right? Isn't it mind-blowing?

Aaron Carnahan 29:05

If you're out there right now and you're dealing with this, know that...

Dr. Jill 29:12

And watch the film and share it with others. It's interesting; I just recorded an episode. It's live now with Burke and Alyssa. One of the things Burke shared [was that] when he shared it with his mother and father—they knew him intimately and they knew his suffering—as [they were] watching the film, they were like: "Burke, I can't believe what you really went through. And we're sorry"—even though they were incredible parents.

Dr. Jill 29:39

Then I tell the story of [how], in the premiere in Denver, I sat next to my dad and held his hand. I was so afraid because I love him so much and he's been such an inspiration in my life. So in the telling of the story, I wanted him to feel nothing but honor. But they also see that their daughter suffered—not because of them—an illness. He sat there with tears in his eyes and said, "I'm so sorry you had to suffer." Even with people like Burke and me and the filming, it's amazing!—the layers of this healing.

Dr. Jill 30:13

So I can't imagine someone sitting there with their spouse watching this movie, and the spouse looks across and says: "Sweetheart, I am so sorry. I didn't understand how much you suffered." The thing about suffering is that we were meant to suffer in community. When we have people holding our hands and surrounding us, suffering becomes less painful. We're not meant to suffer alone. But what's happened in the last several years, and it's just escalating, is that we have a thousand followers or a million followers, but we have no one to come over and help us make dinner or feed our dog. And we are losing that connection. In fact, I heard Esther Perel recently call AI artificial intimacy—this idea that we have all these connections. But the truth is that the people who are in the suffering with us and holding our hand—it's either rare or that we don't have those kinds of people. So I think part of the film speaks to the loneliness we feel in suffering.

Aaron Carnahan 31:14

Yes, absolutely. It does. Jill, this morning I was in the forest. I was on a hike, like I do in the morning. Every morning, it's my time to breathe, think, process, and just be. I was thinking about the fact that we were going to be doing this podcast today. I felt this overwhelming need to just be vulnerable. I thought something that we didn't get in the film was me talking from the spouse's perspective or whatever. I realized that people might be wondering: "How in the hell did he not stay with her through that? They did cancer together and Crohn's together." I was right by your side through all of that—through everything. They're like, 'How?' And that's where this really weird world of chronic illness, mold, and Lyme... You've got to understand—it's a different world. I had been through so much with you.

Aaron Carnahan 32:25

So if it's okay for me to just share my heart on this, as I was just trying to process it: What people don't realize is that there are many layers. One of the layers is that, yes, you grew up in this stoic German background. [You felt] that you'd suck it up, you buck up, and you go and do it—you do the work, you do the challenge, and everything. You did that with mold. You would go to work, serve people, love people, and heal them as you were trying to heal yourself and take care of yourself. And then you would get home and there'd be nothing left. You worked your ass off. You would say: "I'm destroyed. I'm wrecked. I can't go skiing," "I can't go out to dinner with you," "We can't go with friends," or whatever else.

Aaron Carnahan 33:18

And my mind, which was still a child mind, was saying: "How come you can do it with other people? How come you can go work and do that? How can you put on a happy face in front of others at church or whatever else, but yet, you have nothing for me?" And you start doubting: "Are you really sick?" because you can't even see it in a lot of ways. You can hide it from people. So there's all of that doubting.

Aaron Carnahan 33:48

My trauma and the stuff that I don't realize is that I was so very codependent and that I didn't communicate those feelings to you well. So I take ownership in all of that. I wasn't able to convey to you: "I'm hurting here because I don't understand this. I don't understand mold. I don't understand." [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 34:08

And we both said that cancer was way easier than mold, right?

Aaron Carnahan 34:14

Cancer was so easy. It was super easy. I mean, it wasn't.

Dr. Jill 34:18

But relative...

Aaron Carnahan 34:19

For crying out loud, we're running freaking 10Ks with pink ribbons and everybody understands cancer. And Crohn's—everybody knows of Crohn's and all of that. I could stand with you on that and say: "Yes. What is the doctor talking about [by saying] that diet doesn't have anything to do with it?" And I could stand by you and I could see that you were wasting away, that you'd become a half of your person because Crohn's has just devastated you. I can see that. I can be that. I can understand that. The world gets it. Mold—especially back then—"I don't know anything about mold." [inaudible].

Dr. Jill 34:55

We were both exposed to some extent. The bigger thing, too, is that you had gotten Lyme disease [while] filming another film. I want to give compassion to you too,

because you had no idea, but you were also suffering from Lyme disease, which affects pain and cognition. Your immune system, towards the end, was crashing.

Dr. Jill 35:14

I was in really bad mold and recovering from mold. I was like, "I've got to survive." Survival mode. Burke and I just talked about that too—complete survival mode. So all I could do was [focus on]: "I've got to survive. I can't lose my practice. I've got to go to work. I've got to do that." And then I collapsed at home. I had nothing left. I never learned how to ask you for help and say, "I really need you to show up in this way." And you didn't either. So we were two people who had learned to take care of ourselves. We wanted help and support from one another, but we didn't even know how to ask.

Aaron Carnahan 35:46

We didn't know how to ask. If I could say anything to anyone, it would be: Communicate your needs—both of you. Communicate your needs. Also, if you're the spouse of the person who has this chronic illness, understand that when you communicate your needs, they might not be able to meet them. And it's got to be okay. It's got to be okay. Believe them when they say they're hurting. Believe them when they say they can't move. Believe them when they say they're sick. Believe them when they say, "I can't get up out of bed." It doesn't mean that it's not hard for you. But listen, it's hard for them too. It's not that they don't want to be with you. It's not that they don't want to be involved.

Aaron Carnahan 36:33

That's the message I want to say: If you and I had been able to communicate, that would make all of the difference in the world. Both of us were [thinking] "Get it done" and take care of ourselves. And that works until this type of thing happens.

Dr. Jill 36:53

It works until it doesn't, right?

Aaron Carnahan 36:55

It works until it doesn't.

Dr. Jill 36:59

When the divorce happened, we were both just coming out of being so sick. What people don't realize—we don't talk a lot about this in the film, [but] anyone who's suffered understands—[is that] mold, Lyme, complex chronic autoimmune [disease], inflammation, and long COVID affect the brain, mood, and our ability to even connect with other humans. There are so many levels of this because you can have a level of anxiety, depression, or even isolation. We talked about when we're in sick behavior. In fact, I was going to try to pull the quote you had sent me about [how], as a child, often if we don't feel the support of someone taking care of us or if we're the person in our family that takes care of everybody, then we tend to go to that default when we're suffering. I'm not quoting it right, but you get the idea that when we're suffering as adults, then we isolate because we've always had to take care of ourselves.

Dr. Jill 37:49

We came together, and we're both that kind of person. We were independent and we took care of ourselves. It was almost like we had this unspoken agreement: You take care of you; I'll take care of me. We'll be partners and all of that, but God forbid I ever ask you for help, and God forbid you ever ask me for help.

Aaron Carnahan 38:06

That's right.

Dr. Jill 38:07

We taught each other that. And we were falling freaking apart at the seams, and we were suffering inconceivably. We had no language to tell each other: "I actually need you to show up, and this is what I need." We didn't know how to ask. And then we both assumed, "Oh, they're not here for us," which was all baloney, right? It wasn't true.

Aaron Carnahan 38:31

Absolutely.

Dr. Jill 38:31

But that makes so much sense. And I'm saying it out loud because I know people out there are in those relationships where they're not able to ask for what they need.

Aaron Carnahan 38:39

Yes. And know this too, this is a beautiful thing—I'm in my 50s—you can learn, and you can grow. So any of you out there who are about ready to give up or whatever—no, you can do it. You can do it. And it's actually beautiful, and it will change your life.

Aaron Carnahan 38:57

In my relationship with Wendy Ann, we have this beautiful relationship where she knows that I've got Lyme and that sometimes things will flare up or whatever else. I now communicate: "I can't, I am exhausted," or whatever—those times when it flares back up. She also knows to watch out. And she'll know that I'll try to self-isolate because I always want to be the positive person, like: "Look at me smiling. Look at me pushing through. I'm positive Aaron." But she'll notice that I'll go and stay in my office longer and longer. She'll be like: "Okay, what's going on?" But she only knows to do that because I've communicated with her that that's what I'm going to do.

Dr. Jill 39:43

"If I do this, then you do this."

Aaron Carnahan 39:44

"If I do this, then you know: Be on the lookout."

Dr. Jill 39:49

At one point, Aaron, I had a document with my partner in the past that said: If I do this, here's ABC response. It was a Google Doc of a flowchart. And it was actually quite helpful. [laughs]

Aaron Carnahan 40:04

[laughs] Yes, it's huge. It sounds silly, but for people like us who... Like you said—you had a successful career, and I had a successful career—we never shared those deep needs. It felt like we were sharing everything—well, we were sharing everything that we felt wouldn't upset the apple cart. So share those deep needs and have compassion for one another. I want the world to hear that so much.

Aaron Carnahan 40:39

Share this film with people in your life who may not understand what you're dealing with, especially if you're somebody out there who hasn't even been diagnosed yet, [but] you just know that you're chronically ill and that something is wrong. Yes, get a functional medicine doctor. Go to Forum Health, IFM, A4M, or somewhere like that. They can set you up with doctors. Or Dr. Jill's resource page. At the website for this film, there will be a resource page on there [for people] to be able to get links to find doctors. Yes, you can absolutely do all of that. But that self-compassion and ability to communicate your needs—it's got to start there. It's got to start there. And in a relationship, maybe share this film with people who don't know or don't understand.

Dr. Jill 41:39

I just had this thought: One of the other feedback pieces that we got after the film over and over was that medical students and doctors need to see this film. So maybe you share it with your doctor. Hopefully, they're open-minded enough to take what's good and not be offended because our medical system is beautiful in some ways and could be better in some ways. But yes, maybe this is something you share with your practitioner or doctor. I think it's powerful.

Aaron Carnahan 42:07

I remember in one of the viewings, we had a doctor who was probably in his 60s. He's watching this film and he goes...

Dr. Jill 42:14

He stood up and was like: "Every doctor should watch this film!"

Aaron Carnahan 42:17

Yes. He was like: "I would never think that I could do that with a patient. I would never think that I could share that intimately and be that connected to a patient." And I was like: "Oh my goodness! Yes, absolutely doctors. Every physician!"

Dr. Jill 42:33

It's giving them permission to be human, right?

Aaron Carnahan 42:35

That's right.

Dr. Jill 42:36

It's funny because we're taught—we've talked about this on many podcasts with other doctors—the idea that as physicians, we have to be objective, we have to kind of have that screen and not show emotion and not share intimately. But the truth is, we're all human. What happens is that we build trust and authenticity when we are totally ourselves, flawed and all. We don't have to be perfect, of course. But there's this idea that in medicine, you have to be objective. God forbid you ever cry with a patient. That's not human. That's not right.

Dr. Jill 43:07

Aaron, as we wrap [up] in the last few minutes, what would you say is the thing you're most proud of in this film? And then, what was the hardest thing about it? Two questions.

Aaron Carnahan 43:20

Gosh, that's such a difficult one. I think we might have answered this before. Maybe I even answered it differently. It's a couple of parts. I'm proud of you for being vulnerable, and [I'm proud of] all of the people that we interviewed in this film for being vulnerable and open. I'm just so proud of everyone. It's hard enough to be misunderstood by your physicians, and it's hard to be misunderstood by your family. As you share your health journey and do it on film for the world to see, it's brave. I'm very proud of everyone who was brave and was able to share their health journey and their struggles on camera. I don't take that lightly. Thank you for each one who did that, including you, Jill. That was huge.

Aaron Carnahan 44:19

I'm proud of Daniel Grace, my partner. I think he's one of the most brilliant filmmakers in the world. I just love his touch—how he treats everyone on set. But also, he's got a beautiful mind, and I love it. He inspires me even though he's like 75 years younger than I am. He's an old soul and I love him so much. And I'm proud of that. In the film, I'm proud that we listened and allowed the film to be what it wanted to be, even when it was scary. I'm proud of that.

Dr. Jill 45:07

Amazing! And, Aaron, I'm proud of you for coming with this project with such an open heart and open mind. Like I said, people don't really understand what you and

I went through, although we're sharing a lot of that. But it was powerful on so many levels for me to be able to share that story intimately and then to get this final version of the film that's so authentic, intimate, and scary, but to also be like: "It's okay. It's okay for me to be flawed and fall apart on screen." We're all human, right? Just show my humanity. To know that those kinds of things are where we touch people...

Dr. Jill 45:44

I'm so proud of you for being on set, showing up how you did, and giving me permission to be my full self. And we've always joked—it's in the book, right?—I used to dial it down to like a four or five out of ten because I felt like I was too much or too anything. I think a lot of women out there feel that way. And you allowed me to be a full ten out of ten, even when it felt like it was too much. But that gives the viewer, the patient, the spouse, or the parent permission to be their full selves too. So thank you for showing up with such grace, kindness, love, and compassion and allowing everybody on the set to shine. You really did—really, truly.

Aaron Carnahan 46:29

Thank you so much, [inaudible]. That's beautiful. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Dr. Jill 46:33

You're welcome. What an amazing opportunity for us to share! Are there any last bits of advice? Let's share—this is a great opportunity—that through all of this, something else really amazing came out: The Iris Arts Institute. Why don't you share a little bit about what you and Dan are working on and how this film may catalyze thousands of other filmmakers and inspire them?

Aaron Carnahan 47:01

It's really cool because Daniel and I love the filmmaking world and making movies. In part of the process, we submitted it to a couple of film festivals and got into a few film festivals. There are things about it that we liked, and there are a lot of things that we didn't like. And we just said, "What if we made our own film festival?"

Aaron Carnahan 47:22

Especially because we just did this film around health and wellness, we didn't see any film festivals that dealt with these topics specifically, where they were just honed in on health and wellness. So we were like: "What if we did a film festival

around health and wellness and about not only physical but emotional, spiritual, trauma, environmental health, and all of these things?" So we just decided: We'll just start a nonprofit, and we'll do a film festival. So this October, we'll be doing the Iris Global Health Film Festival in Boulder, Colorado. And then we hope that the Iris Arts Institute will do other things for the arts and help filmmakers get their films made and maybe other film festivals as well.

Aaron Carnahan 48:12

But what we truly want to do is bring love and hope into the world. That's what we want to do. Our film is an example of this. Film is a powerful way and a powerful medium to move people to move people. Hopefully, the Iris Film Festival will do that and be that for other filmmakers and, more importantly, even for other viewers to watch those films and be impacted. Hopefully, people are impacted by our film. Most definitely. So that's what the Iris Arts Institute is.

Dr. Jill 48:44

Amazing and it's IrisArtsInstitute.com [sic] if people want to share or donate to the conference.

Aaron Carnahan 48:48

I think it's dot org, though.

Dr. Jill 48:49

Okay, thank you. I'm going to make sure.

Aaron Carnahan 48:53

Iris Arts Institute.

Dr. Jill 48:55

Dot org. Okay, beautiful. Thank you so much.

Aaron Carnahan 48:58

Yes, most definitely. And another thing with regard to what this could be for people is—I'm seeing both of us on the screen right now, and I don't know, I just feel the need to say this—divorce doesn't have to be the end of your life. And it doesn't have to be the end of your relationship with the person that you're divorced from. It can

be and maybe it's supposed to be, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. Have compassion and try to think in the other person's shoes instead of your own.

Aaron Carnahan 49:37

Love is a beautiful thing, and it doesn't have to always look the same exact way. You can still love your ex-spouse if you choose to. It's not mandatory by any means. This is a strange and beautiful thing that we have. I'm just grateful for it. So if we can be of hope to anybody out there, please know that this isn't just an Aaron and Jill thing; this could be you if you want it to be. And it could only be to this place because Jill and I went to very difficult places to deal with our own trauma. I want it to say over and over and over again: In order for us to have this relationship that we have today, we had to deal with our own stuff.

Dr. Jill 50:27

Yes. And we needed to take ownership, right? There was no finger-pointing. The way we got here was by pointing the finger here.

Aaron Carnahan 50:33

That's right. That's right. That's exactly right. I'm so sorry, but I really felt the need to say that.

Dr. Jill 50:40

No, that is the exact thing that we need to end on. It's absolutely perfect and perfectly said, Aaron. Thank you for bringing your heart, your compassion, and your insight into this interview and everything that you do.

Dr. Jill 50:54

If you want to see the film, [visit] DoctorPatientMovie.com. You can rent, you can purchase, and you can share it with your friends. We hope that this will impact millions of lives.

Aaron Carnahan 51:05

Yes. Most definitely. And get Jill's book too. The book goes into detail in some places that the movie doesn't, and the movie goes into detail in some places that the book doesn't. It's amazing! Read her book as well. It's so fantastic.

Dr. Jill 51:18

Thank you so much, Aaron.

Aaron Carnahan 51:19

Alrighty.