

## [222: Special Episode: Resiliency Radio with Dr. Jill: The Power of Healing with Infrared Saunas](#)

### **Dr. Jill** 00:00

Hey guys, welcome to *Resiliency Radio*, your go-to podcast of the most cutting-edge insights in integrative and functional medicine. I'm your host, Dr. Jill, and each week we meet with innovators, medical experts, and all kinds of thought leaders in our field. Today we have a really special episode, and I'm so excited to introduce our guest.

### **Dr. Jill** 00:18

Connie Zack is a co-founder of Sunlighten, the world leader in infrared sauna and light therapy. Inspired by her brother's health transformation through infrared sauna use, Connie and her husband Aaron left a successful pharmaceutical career to found Sunlighten 25 years ago. Their visionary leadership, grounded in light science and researched-backed innovations, revolutionized the infrared sauna industry and guided the company to global prominence. As an infrared light trailblazer, Connie's belief in the power of collaborative partnership paved the way for infrared/red light industry-wide education on the benefits, which is now a common practice. And as we know, it's so common in our practice.

I am so excited to have you here, Connie! Welcome to the show.

### **Connie Zack** 00:59

Thank you so much! I've been looking forward to this all day.

### **Dr. Jill** 01:02

Me too. And we always see each other. We were just talking about conferences—"Where are you going to be?" And in a couple of weeks, we'll be together. I've known about Sunlighten for a long time and had such a deep respect, but I've never really gotten to hear your story. I always love to start with story. Tell us the story of your brother and the start of the company. How did this all happen?

### **Connie Zack** 01:21

Yeah, it's so, so crazy—the story. I love and I read your story as well, which was so inspiring and just amazing! I was so glued to your website. So congratulations on everything you have done because it's inspiring.

**Connie Zack 01:42**

As far as how Sunlighten started, gosh, it's so crazy. I was working at Procter & Gamble in the pharmaceutical division and my brother was really, really sick. This was over 25 years ago. This is a long time ago. He went to the doctor. He tried everything. He traveled. He did all the right things, but nobody found a cure until his dentist said to him when he was there one day, "Jason, these mercury amalgam fillings that you have in your mouth—I think this is what's causing all of your issues" because he had chronic fatigue, he had vertigo, and he had pain all over his body. He literally couldn't get out of bed. It was horrible. And the dentist said, "I think the mercury is leaking and I think it's stuck and that's causing all these problems."

**Connie Zack 02:37**

He went on to say—every time I say this, it sounds so crazy because it was so long ago and it was in St. Louis, which I love, but it's not the most progressive wellness city in the United States—"I think that I read articles about infrared. There's this type of energy; it's a type of wavelength. I've read that if you can get enough into your body, it can help detoxify the body and pull out heavy metals like mercury." So he said: "I think you need to go and do that. There's a thing called an infrared sauna and you can sweat out."

**Connie Zack 03:13**

So my brother bought one, and it changed his life. It's really that simple. It completely changed his life. Then he told me about it. I went over to his place, his home, and I saw it. He was like, "You've got to experience this." And I was like, "What's going on?" I couldn't even believe it. He was a completely different person. He was able to walk up and down stairs. He was able to walk and then eventually run.

**Connie Zack 03:41**

I started doing research on my own—and this is the part that is still fascinating to me because this is a long time ago—and there was a lot of data already, already out there this long ago. Nobody knew about it. It was all in Asia. It was mainly in the cardiovascular area, but it was so powerful. And keep in mind, I was working at Procter & Gamble in the pharmaceuticals, and I was working in the cardiovascular division. We were working specifically on developing medications to lower blood pressure without side effects, which is really hard to do. We're spending millions

and millions and millions of dollars, and I'm like: "Wait a second, there is an energy that you can sit in at the comfort of your own home, and it can help you lower your blood pressure and improve your healthy heart without taking medicine, and it's not going to affect your libido or all the other things." And I'm like: "Oh my gosh, sign me up. This is crazy!"

**Connie Zack** 04:43

So that's how it all started, and I ended up leaving my job. I was dating a guy who also worked at P&G who left his job, and we joined together. We're now married, and we own the business together. We just took it one step at a time and dedicated our lives to mastering the understanding of infrared and then helping take that understanding and make the product as precise, efficient, and effective as possible, as well as beautiful, and then getting the word out globally to everyone. It's been my passion working with great, great partners to share and collaborate. I think it's really been one of my favorite things that we've done over the past 20, 25 years, I guess. Wow.

**Dr. Jill** 05:38

What a story! And first of all, I love it because I grew up in Peoria, Illinois, which is not far from St. Louis, and I know how that was. I had an integrative clinic and I was like a freak there because, "Integrative medicine—what is that?" The same thing. Thank goodness there were a lot of people who were interested so we did well. And then I moved to Colorado after about three or five years there. But I totally get that.

**Dr. Jill** 05:57

And how cool it is that your brother's St. Louis dentist suggested this and then where it led! And I always love stories [where] you look back and you see: "Oh my goodness, what a clear path!" You've obviously transformed probably hundreds and thousands of lives through what you do and what you create. But isn't it neat to look back and see how it all starts with one idea? Had that dentist not said that to your brother and had that experience, and then this whole domino effect... And that always excites me because so often the beautiful things that happened in my life are a simple conversation or a simple meeting or someplace I wasn't sure I was going to go and then I went and met someone. And I love those stories because it just shows there's not really any coincidences. Often these things are kind of orchestrated to our benefit. So I love this story.

**Connie Zack 06:41**

Aw, thank you. Yeah, it's crazy. And just to build on what you're saying, we had it in the basement of our home at the time. We were both in Cincinnati, and we were trying to figure out how to get the word out. So we started a website, which didn't exist. All these things didn't exist. So we were paying Google for leads. The word 'infrared'—nobody was searching on. So we had to pay for the word 'sauna' which is really expensive. All these people would come in and they wanted regular rocks, like what people think of in Finland as a sauna. And we have to take that person and educate them, which they were like: "Wait a sec. This is not what I want." Oh my gosh, it was the craziest. Nobody came in back then. Zero people came in. It's crazy. And a lot of people didn't even believe in detoxification. That was not a thing at all. Mercury—everything was foreign. So every single component was challenging. It was hard.

**Dr. Jill 07:57**

I can't imagine. And I just want to say, as a medical doctor who does environmental toxicity, I can do all the supplements, all the planning, all the diet, all the intervention in the world, but if I don't have those patients sweating in an infrared sauna... So I want to sit here saying how important this is to my practice, to my patients' well-being, and to everybody out there.

Let's start with infrared. What is that?—for people who are like, "I still don't know what infrared is".

**Connie Zack 08:24**

Yeah, of course. First, I always like to explain how it feels because everybody's had this feeling that I'm about to describe, and then I will break down what it is. But the feeling is, when you go outside on a cloudy day and all of a sudden the sun peeks out of the clouds—so you see this bright ray of sunshine, and then it gets into your body, and you feel that sunshine—all of a sudden, you go: "Oh God, that feels so good!" You just want to stand there for a second, pause, and be like, "Hey, sun, I'm so happy!" That's infrared, and that's how it feels. It feels so good! It's a radiant energy that heats the body directly, versus heating the air. You're making all these changes that I'm sure we'll talk about because your body has just received the energy inside and it's doing its magic to change your body, which we can talk about.

**Connie Zack 09:27**

The other thing that's important to know about infrared is that in addition to heat—this is also what makes it so special and different than regular heat, what we call traditional heat—it's also light. It's light energy, which is something more than ever in our society—I'm sure you'd agree—we need into our body. Our body is full of water and mitochondria. There are mitochondria all over. Infrared light supercharges your mitochondria and increases the mitochondrial efficiency in your body, which is in every system in your body. So it's really important. Sometimes people say, "Is it good for this?" "Is it good for this?" It works with every single part of your body, which is such a wonderful tool because you get so many different benefits.

**Connie Zack 10:23**

And then the last thing about infrared that I want to mention that's different than any other type of heat source is that it is a spectrum within a spectrum. So it's a spectrum of light and heat that is within the sun's spectrum. And there are three different parts. There's far, which is the longest wavelength and also the coolest of the three. Then there's mid, which is hotter and shorter. Then there's near, which is also the shortest and the hottest. And right next to near is invisible, and right next to near is red—which a lot of people have heard of—red light, which is visible. It's super cool because each part of the spectrum has its own unique healing properties. And the way it works with the body—it's super, super cool.

**Dr. Jill 11:16**

Yes, let's talk about those. Again, it went from "What's infrared?" People are starting to know what that is and now they're like, "red light" and all this. First of all, let's just clarify: Your Sunlighten saunas have the full spectrum, right? We're talking about all these different energies, and they radiate all of the energies that we're talking about.

**Connie Zack 11:33**

Yes is the answer to the question. We had to make it easier. We have everything. We have far infrared only, and I'll tell you why that is in a second. Then we have what's called on the market 'full spectrum,' and I'll tell you why that is. Then we have the unicorn that's behind me, which is called the mPulse Smart Sauna. The reason it's a

unicorn is because it's the only product on the market that has all four wavelengths and, as well, isolates each one. You deliver it independently. Then we have six preset programs that you press to get the desired result. It's a unicorn. There's nothing like it. We have the patent on it, and it's amazing. I could talk about that all day long.

### **Connie Zack** 12:25

As far as breaking down the spectrum, far—it's really important that people know that this—I call it the foundational wavelength. It is the most important wavelength of the entire thing because it does the most. How far works: It's absorbed into your body. It changes the vibration of your water molecules, moves everything around, allows it to flow better, and increases your core temperature. And then all the benefits that you get with that are that it helps with depression. One of the most significant benefits is the detoxification you talked about at the very beginning. That's so important. And there's plenty of data on detox about how infrared delivers a more effective detox than traditional saunas or even exercise. There's a study on that. That's far infrared. I don't want to get too much into the science on that. But we have two saunas that are just far-infrared only. And it's great for immunity. There are lots of other things that it's great for, which we can talk about.

### **Connie Zack** 13:30

And then there's mid, which is hotter, so it's a different experience. It's also good for detox, it's good for weight loss, and it's really great for reducing inflammation in the joints and tissues. There's no reason to have mid by itself, like a separate mid sauna, because you would sacrifice so much. And then there's near and red. Those act totally differently. First of all, there's no heat associated. They're light, so it's called photobiomodulation. Near penetrates deeper into the skin and red doesn't penetrate as deep. Red is visible; near is invisible. That's the only difference between the two. There are tons of benefits on activating your mitochondria and skin rejuvenation, increasing collagen and elastin. So that's a snapshot of the four, let's call it, different wavelengths.

### **Connie Zack** 14:29

But it's so cool because they're all like little characters that can help your body in different ways. They're like, "I'm going to do this," "I'm going to do this." And then you put them all together, and you put a program, and all of a sudden you have this

magic. When you get done—I'm sure, as you can testify—you just feel so much better than you did before you went in. You're like, "Oh my gosh, why don't I do that every single day?" because you feel you have more energy, your head is clear, and you're ready to go do anything, which is also a different experience than what a lot of people are familiar with with the traditional because a lot of times they get zapped afterward. They get exhausted.

**Dr. Jill 15:10**

I actually love that you said that because that's been the experience with the patients with the wrong sauna, or maybe the wrong technology, or too much, or too little, or whatever kinds of doses, [about] which we could talk about best practices next. But just in my experience in clinical practice, I deal with a ton of environmental toxicity: Heavy metals, parabens, phthalates—all these things that basically go often into our lungs through the air that we breathe. About 80% of our environmental toxic load is in the air that we breathe, and the alveoli diffuse right into the bloodstream and deposit into tissues. So in talking to patients, it's, "How do we mobilize these toxins out of your tissues, then get them back in the blood where the liver and the kidney can filter, and then you get rid of them through the urine and the stool?" This is one of my favorite ways to mobilize toxins. And honestly, there's no amount of glutathione that can do it without some other mobilization, like the body sweating. Like you mentioned, exercise is one way, but this is, I feel, a much more powerful way.

**Connie Zack 16:03**

And you can do both. That's one of my hacks—habit stacking or sweat stacking. That's one of my favorite things. I love to either walk or run. And afterward, immediately going into my sauna—oh my gosh, it's the best of both worlds. You're starting everything—your mobilization in your walk or your run—and then you're finishing it off. And you're accelerating everything. And you can feel the difference. You start to feel good through your exercise and then you feel great.

**Dr. Jill 16:40**

Really good, yes. Because I have had some patients who have a traditional experience, whether it's a Finnish or just a far infrared, and they do feel a bit more wiped out afterwards. Is that where the red light, because you're getting that mitochondrial energy... In my experience, I've used red light for the brain—turning

on the brain—for skin, as you mentioned. I have all kinds of red lights for my face and it's so great for the collagen. Is that the difference as far as what people might have experienced with a traditional sauna versus one of your saunas?

**Connie Zack 17:16**

As far as infrared, there are so many mechanisms of action from each wave length. Primarily, actually, most are from far and near and red as well, because they're the same, except for the reasons I said. Those wavelengths are what help to increase your energy. It helps to increase ATP because of mitochondrial activity. But the far does it differently. What that does is change your water molecules and increase the flow of everything. Near doesn't do that. It operates on the surface of your skin. The light is impacting the mitochondria. When you put them together, it's crazy good. There's also some great data on exclusion water. I don't know if you read all of that. And that's specifically with the far infrared as well, going to the fourth phase and how it changes in your body. You notice that you just have so much more energy. I never knew all the science behind it. I remember when I started everything and I was doing it, I was like: "Oh my God, this is crazy good." Now I understand it. I'm like: "Oh, it makes so much sense."

**Connie Zack 18:35**

I think that on the traditional side, just to finish that thought, it's very hard for people to stay in high temperatures for an extended amount of time, and that exhausts people. One of the benefits of a Sunlighten sauna is that you can tolerate it, it's enjoyable, and you can stay in there. And you can habit stack and you can do a lot of other things, and you still get the therapeutic benefits.

**Dr. Jill 19:03**

Yes, thanks for explaining that. And for patient's listening, I have a lot of [patients with] complex, chronic [conditions or] long COVID. What I see clinically is we have a lot of POTS dysautonomia. What happens is that heat is a trigger for some of the mast cells and that. So I do love that you specify that because I feel like that's what some of them are running into—way too hot, too long, and not enough of the full spectrum—and they're getting into trouble.

**Dr. Jill 19:25**



And that mobilization we talked about, I think what you mentioned—and clarify if I'm saying this wrong—is so good at detoxifying. But in my mind, if you're mobilizing too quickly and their bodies can't excrete that load that they just mobilized, that might also be where they run into trouble. But it sounds like with this full spectrum, you're getting a much more balanced, dosage-appropriate kind of thing. And even though, I still recommend patients start with five minutes, start with ten. Go kind of slow. What do you recommend for best practices for, first of all, someone who's brand new—kind of a virgin to the sauna world—and then also those who really want to biohack and go to deeper levels?

**Connie Zack** 19:59

I recommend, especially for the people who are sensitive to heat or mast cells—for everybody, but especially them—you have to start slow. You absolutely have to. And here's what's great; here's a hidden secret that a lot of people don't know or understand: The way infrared energy works with the body is that as soon as you turn it on, your body starts absorbing it. It doesn't have to be hot. For those people, they can get in. There's this concept of, "When do I get in?" and "Does it have to be 130?" They get really caught up to the temperature. The temperature signifies just that—the temperature. But it does not connect to the therapeutic value of the energy and your body. On the far infrared, to take it one step further, the wavelength is the longest and the smoothest the minute you turn it on because it's the coolest. If you picture that your body is so much more receptive to absorbing that energy when it's long and smooth versus as it heats up, that wavelength gets shorter and it gets harder to be absorbed.

**Connie Zack** 21:21

The best practice for sure is to get in when you turn it on. As far as time, start slow. Work up to the ideal time [which] is 40 minutes. We have six programs. The cardio program is the only one that's longer than 40 minutes; it's 45 minutes. And drink a lot of water because you need it. You need it anyway, but when you use your sunlight, I go overboard and drink a ton before, drink it in it, and drink it after.

**Dr. Jill** 21:51

Fantastic. I often recommend if people are detoxing, they might take binders after, they might take glutathione before. And of course, I have my little tips and pearls. But I'd love to know from you: Is there anything you recommend for someone who's

used to this and wants to go the next level, like niacin, buffered C, glutathione? Is there anything you recommend as far as other protocols with the sauna?

**Connie Zack** 22:11

When it comes to that, we always recommend they work with their practitioner because some people can't tolerate certain things. Somebody like you, you know who you're dealing with. So you know what they're sensitive to, how their body is absorbing everything, how it's excreted, etc. As far as taking it to the next level, I would increase your frequency. I would do what I just said, because most people don't get in when they turn it on. And that's really the ideal.

**Connie Zack** 22:45

I would also do multiple things while you're in there. Work on meditation or work on other healing modalities while you're in your sauna, because that's going to take it to the next level. That's going to really help you because you have this energy that's coming in and healing your body. And if you can put your mind also at ease in a different state or if you can stretch, now you're taking your muscles and are having a faster recovery. There are so many ways you can increase the benefits on your own.

**Connie Zack** 23:24

The other thing is, as far as taking it to the next level, I would check your electrolyte levels in your body after you start using it for a while, just making sure that you're not excreting too much sodium or chloride or making sure you have the right balance. It doesn't feel intense, so that's great, but it is intense. As far as how it's working, it is energy medicine. It is absolutely transforming your cells and your body and affecting every single system. You need to make sure that you're not sweating too much of the good stuff out. There's no such thing as "You'll be fine with all the bad stuff, but the good stuff you want to keep in."

**Dr. Jill** 24:08

Gosh, I love that because I always recommend you do electrolytes. In fact, in our clinic, when we have people get in the sauna, we provide electrolytes for them because it's so crucial to really make sure they're hydrating. This is so great. I love hearing this story, and I love that people can get the benefit.

**Dr. Jill** 24:24

Tell us about this mPulse because this is the unicorn. I'm really excited to hear. For people who want to get kind of the Cadillac of saunas out there, I think it's the one that I like the best. I'd love to hear more about specifically why that's such a great sauna.

**Connie Zack** 24:44

We developed this in 2010, so 14 years ago. It's so fascinating; we worked with all these scientists all over the world—different ones in different cities—to really understand, at the deepest level, the right frequencies and the right amount of each wavelength. What makes mPulse so special is you have all that entire spectrum of infrared inside there, but it's all separate. And there's such power! When you combine things like shampoo and conditioner, you're not getting 100% shampoo, and you're not getting 100% conditioner; you're getting a blend. Or like orange juice from the orange: If you buy orange juice, like SunnyD or whatever, you're not getting 100% vitamin C. You're not getting the juice from the orange. The same thing with isolating wavelengths; you're getting 100% far infrared—up to 99% emissive. What that means is 99% of that energy is being absorbed into your body, which is unicorn in itself. There's no other product that's that high. It's like giving you the ideal supplement, but it's an experience.

**Connie Zack** 25:59

And it's the same thing with mid-infrared. That's separate. That's 100%. Near is at the precise frequency that it needs to increase the mitochondrial activity, change your skin, and get all the benefits. And then same thing with red with the nanometers. So we've studied all of that.

**Connie Zack** 26:18

And then, what's extra exciting is that on the six programs, behind the scenes, we have a brain inside mPulse. It knows the right intervals, frequency, quantity, and amount of each wavelength throughout the program. And then there are programs. You don't need to do anything. You just go in and press a button to do some cardio relaxation, detox, weight loss, or anti-aging. Press one of those buttons, and then the mPulse will do the rest. That's a quick explanation of why it's so great.

**Connie Zack** 26:54

What's great too is that with the programs, you can have a different experience on different days. Some days you're like: "Oh my goodness, I'm in so much pain. I just did a hard workout. I need muscle recovery." Then bam, do the pain relief program. Sometimes, with all of your environmental background, you need to detox. You need an amazing detox experience, so you press the detox button.

**Connie Zack** 27:17

The other thing that we should note about mPulse that's really important that we worked super hard on is that we've made it really, really safe. And I'm sure a lot of your listeners care about safety and care about EMFs. It was always a challenge when we first designed it because, just by design of it, if you have more frequencies, then how does that work with your body? But we have canceled everything out, so we have a great technology. There is virtually nonexistent EMF. And we have tested it from a third party that, right after COVID was lifted, came in and tested everything. And it's extremely safe and effective.

**Connie Zack** 27:58

The wood—another great benefit, which is on all of our saunas—is renewable. It's from this amazing place in Wisconsin. We have eucalyptus, which does not have a scent. It sounds like it does. And there's basswood, which is hypoallergenic as well.

**Dr. Jill** 28:14

Wow. Yeah, I get that, of course, because I have a super sensitive population, and they're always wondering about EMFs. So I love that you cover that to clarify for patients, clients, whoever.

In our last minute or two, when you started this, there was a lot of data, but since then it's been exponential in how much has come out. What do you see coming out on the horizon, like maybe with Alzheimer's or special situations? Is there anything that's being researched now more than ever before with the power of infrared saunas?

**Connie Zack** 28:45

Yeah, that's a great question. Thank you for asking that. Yes, Alzheimer's is being studied more. What I'm really excited about to share is that Dr. Mason is doing a study in California on depression. It's to follow up on Dr. Raison's study on

depression years ago with far infrared, specifically, and showing a connection between severely depressed people who essentially used something similar to our solo, which is like a tube and you lie down and your head is out. The results of the study are that depression symptoms went away for up to six weeks, and it was just one session. She's studying that and taking it to a different level, and I can't wait to see everything that she discovers.

**Connie Zack 29:39**

The mental health part of our society, ever since COVID—I just feel that we need to pay more attention to that and we need to help people as much as we can. If we can enlighten them on a safe, easy way in the comfort of your own home to make you happier and feel better about yourself and not have so much anxiety and not be depressed, then that's our responsibility to do that.

**Dr. Jill 30:04**

I love that. I love that we ended with that. And interestingly, many people have heard this statistic: I think since COVID, there's been a 400% increase in pharmaceutical prescriptions for depression. Really, all ages—it's a huge, big deal. I couldn't be more excited to talk about something. And we know the studies with exercise and sunlight. But what about those who maybe don't have access [because of] cloudy days or can't get exercise? I love, love that this is an option—that, like you said, you can do it from your home. I am the biggest fan of saunas. I couldn't wait to have you on here. And I know that our listeners will really enjoy this episode. Connie, thanks for the work that you've done. Thanks for taking the inspiration from your brother and making this such a beautiful company that really, really serves the needs of myself and all of my patients.

**Connie Zack 30:46**

Thank you. Thank you so much for having me on. This was such a pleasure.

**Dr. Jill 30:51**

Hey, everybody. Thanks so much for joining me for another episode of *Resiliency Radio*, this special edition with Sunlighten Sauna and the founder Connie. I hope you enjoyed that information. If you want to hop on over to Sunlighten and check out for yourself the mPulse, the amplifier, or any of their award-winning saunas,

you can get a discount up to \$600 off a purchase with the code DRJILL. I hope you will jump on over, check it out, and use this technology for yourself.

**Dr. Jill** 31:20

I really couldn't be more excited to do this because I feel like of all the supplements, diet, and lifestyle interventions that we do, because I deal with mold toxicity and chronic Lyme disease, long COVID, infrared sauna—energy, near-far, mid-wavelength that we talked about—is one of the most powerful things we can do for our bodies. I practice this myself every single week. So I hope you enjoyed this episode.

**Dr. Jill** 31:46

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