
THE NATURAL EVOLUTION PODCAST | SEASON 1: EPISODE 1
GUEST: MICHAEL ROESSLEIN

PODCAST TITLE: My (Mostly) Uncensored Story

PODCAST DESCRIPTION: Welcome to The Natural Evolution, a podcast where we share our healing journeys and support others along their path of healing.

Content Note: In this episode there is talk of depression, suicide, and pet death*
I'm Michael Roesslein and today I'll tell you my story, what brought me here, and what I went through in my own healing journey to this point.

I hope you find value in the stories that are shared here. Season 1 will feature many amazing individuals sharing their unique and remarkable healing journeys.

Head over to <https://rebelhealthtribe.com/kit> to get a free download of our loaded quick start bundle to help you along your healing journey. If you like us, subscribe, review, and share us with your friends, and come join our [Rebel Health Tribe group on Facebook](#).

A [Podcast Launch Bestie](#) production

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT:

Hello, and welcome to the Natural Evolution produced by Rebel Health Tribe. A radio show focused on providing you with inspiration, education, and tools for true healing and transformation. I'm Michael, and I'll be your guide on this adventure as together, we explore the very nature of the healing journey.

Hey everyone, we are live with the first episode of the Natural Evolution podcast. I'm your host, Michael. I'm going to introduce myself a little bit and share a bit about my background. I'm going to share the mission and intention behind this podcast, so you can make sure you're in the right place and then I'm going to openly share my own story and healing journey. Season one of this podcast is going to be focused largely on the healing journey itself and over 20 different amazing individuals share their unique and remarkable healing journeys. So I figured it would be best to start with me sharing my own and where I'm at right now and how I've gotten here. And then finally, we're going to give a few sneak peeks of what's to come in this first season and ongoing seasons of the podcast. So my background a little bit, just so you can get a feel for who you're listening to.

I hold a Master's degree in Exercise Science and Health Promotion. I'm a CHEK holistic lifestyle coach and CHEK exercise coach through the CHEK Institute. I'm a functional diagnostic nutrition practitioner. I just completed a two-year training at the Luminous Awareness Institute, which is a far different training program than those listed before. It's a lot more focused on spirituality and meditation and deeper healing work and trauma and neuroscience and psychology. And then I'm about to complete and probably have completed by the time you hear this, Dr. Gabor Maté's Compassionate Inquiry training for therapists, which is a one-year training. I co-founded Rebel Health Tribe in late 2014, I believe early 2015 with my partner, Joe Rignola. We launched the company with a big month-long online event called primal 90, which was kind of like a summit type deal. But also, we created a digital course that was 12 modules and this huge thing.

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We'll talk about that. I have two episodes with Joe during this season. So, one of them is the origin story of Rebel Health Tribe, which I believe is episode two. So, you'll probably hear that one next. So I'm not going to go into a ton of detail on that because we share it together and it's a lot more fun that way. We then kicked off microbiome series webinars with microbiologist Kiran Krishnan after that, which became kind of almost like a cult following on the internet. It blew up him and his work and his company and their flagship supplement product, which is MegaSporeBiotic. When we first started working with Kiran and MegaSpore, their office was three people and they were working with a few 100 doctors worldwide. Now Microbiome Labs is probably close to 100 individuals, there're international 20, 30,000 practitioners worldwide using their products. They have a whole line of products and Kiran's now formulating for one of the largest producers of natural products in the world.

So we started small, they started small and we kind of grew together with Kiran and his work over there. And we've also produced three masterclasses. Microbiome masterclass, autoimmune masterclass and brain and nervous system masterclass, which are two day virtual events about 16 presentations each with experts in the various fields. And these are high level educational content. We've hosted over 100 live webinars over the years on countless topics in health and wellness and all of our live events and webinars and masterclasses and microbiome series with Kiran and Primal 90 and all of that has been attended by over 250,000 people. So with your support, we've managed to reach a lot of people and change a lot of lives and help a lot of people along their healing journeys. 2017 and 2018, Joe and I stepped away from this for a little bit, and we were producers and helped get off the ground the Human Longevity Project film series, which is a documentary series, which is filmed all over the world looking at the healthy habits and lifestyle of the world's healthiest people, the longest lifespans and release chronic disease.

And that was a lot of fun. We reached over 200,000 people with that and that project, you can still find, you go look over there. They've still got that available, Human Longevity Project film. I've been a speaker at Paleo f(x) Conference in Austin, Texas, and been on a lot of podcasts and virtual summits. I'd actually stopped doing interviews a few years back, which I'll explain during my story, but I just restarted again and was recently on Dr. Christine Schaffner's podcast. It was a lot of fun and I'm booked on a couple events through HealthMeans and Health Talks Online coming up pretty soon. I also have been working on and just launched a second platform called Inaura, which just launched with a massive two and a half day live virtual retreat event called the Power Of You and Inaura... Well Rebel Health Tribe is focused mainly on functional medicine, integrative health, nutrition, supplements, wellness, that side of things.

Inaura is entirely focused on the mental, emotional, spiritual trauma, energetic side of things. So complimentary not competitive. And I've been working on that for almost three years and I just launched the first weekend of August in 2021. So that is a bit about me and my career and credentials and professional background and all of that. Regarding this podcast, Natural Evolution was actually the name of my first health business that I started about 12 years ago now, when I was in grad school. I started a personal training business out of the garage at my friend's condo, where I was living. And I got my first clients off Craigslist and it was called Natural Evolution.

And I started to teach nutrition classes and wellness workshops and things like that from the fitness background. So it's a fitting name for the podcast, which I'll get back into towards the end of the story, but my career and my work has mirrored my own evolution from fitness to nutrition, to functional medicine, to deeper trauma and energetic and spiritual work and Natural Evolution felt just right to come

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back to and title the podcast that because we're going to cover the entire evolution, the entire spectrum of. And what this podcast really intends to be is a source of inspiration, education and tools.

So the first season, we're going to talk about the healing journey itself, and we've got some incredible stories to share with you. So, that would be where the inspiration comes in. The second season, we're going to talk about how to discern information and what are the most important pieces of information I've learned along my own journey, who are the best sources of information, where to find it, how to discern? And so I've been lucky enough to collaborate with and learn from some of the best and the brightest in the industry for 10 years. And so season two will be primarily focused on education and information. Season three, we're going to introduce and talk about our own personal favorite by us. There's a whole team here at this company. It's not just me, so our favorite tools and resources, things we've spent a ton of time, energy and money, trying everything. All the different products, services, resources, offerings in the health world.

And we'll be sharing our absolute favorites to save you from having to go through the same process that we did, which can be very long and tedious and expensive and trying a lot of things that don't work, so shortening, the learning curve. So back to season one, which is now, we're going to be talking about healing journeys and some of the guests are people you might know or recognized from the functional medicine world and maybe you haven't heard their story before. Many in this industry get into it because of their own health challenges and their own journeys. So it might be a different side of people that you maybe have heard talk on podcasts before about whatever their expertise is, whether it's hormones or toxicity or Lyme disease or fatigue. We're not going to talk a ton about that in season one, we're really going to get to know the people, the individuals themselves, and their own journeys and their own stories.

I want people to know that there's probably a lot of you out there listening to this who are kind of in it right now, you're struggling right now, you're in pain or you're dealing with a chronic condition or somebody that you care about is, and we often don't hear or see or know about these, practitioners who have these stories. You don't learn about them or see them until they're through it, they're out the other side. They come out the other side and then that's why they start to do what they do. So you see them as this healed individual or somebody who's been out the other side of it. We want you to feel seen and understood and validated that, they were in it too. I've been in it too, like right in the middle of it. And that's often glossed over.

And I just want to acknowledge that, that chronic illness and chronic disease or chronic pain, any of these types of conditions, it's hard. And whether that's a physical or mental or emotional, whether you're dealing with depression or anxiety or chronic pain or auto-immune disease or whatever it is, it's hard. And some of these conversations go pretty deep and pretty heavy because we're talking about very real things that they've been through. And we're going to hopefully learn from their experiences and pull inspiration from their successes to help that healing is possible. And that there even is another side to the journey that I know it. I used to have people when I was really stuck in it, mine's depression. And we'll talk about it in a minute, but people would be like, "When you come out of this, you're going to be in this great place, and this is going to be the best thing that ever happened to you."

I don't want to hear any of that garbage. So, and yes, they were right. Most of the time, but I just want to acknowledge that when you're in it, you don't just want to hear people say, "Oh, keep your head up. It's going to get better." We want to show you real life examples of it getting better and things changing and what that was like for these individuals. So you may already be learning from another

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platforms or even on ours. So, that's the story of the podcast. Season one's going to be all healing journeys and there's about I think, 20 or 21 of them and they're great. There's a lot of incredible conversations that we've been lucky enough to have with people. And I'm excited for you to hear them and to see that side of some individuals that you probably already know of quite well, or have their books or have watched them on summits or anything else.

So that's the podcast, I'm going to get into my own life history and story. And I just want to throw this out there before I really get into it, that some of this might be triggering to some people. If topics of depression or suicide are really difficult for you to hear, I'm just throwing that out there that, that's going to be something that I discuss. So my life started out as an unwanted pregnancy that was put up for adoption. And I spent my first three weeks on this planet in the equivalency of an orphanage. I was adopted at the age of three weeks. And I'm also an only child. I did not grow up having any siblings. I didn't realize all that comes along with adoption psychologically and mentally and emotionally until much later in life, till recently when that's where I turned my attention and started studying those things.

But adoptees do have exponentially higher rates of depression, of suicide, of addiction, and many other chronic situations and conditions and diseases. Also, a much higher rates of ADD, which I realized at about the age of 39 I think, that I have a pretty severe case of ADD or ADHD, I'm not really sure. Something in there, learning about the links between adoption and my early years. Two a lot of those things has really helped me understand myself and have compassion for myself, where I used to see a lot of these things as flaws. And most of them have just been adaptations I made to a really scary early life situation. So any adoptees out there, I see you I hear you, and hopefully you find some value in this. I went to private school starting in first grade, a Lutheran School. Not even really with the intent of my parents to send me to a Christian school. it was more that the public schools and the district went on strike for a really long time and they wanted me in school. So I went to Lutheran School.

I ended up staying there through eighth grade. I made a lot of lifelong friends who I'm still in touch with today because of the really small, tight knit class size, which also has its downsides. And then there in school, starting pretty right away, I was in trouble pretty frequently. I spent a lot of time in the hallway of principal's office, not being allowed for recess. My second grade teacher actually physically tried to put me in the trash. I was told in eighth grade by the principal that I was going to hell. So those are just specific stories that fit a much larger... I don't know, dynamic there at the school that kind of gives you an idea.

I was always a smart kid, but I would sleep a lot or I wouldn't pay attention. I wouldn't do my homework and then I would get A's on the tests, which infuriates teachers. I was actually a teacher when I first got out of school. My undergrad bachelor's degree is in history. I taught history, political science. I'll get into that in a second, but I know that those kids are very frustrating to teachers when they can obviously do well and they choose not to, or not engaged. But that's kind of where I was at. And I didn't generally get in trouble for doing malicious things most of the time, it was just I was hyper, I was talking, I was doodling, I wasn't paying attention which I've now learned is pretty normal for a child that we lock kids into rooms and sit them at desks and stare at them at whiteboards for hours and hours and hours is not something most kids can do without a lot of discipline.

So that really shaped my own beliefs about myself and the way I saw myself that I was this lazy slacker, bad kid, bad influence, that I just pretty much was no good. And a lot of us grew up with that story from one way or another. And I'm going to get back to that a little later. And I grew up mostly on like a standard American diet. We did have fresh produce in the summer. When I was really little, we

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lived in a house with a big garden, so I could go outside and eat tomatoes and peppers and cucumbers and berries and things like a huge garden, like an acre or something. I don't know how big it was. It seemed like miles because I was tiny, but it was very big. And that kept up in the summer, we'd often have fresh produce, mostly like corn. And I grew up in the Midwest, outside Chicago, so we'd have corn and tomatoes and cucumbers and things like that.

So it was kind of mixed in like standard American diet, snack foods, candies, the sugary breakfast cereals, and fast food with fresh produce, fresh vegetables, fresh fruits. I was very active. I played a lot of sports growing up, soccer, basketball, baseball, swimming we had a small backyard pool, plus I swim laps. I did that for a while with a coach. So I was very active, very athletic. I started to cook at a young age, which has served me well with the field that I've gotten into. I was a combination of my mom going to Asian cooking class and coming home with a wok and I thought it was the coolest thing when it got put on the stove.

So there's a little stool in the kitchen and I could stand up on it and see into it and started to learn to cook stir fries when I was probably about eight or nine. And then I learned how to grill in the north parking lot at Soldier Field in Chicago at the Bears games where my family's had season tickets since before I was born. So I started going there at a really young age and operating the grill and learning how to grill various foods and learn how to cook in the wok. So by the time I was 10, I was grilling and cooking stir fry. I really liked soccer and basketball. I played baseball some mainly just because everybody else did, but soccer and basketball were my two favorites. I played through high school, both of them. My trouble really started to escalate in high school.

Nuisance type, annoyance, trouble in junior high, in grade school, at the small little private school started to escalate in high school, partying, booze, drinking, drugs, girls fights. And this is where severe depression really started to kick in. I don't remember being depressed in junior high. My zone out then was mainly sports and food and video games. I played a lot of video games. In high school, once I discovered ways to shift my consciousness as far as drinking or smoking weed or whatever other things I really took to those. And what happens then is that usually snowballs all the problems because I would do things or say things that I wouldn't normally do that then I would feel bad about it. It's a spiral of shame and depression and it got really bad. And the first time I remember being severely depressed or significantly depressed was I think when I was 15. A kid in my English class died, he got hit by a car.

And I just remember everybody talked about him like that they liked him, or they were his friend, what people do when somebody dies, everybody all of a sudden is their best friend or they're the best, this or best of whatever. I didn't really know him. So I'm sure he's a great kid, but I saw the way that everyone reacted to it. And then there was a part of me that just wished it was me because I think that I wanted that sort of attention or that sort of praise or something. And I started to have these images or fantasies in my head about my own wake or my own funeral and seeing people crying and people talking about me and people caring a lot. That was pretty normal in high school, I had those thoughts a lot and I didn't talk to anybody about it.

I didn't realize it was problematic or dangerous. I just thought it was something that all kids thought about. And the music in the '90s too kind of confirmed that. Half of my favorite musicians from high school are dead either from drug overdoses or suicide. And most of the music of that era was really... Now that I look back when I hear all these nostalgic radio stations, the music really is difficult for me to listen to now because it's so depressive and so just filled with rage and depression and despair. And I didn't notice that then either. So I was embroiled in all of that. And from high school I played basketball

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and soccer. And from there I went to college and I had originally intended on going to Florida State University with a friend of mine who decided not to go, and then I didn't want to go there across the country by myself. so I wound up going to Western Illinois in the good old Macomb, Illinois for anybody who's been there.

It was kind of the last school I hadn't applied to. I had never even been there before I went for registration. So I went school four hours away from home in the middle of the corn and soybean fields in the Midwest. And I got placed on a floor of the most endearing, lovable lunatics in the dorm that one could ever imagine. And I'm still friends with several of them to this day and my party habits and irresponsibility went through the roof. I thought I was a pro in high school. It's kind of like a Single-A baseball player getting brought up to the majors. I had no idea what I was in for, and everything took off and the depression spiraled with it.

So, that freshman year was really difficult. And I struggled to keep my grades up and maintain that kind of social life partying. And then towards the second semester of freshman year I found out that I was going to be a dad and I'm not going to get too into how that story went just out of privacy for people who don't live such public lives, but that summer, between my freshman year and sophomore year in college, my son Michael was born. And I was still a child, it was a month before my 19th birthday. So I was still a child. I had no idea what I was doing, I was terrified and I decided to stay in school so that I could have a career and that I wouldn't just drop out. And I had no idea what I would do if I dropped out, so I stayed in school and I drove from Macomb back to Chicago, probably two to three weekends a month during the school year, sometimes more, but at least two to three weekends a month, which is four hours each way.

I was still irresponsible and getting in trouble and partying. I didn't take school super seriously. I always did just enough to stay enrolled and stay there and keep my grades in good enough order. I started bartending and serving, which I thought was the coolest thing, but that was not a good influence on my life. And I had really severe depression in college. I can recall a number of times where it got really, really dangerous, and I maybe told somebody, or maybe didn't, or maybe, but blurted out in some sort of aim to get attention, but it was really dangerous. And having Michael is really what kept me going, knowing that I had a son and that someone was reliant on me and that I didn't want him to lose his dad in such a way, even though there was a large part of me that felt like he'd be better off without me and so would everyone else.

I touch on that with Dr. Christina Bjorndal in her episode, in this season. So if you want to talk more or hear more about that and the mindset of somebody at that level of depression, and it's really good and understanding there, we get way into it. And it's a pretty heavy conversation, I'll warn you. It's probably the heaviest one out of all the episodes, but I'd head over there and listen to that for a more discussion on the mindset around severe depression. So I did finish school. I taught for a couple of years, mostly subbing, a long-term sub, I taught summer school. I taught history, political science, sociology, and English, but I knew right away, I wasn't going to do it. I knew right away I didn't like it. I didn't sit well with the indoctrination and the politics of the school districts.

Just one story to sum that up. It was during an election year. It was when it was Ralph Nader and John Kerry and George Bush. And I took a ton of time and energy and effort to make up this mock election where it had 50 or 70... I don't remember different issues. And then I had an ABC choice for each one, the candidates' stance on the issue, and I jumbled them all up. So it wasn't like Ralph Nader was A on all of them and George Bush was C. I jumbled them all up and then I tabulated all the scores. I had

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them just pick which stance they aligned with on the issues. And these were seniors in high school, mostly so I felt this was relevant. And when the results came out I just posted them in the back of the room because teachers are not allowed to talk political affiliation or sway kids, or do any sort of thing that endorses anyone or anything, that's not allowed in schools.

And so I just posted it in the back and I said, "Hey, the results of all your mock elections are in the back." And the high school seniors overwhelmingly chose Ralph Nader. And I was teaching in a rather conservative, rather wealthy middle upper class suburban school district. One kid went home, told his parents, his parents called the Dean, told the Dean that the teacher's making all the kids vote for Ralph Nader and I got chewed out in the Dean's office and basically just quit right there. I stayed for the rest of the school year, but I knew that that was going to be the end of me teaching. I feel really good now about walking away from it, but at the time it felt like a huge failure. And I went back to the service industry for a couple of years. Well, for a while, actually when I went back to the service industry bartending and serving, I worked half as many hours as I did when I was teaching and made about one and a half times the money.

And that's just an indictment of the situation for teachers in this country. But I did that for my whole 20s and I would see Michael on the weekends and I would during the days, and then I would work at night. I struggled for my entire 20s, severe depression, a lot of alcohol, a lot of partying. I would go out after work during the week. Like I would go out after the shift come home really, really, really late at night or early in the morning, say, "I'm never doing that again." Wake up at noon eat. I would always go to the gym still, but I would go to the gym and I would then go to work and then repeat the whole process. And my first step in trying to change the cycle in my late 20s I think was 2006 or 2007, I got a puppy.

And when I was 10, I had a puppy that drowned in our swimming pool. And that really messed me up. And I had nightmares and night terrors for a long time. And it's something I'm still working on processing and going through and it's created this hyper-vigilance that I have in my life of like making sure everyone's okay all the time, especially related to pets and animals. So I felt relevant to share there. My first step in change was Marley, my dog. And I got him so that I was forced to come home from work after my shifts to take care of the dog and I couldn't go out. And I got him on accident. I wanted to get a dog, but I wasn't planning on it. I stopped at the pet store for something else at his old pet store in my hometown where I didn't live anymore and I hadn't been to in forever this little mom and pop pet store.

And there was this box in the back, a big plywood box filled with puppies. And I took one out and it was crazy and running around and jumping on me and biting my pants and going all nuts. And I was like, "Ah, I don't want that." So I put it back in the box and then I took out another one and I sat him down and he just sat there and looked at me and I said, "I'm going to get this dog." And I got him. And he was my best friend for 13 years. And I really believe he saved my life. I'll talk more about him in a little bit. After that, 2008 in the spring, I moved to Florida to start grad school at University of South Florida.

I got some personal trainer certifications. I had decided I wanted to get out of the service industry. I felt it was like a dead end. I could see where it was going, it wasn't good for me. I was drinking a lot, I was partying a lot. I was gaining a lot of weight. I didn't feel good. It was making my depression worse. I just saw it as a dead end, like I was going to end up in the gutter, like I was not going to make it. And so I was friends with a couple of trainers at the gym, because I went there all the time and they're like, "Yeah, you can do this. You can help people work out and get paid." So I got the certifications and I decided to go back to grad school to get a master's in exercise science, which actually was the result of a coin toss.

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It was between USF Grad School in exercise science, or I believe University of Denver, a master's program in international relations. So imagine that gone the other way, but I really did choose it on a coin toss. And so I moved to Florida. I started grad school. I started to make changes because I just really wanted to shift my life, but I was still struggling a lot. I would take away one crutch or one coping or soothing mechanism, and then I would replace it with another one. I didn't realize that without addressing the underlying pain and the underlying traumas and the underlying things that I would just continually find new things. I ended up being in Florida for the semester and the summer. And then the economic crash happened the end of that year and the restaurant I was working at closed and everything started to close and I had to come home and this was devastating.

I was so destroyed by this, I actually spent a night sitting out on a pier in what I think was a tropical storm the whole night. Was suicidal sitting on a pier, trying to... I don't know, keep myself alive? I don't know why I went out there, but it was a long night and it was pretty wild. Only thinking about Michael and Marley kept me alive that they were relying on me to make it that. And I came home to Chicago, I finished grad school, started the PT business in the garage, which is where Natural Evolution started, thanks Al. I tried working at corporate gyms, but it just sucks that I can't do it. I can't cold harass people and push crap products and energy drinks and sell them shit they don't need. So I just don't, I didn't. I worked there for a minute and then I left and in my own PT business.

And then I discovered Paul Chek, founder of the CHEK Institute. I read an article about like the 50 something ingredients in a burger king milkshake. And he was so pissed. He was like, "What is this shit? What is this ingredient? This is why we're so sick, and this is why we're fat, and this is why we have disease. What is this garbage?" And I loved it. I thought, "This is way different than what I learned in grad school," because in grad school, I mean, it's conventional education. So I'm learning about like, "Don't eat fat, only eat whole grains, only eat broccoli, don't eat any of this or that and kill your clients on a treadmill and beat them to death and whatever." And this is a total shift in perspective. And I was like, "I dig this guy." I found out that he has a whole Institute, that there's a program called Holistic Lifestyle Coach.

So I went to that and that shifted my life. I realized, I learned about like organic food and soil science and stress and the way that emotions and energy play a role on our health and that hardcore exercise is not best for everybody. I learned really advanced core training, a whole bunch of things there. And that totally shifted my perspective. I started putting together classes and workshops right away locally. I lived at this condo complex and they had the room you can rent with all the tables and things and I did a workshop there and 30 or 40 people came to it. I don't even know how, but it was awesome. And that was the first thing I ever taught. And what's cool is that those things I used to teach 10 years ago were mind blowing to people and this weird information that they'd never heard of, and now it's not.

Now it's pretty mainstream and common and a lot of people know about it. And so that's been really exciting to watch. So I started teaching nutrition and health in addition to training, I was still doing a lot of really unhealthy things. I still felt really hypocritical, I was still depressed and anxious. I was just in a little bit better shape, but I was still eating really unhealthy some of the time, I still was drinking, I still was smoking various things. It just felt like I was living two lives, one that was professional and public facing, and then one that was private. And there was a lot of shame involved with that, and a lot of guilt and a lot of, "You don't belong or you don't know what you're talking about or why should anybody listen to you?"

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But gradually my clients started to get a little bit more complex as I was being more successful, helping them. And that's when I learned Reed Davis and Functional Diagnostic Nutrition and using lab testing in your practice. So I went through that training and it was super cool. I nerded out on that, I studied a lot under Michael McEvoy, the founder of Metabolic Healing, his business and he's a wizard with lab testing and biochemistry and all that stuff. And so my clients just started getting more and more complex. I found that I was teaching people the same stuff over and over and over and over again though, and so I decided as a teacher to create a digital course, that would be all the stuff that I would teach anyone. And then I could have them watch that and learn that. And then when they were going to pay me for time for my hours, we could focus primarily just on that, the stuff that's unique to them.

And I thought that saves them money because then they're not paying me for a lot of hours to teach them the same stuff I would teach anybody. It frees up time from me, so that I'm not repetitively teaching the same stuff and I could potentially market this thing. I had just started learning about digital marketing and marketing things online and that there were these people who make their living marketing things online and they are location independent. I wanted to live by the beach. I'd already tried once going to Florida, so now I had my sights set on Costa Rica or Mexico or somewhere really cheap on a beach, working with clients via distance, making a digital course, something like that. That fall, which was, I think 2013 maybe, I attended a training in San Diego with Emma Lane, who's a gut health specialist and I loved it.

I was blown away by how beautiful, I was in North County, San Diego. It was in Carlsbad, I believe, and near La Jolla for anybody who knows North County, San Diego. And it's really pretty, the place was right on the beach, overlooking the water. And I had left still to go there. And it was 70 and sunny and I'm like, "Man, I need to get to this place." From there, I met my wife, Mira, who I had known... and I had to go back from San Diego to Chicago. So I got this taste and I was like, "Man, I want to go there. How could I go here though? It's so expensive." Because I was looking at Costa Rica and things of that nature that are much cheaper. I met Mira and we became friends and that gradually became more. And she came out to visit for a weekend in February in Chicago, somebody from California, I'll just leave it at that.

It was a bit of a experience for her. And from there, I decided to move to where she was living at the time in Arizona on the Navajo Reservation. So we had spent 72 hours together ever. And I moved to Arizona with Marley and we drove there and we landed in the Navajo Reservation. I'd never really even seen real mountains until I drove to there. And I woke up in a red rock desert that looked like Mars and the culture shock was extreme. And I still was struggling with a lot of the things I was struggling with before I left, I did fall in love with the Southwest, like Arizona, New Mexico. We were right on the border of Arizona and New Mexico and the Navajo Nation around Window Rock. The town was called Fort Defiance for anybody who knows that area at all. And we went all over the Southwest.

We went to Sedona, we went to the Grand Canyon, we went to Chaco Canyon in New Mexico. We went to Albuquerque, Santa Fe. It was really gorgeous, the whole area, Utah, Moab, it's really, really, really pretty. And there's a soul and a spirit there and it's beautiful. And it's really devastating to see the way that this country does not treat the native population as if they're human beings. It was stunning that a third of the people there don't have running water, that a third of the people there don't have electricity, that they would have vats of water outside that they would heat with a fire in the night because it's at 7,000 feet, so it's very cold to make sure that their water didn't freeze so that they had actual water to use for their homes. To have billboards pleading for water, to have alcohol illegal on the entire reservation due to the amount of alcoholism and drug addiction.

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Mira is a nurse and she was working on the hospital there, that's why we were there. And they were seeing diabetic amputations on people in their 20s. They're seeing gallbladder removals and teens and 20s, like things that are lifestyle disease, progress at very, very young ages. And so it was very mixed bag there, beautiful land, tragic state of affairs and living. And I also quit tons of things, cold turkey when I moved out there. I quit drinking, I quit smoking weed or anything else. There was no restaurants around that were remotely good, so I stopped eating out or other kinds of food. I took away all the things that I had been using to cope or soothe or manage or numb or not feel. I didn't know this at the time, but you can't just do that without addressing the underlying things that need to be coped with and soothed and managed.

And so it presented itself as wild anxiety and panic and weird jittery shakiness and all kinds of things that I had never experienced before, because I'd always numbed it out. I developed a skin rash and a bunch of other symptoms that I couldn't figure out and I'm all but positive. It came from losing my coping mechanisms and my ability to soothe and numb and things because I didn't have the skills or the knowledge or anything experienced nothing to work through these things in a healthy way. I had no idea what that even was. I didn't even know there was things. And so it was a really hard time and it was tough. It was tough to go through that, it was tough on our relationship and it was a rocky situation. And when we were on the res' before we were moving to San Diego this guy messaged me from the FDN Facebook group, Joe Rignola who we founded Rebel Health Tribe together.

And he wanted to do an interview with me and I couldn't figure out why or what for, and we'll talk about that on his episode too. And anyways, long story short, we ended up founding Rebel Health Tribe together. So listen to the episode with Joe, which I think is the next one. Mira and I moved to San Diego from there so that I could go to Bastyr and attend their naturopathic medicine program, which I didn't do. And because Rebel Health Tribe really grew and took off pretty well and I decided against taking out \$300,000 in student loans and going to school full-time for five years and shutting down that business. I'm really glad that I made that decision, but that's why we went there. We spent five years in San Diego, so it was beautiful. And then there was parts of it that I loved and parts of it that I didn't like.

It definitely wasn't the paradise that I thought it was going to be, but it was beautiful. And I lived right on the beach, which was my life dream, but I was living right on the beach, which was my life dream and I was still depressed. And now I had these additional anxiety attacks and panic attacks because I had taken away everything I'd ever used to cope or numb or sooth. And in 2018, we did the movie launch with Human Longevity Project, which was a massive stress. I was not sleeping, I was up all night, I was panic attacks. This actually led to Mira's first and second auto-immune flares, which were terrifying. There was mold in the house too and the stress from that and her auto-immune presents as like debilitating, full body joint pain. I'll never forget the night that I had to help her get dressed and carry her to the car and put her in the car and take her to the hospital because she was screaming and she couldn't move and her body was like glass.

That's when we knew it was really serious and we had no idea what we were dealing with. So it was terrifying. I felt like life collapsed. We had all these plans, we were going to do all this traveling. We had his life planned out, everything went to hell. I felt like I brought it on her because of the stress from the project and some other things that happened. And I went into this pit of guilt and shame and deep, dark depression. And I later learned this is called the dark night of the soul. And when somebody told me that while I was in it, I looked it up and it felt like somebody had written a biography about me. And so for most of the 2018, I really wanted to die. I couldn't bear seeing her like that, I couldn't bear the thought

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that I made her that way. I couldn't handle the fact that even with all my connections in functional medicine, it took us months to get it right, to get it fixed, to get it mitigated or whatever.

I was trying to fix it, fix it, fix it and it took a while for things to calm down and to heal and to reverse. And that was really hard to deal with. And she got better, but I didn't. And I tried diets, I tried supplements, I tried exercising. I went in the sun, I went on the beach, none of it mattered. I struggled to just get through the day. I had serious suicidal thoughts, I started making plans. I wrote letters and it was really scary and really dark. And I tried a bunch of different therapists and counselors and programs and books, I looked online for a hub, a resource, something like Rebel Health Tribe, but for that kind of health and I couldn't find it. And I was really, really desperate, I really didn't think I was going to make it through there.

And a friend of mine invited me to a plant medicine circle and I had a life history with psychedelics. I first took psychedelics when I think I was 16 or 17. And they were pretty constant in my life over time. Not constant like I was constantly taking them, but they always would pop up. And I had a lot of really powerful, really positive experiences with psychedelics, but I'd always stayed away from them when I was depressed or not in a good head space. So at first I rejected this offer to attend the circle. And then finally I thought, "I'm really desperate. I don't know, maybe I'll try it." And I was invited to talk to the facilitator of the circle and he said that, "I'd like you to consider the idea that not all healing needs to be painful," and that's not something I'd ever heard before.

I thought that to get through this, I was going to have to go through like some sort of unbearable hell, face all these demons. There was this pit of anguish that I was going to have to traverse to feel better. And he said that to me and I thought, "You know what, whatever. I'm going to die if I go down this road any further so I might as well give it a shot." And that first night, that first ceremony by the morning, my black and white had turned to color. I wasn't depressed anymore. And it wasn't that I just wasn't depressed, this doom cloud that I had carried around my whole life that, "Everything's going to fall apart, everything's going to fail. I'm going to wind up dead or suicide or in a gutter or in an asylum or in rehab." That's how I always saw my life going. I didn't see it possible to go any other way. It was just like I was always delaying the inevitable of this collapse or this failure into death or despair or whatever.

And that was mostly gone too. And I cried the whole way home while I was driving, because I didn't think I'd ever feel better. And I didn't know what to do, I didn't know how to be from that place. And for a long time, I thought that it was the medicine. I thought it was the substances that did that and it wasn't. I now know and understand after all the training that I've been through was that the medicine that night helped me to receive from others and forgive myself, receive care and compassion and to have compassion and self-forgiveness and care for myself. And that's something that I was never able to do sober, naturally. There's certain types of plant medicines that really help with stuff like that. And so that's what shifted me was that I allowed myself to receive that kind of care and compassion and I had for myself, I was able to forgive myself and see myself with compassion.

And after going through that experience, I knew I wanted of to shift my career. I wasn't sure to what, I thought about getting another master's degree, maybe I'm going to become a therapist. But then I looked at student loans and a gazillion clinical hours that I didn't want to do. Love to the therapist out there, I know you go through a lot to have those credentials and I'm not downplaying it, but I didn't know what. And I went to another circle a little while later, like a month and a half later. The same group pretty much, but with a couple new people. And when I walked in a lot of people started crying when they saw me because of how different I was from the first time that they'd met me.

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And someone who was at the first one and at the second one, her name's Anna Paula. During the course of that night, we received a simultaneous message to create something to wake everybody up was the message that we both got and to shift the trajectory of humanity towards healing and growth and realization of who and what we really are. And then there was a guy there doing crazy energy work, stuff I'd never seen before that I wouldn't have believed was real. And I talked to him, he confirmed that this was the plan, that this was a good idea to do. He also led us to the Luminous Awareness Institute training that I recently finished. And so out of that night came the creation of Anora which is the other platform that I have recently launched that I've spent almost three years working on and introduced me to the trainings that I've been going through for the last two years to shift my career.

And so I've been doing nonstop healing and growth work for the last three years, therapy, trainings, coaching classes, workshops, book, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, audio books, you name it. I've learned about the impact of my adoption, the treatment in school that I received. I've learned about intergenerational trauma. I've learned about energy and how these things show up in the body. I've learned the impact of living in an unnatural and unhealthy society. I've recognized in myself, significant ADD and ADHD, significant depression, anxiety, addictions, but I've met them with compassion and understanding and curiosity and not resentment and anger and shame and that makes all the difference. And so I'm going to start working with clients in that regard on that kind of work soon. I haven't opened a practice yet, but I've completed two trainings to be able to do that and launch the Anora platform, which covers all that type of feeling in addition to what's on here at Rebel Health Tribe,

And it's not all roses and rainbows. Two years ago, we moved up here to Northern California. We're in Berkeley, and it was a disaster from the first day. We had bought this camper that was going to live in the backyard of Mira's parents house so that we could live there, rent free, and we could pay off her Mount to know student loans from nursing. And that was a tragic mistake from day one, the day she arrived up here, she went ahead of me. I had the animals and was boxing up and moving all of our things from San Diego. The day she got here, she went in the camper and she saw water damage and mold was involved in both of her to flares. And that night, her first night up here, her pain came back and it started, and it ended up being the worst flare she's ever had by 100 times.

It lasted over a year. She was on steroids for almost a year, and we tried literally everything. There were more days of horrific pain than I can count. She worked through most of it. She worked through COVID through... You name it, she's an ER nurse. We had to move from there and rent a really expensive place, which defeated the purpose of us coming up here to pay off her loans. She started getting a little better and then COVID kicked off and the stress from that knocked everything up 100 levels to the point where the worst day ever was April 1st, 2020, and she couldn't move. And she was screaming and crying and it was horrific. And then we spent all of April trying to get her pain down enough so that she could work. And at the end of that month, she started working with a new doctor who was going to sign off on some leave.

And that was April 30th. And we were so happy that she was going to get this time off to rest and heal. And we went for a walk to Pharmaca, which is a natural supplement store. We needed to pick up a couple things. It was the first time we were happy and relieved in so long that it felt so foreign that it was like, I still remember it. And when we got home, Marley was sick, my dog, and he'd been with me through all of this. He loved the beach in San Diego, he loved walking on the ridge at the res' at our house on the red rocks. We took him to Sedona, he went to the beach all the time in San Diego. He was with me in Florida, he loved the beach there. He'd been my companion at my best friend and my teacher for 13

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years and saved my life more times than I could count, he was sick and he wouldn't eat and he couldn't move.

And we took him to the vet and they told me that they'd have to keep him overnight. They weren't sure what was going on. They ran these blood tests, "It could be this or this or this." And I just knew that he wasn't going to make it and I took him home because it was COVID and we couldn't even go inside with him. And there was no way I was going to let him die there. And I spent his last night with him on the floor right here, and he didn't sleep because he was in pain and I didn't sleep because he was in pain. And then the next day we took him back and they ran these scans and they told us that it was bad news, that he had this rupture in his abdomen that was going to require some sort of really extensive, dangerous, risky surgery and he was 13 and a half years old and that it was possible he would die on the table. We decided to have him put down and we had a beautiful ceremony for him at Mira's parents' house in their yard and their rose garden and it was the most painful thing that ever happened to me.

He was waiting for her to get a break from work so that we could grieve together. Her break started the next day and we took off two weeks and just cried and grieved and walked and smelled flowers and really leaned into the grief, which if you've never done is really, really powerful medicine. And so I've now learned that grief is my personal, most powerful doorway to feeling love and feeling alive. And that was Marley's last gift to me. So the power of grief and surrender was that lesson and that he waited for her to have a break so that we could do it together.

And she recovered over the summer while she was off. And towards the end of last summer Mira and I attended a virtual retreat trauma with Dr. Gabor Maté, who many of you probably know of now because he's famous. And we were pretty blown away and on a whim, I was already a year into the Luminous Awareness Training. I signed up for Gabor's Compassionate Inquiry so I would then be running Rebel Health Tribe, building Anora in Luminous Awareness Institute training, which is intense and in Compassionate Inquiry, which is also even more time consuming and intense. And I'm about to finish that. That's the road that led me to doing the trainings and building the things and doing all that stuff. We did manage to pay off Mira's loan, which is pretty remarkable. And we've decided that our next move more than likely at the end of this year is going to be to Italy where I can get citizenship due to my lineage, and she can take some time off working as a nurse in the ER to let her body really heal.

She's at work for a year almost and to all you ER nurses out there if you hear it, so much love to you, it is an extremely stressful job and it's been extraordinarily stressful for the last year and a half. And we just want to be somewhere where we can live off one income comfortably in a slow pace of life, in a place where healing is priority. And so we're going to be moving there at the end of this year, more than likely. And that's the next step. The journey's never over. That's always continual. I'm looking forward to returning to client practice soon with different types of clients than I used to work with. Where I was working with nutrition and functional medicine and integrative health before, I'm going to be working in the mental, emotional, spiritual, and energetic realm now.

We just launched Anora last weekend which I don't know when you're going to hear this, but the first weekend of August with an incredible two and a half day virtual retreat that was live and it was amazing and it was transformative and it was powerful. And I'm really excited about what's going to be going on over there on that platform, which I'm not going to get into too much on this podcast, but there's a lot of offering over there. A ton of over 200 practitioners database. We have educational stuff, classes, workshops, all kinds of things over there for that kind of work. I'm going to continue to navigate here at RHT and still be helping people on the functional medicine side of things. We just had a webinar on

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digestive enzymes since last week from when I'm recording this. So I'm going to continue to walk both sides of that line of health and healing and look forward to help helping people while doing my own work.

I still am doing my own work and that's a journey that never stops. So what is a healing journey? Why did I just tell you this whole long elaborate story? And I think that looks for everyone. Mine didn't involve a lot of physical health problems. At least for me, it does for my wife, but there was mental health problems and suicide and depression. So it looks different for everybody. And what you'll notice in this season one is that there's over 20 people sharing their remarkable and unique healing journeys, but none of them are the same. And no matter what yours looks like or where you find yourself on it, just know that there is a way forward, that there is another side. And with this podcast and all we do here, our intention is to be a support and resource for you along that path.

I hope that you enjoy the podcast, I hope that you find value in it. I hope you find inspiration in the stories that are shared and I thank you for listening. And if you'd like to help us reach more people, please leave a rating and a review. That's really important for these things and share with those in your life who are interested in health and healing whatever it may look like to them. So, much love. Thank you so much for listening and check out the rest of the episodes. You won't have to listen to me talk the whole time on them. It's a lot of really interesting people with really amazing stories that you're going to hear from. So thank you so much and see you on the other episodes.

And this brings us to the end of today's journey. Head on over to rebelhealthtribe.com/kit, to grab a free download of our loaded quick start guide. It contains dozens of our favorite tips, suggestions, recommendations, and tools to help you along your healing journey. If you're on Facebook, come join our Rebel Health Tribe group over there. And finally, if you like the show, please subscribe, leave us a review and share with your friends. Thanks for joining us, we'll see you again soon.