

AJR Michele Kietly Transcript

0:00:01 - Annncr

Julie Ryan, noted psychic and medical intuitive, is ready to answer your personal questions, even those you never knew you could ask. For more than 25 years, as she developed and refined her intuitive skills, Julie used her knowledge as a successful inventor and businesswoman to help others. Now she wants to help you to grow, heal and get the answers you've been longing to hear. Do you have a question for someone who's transitioned? Do you have a medical issue? What about your pet's health or behavior? Perhaps you have a loved one who's close to death and you'd like to know what's happening? Are you on the path to fulfill your life's purpose, no matter where you are in the world? Take a journey to the other side and ask Julie Ryan.

0:00:43 - Julie

Hi everybody, welcome to the Ask Julie Ryan Show. It's where we blend spirituality and practicality to help you live a life of purpose and joy. We have Dr Michelle Kietly on the show with us today. Michelle's a professor of counseling at James Madison University and a practicing therapist. She empowers her clients and students to design intentional, fulfilling lives by integrating spirituality into their daily routines. I'm eager to uncover what that truly means and, more importantly, how to achieve it. Please remember to subscribe, leave a comment and share this episode with your family and friends. Now let's go talk with Michelle. Michelle, welcome to the show. I'm so delighted you could join us today.

0:01:32 - Michele

Thank you, I'm very excited to be here. I'm a huge fan of yours.

0:01:36 - Julie

Oh, I'm so honored, Thank you. You say you believe spiritual wellness is the foundation for a purposeful and joyful life. That's my whole MO to help combine spirituality and practicality to help somebody live a life of purpose and joy. So we're on the same page right off the bat on that. What does that mean to you and how did you come to that conclusion?

0:02:03 - Michele

Oh, that's a fun question to you. And how'd you come to that conclusion? Oh, that's a fun question. Well, I love your blending spirituality and practicality because I think that's a huge cornerstone for me too. I can probably dig more into this later, but I have kind of these deep roots in exploring spirituality and spiritual wellness all the way back to my dissertation and my doctoral program, and spiritual wellness all the way back to my dissertation and my doctoral program. But I really really do believe that at our core, you know, we all connect with these elements of spiritual wellness and if they're off, then it really makes life more difficult and we don't feel as centered and as happy and as integrated I think, as humans as we could be. So I think that there's these sort of four major components of spiritual wellness that I like to dig into with my clients, that kind of put legs on it, so to speak. So it makes it more practical and not just kind of you know, ethereal, if you will.

0:03:02 - Julie

I want to get into that in a little bit what the four pillars if you will, legs, as you call them are. But what is spiritual wellness?

0:03:13 - Michele

So spiritual wellness to me is really well kind of defined by these four components. So I'll just kind of go into them. Spiritual wellness is really having a strong sense of meaning and purpose in life, being able to tap into your inner resources for that strength, to have that resilience to navigate life's challenges and joys. Having a sense of transcendence, being able to kind of get

outside of yourself to have kind of a greater perspective without skipping the human experience, which we would call spiritual bypass. And then also positive interconnectedness. So for some people that might be a faith community, for others it might be like a really deep, close, intimate friend group. For somebody else that might be a faith community. For others it might be like a really deep, close, intimate friend group. For somebody else it might be just like nature, you know something, where they feel really kind of connected in a way, or animals.

0:04:16 - Julie

Does family come into that as well?

0:04:19 - Michele

Absolutely. Oh goodness, yes, and I am half Irish, half Italian and I will say, growing up and witnessing, especially my mom's side of the family, that warmth, that connection that you belong. I think for people who are blessed enough to have that you know that positive interconnectedness is huge. For other people, I think that can be more of a struggle and so they may need to really kind of find that somewhere else if they're not getting that from their family. Was your mom the Italian or the Irish one?

Oh yeah, she's the Italian one. Italian, that's what I figured. Yeah, that's Irish, yeah. Wonderful and the Italians are so welcoming and charming, and it so involves, involves food, and the food is always amazing, I know it's just the best. Like, yeah, we would have a Thanksgiving, my grandmother would make traditional Thanksgiving and Italian Thanksgiving. You know, and you, just, you just can't beat it.

0:05:16 - Julie

I know and you think, how in the heck can one human make all that food in that period of?

0:05:21 - Michele

time. I know it's amazing, isn't it?

0:05:23 - Julie

I know, I think that it's a superpower. My brother's sister-in-law is one of those entertainers, like your grandmother. You go and they just I can't even tell you. There's 15 desserts there and there's five or six entrees, both the Italian entrees and the regular food, the regular American food. It's incredible.

0:05:50 - Michele

We got to. I know this is a little sidetracked, but my son my younger son and my husband and I we got to go for a whole semester to live in Italy about a year ago and it was just incredible and my son and I, I think we were like literally ushered by Italian angels to the passport office in Philadelphia. I mean, we got our passport the day before we went to Italy. So we became Italian citizens through Heritage on my mom's side and we got the notification like two days before we were supposed to go and I just got this like go, like, just go to Philadelphia and see if they'll give you a passport. So like the day before we left for four months we got our passports and then we just really got immersed in the culture and the food is just so beautiful and so I'm presenting to my mom and her husband's Italian club in a few weeks and about the experience. So I've been going through all the pictures and putting all the pictures of the delicious food in and it's just yeah beautiful memories.

0:06:52 - Julie

I want to circle back around to that a little bit later. Actually, I have questions for you about your Italian adventure. Back to what's going on in your life now and what brought you to this spiritual wellness program that you've designed that's helping so many people. Was there a

catalyst that led you to include spirituality in your curricula and your counseling, or was it just always there?

0:07:23 - Michele

Yeah, so you might have to cut me off on this one. This is, I might say, too much here. From the very beginning of my life I just I had a very strong sense of faith and spirituality. Like I had a poster on my wall as a little girl I can still see it and it just said God is love. And I just felt that like I knew that was true of God is love, and I just felt that, like I knew that was true. And so for me, my spiritual I grew up Catholic and I wasn't I very much connected to the mystical, maybe, aspect of that, like maybe Mother Mary and saints, and I know you and I have some of that in common and so it was just a real part of me.

When I went to graduate school I started training to be a counselor and I took it very seriously. But I did wonder, like why are they not teaching us how to talk about spirituality or faith or anything? Because I think it's important to people, but maybe it's not. You know, maybe I need to kind of just listen and see what's going on here. And and meanwhile, of course, I'm reading all these books, everything I can get my hands on, you know from Edgar Cayce and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and you know anybody that was publishing real books because we didn't have the internet back then go to the library and I'm doing kind of my own path and my own journey. And then I start going into like internships and jobs, you know, working in schools. I worked at a bone marrow transplant unit at Bowman Gray School of Medicine at Wake Forest University with cancer patients.

I worked at a women's resource center and as I started having more career experiences, I was like, okay, it's not just me. You know, people are bringing this up, they're hungry to talk about it, they're asking about it, they're talking about you know, death. They're talking about. You know. I'll never forget this little girl. She was in third grade and I worked at a Catholic school for that time and she said my uncle killed himself. She drew me a picture of him in his coffin and she said my family told me that he's going to hell, but I do not believe that God would do that. What do you think? Oh gosh. And I remember going okay, we're not supposed to say what our values are or what we think, but I was like you know what God is love? God is a loving God, and I am right there with you. I think the exact same thing you do. I do not think God would turn God's back on your uncle and I think your uncle is right there, you know, with God and the rest of your family. That's passed on.

And so it was times like that where I thought and then of course, you know, the people on the bone marrow transplant unit really were at that stage of life where the I mean this is really it right, like um, and you had young, young women maybe who had breast cancer or you had, you know, folks of all different ages and stages of life and everybody at the end of their life is talking about the same stuff, like what's important to them, what do they think might happen when they die, reflecting on their relationships. And I remember one of my doctoral supervisors said it sounds like you're being a student with the patients, and I was like well, I am, you know, I mean I'm learning from them. I mean this is like the deep stuff. And my classmates were like I don't even see how you're doing this work. This is so depressing. But to me it wasn't depressing at all. It was like such an honor to be in the presence of people who were facing you know the next stage for them after their physical body would be no longer here on this earth. So for me I just was like, okay, I'm not going to question this anymore.

I started trying to pursue of course you have to pick a dissertation topic and I said I want to study spirituality. At that time we had like nothing in the counseling literature, hardly anything at all. And I picked up like a religious studies kind of a cognate in my doctoral program and then my mentor at the hospital introduced me to a lot of literature in the medical field because there was just a lot more. There were clinical like double-blind studies on, you know, power of prayer. I think it was maybe Larry Dossey that did that. So different folks were studying I think Duke

Harold Koenig, maybe just different folks at medical institutions were studying different things about faith and spirituality and so I really started to have I had to use the literature base mostly from the medical field.

And then I found this model. It was really cool. There were two different very big pieces of work where they found they looked at all the interdisciplinary literature and they found these four themes, the ones that I said earlier, and somebody created an instrument based on those four themes of spirituality and created the spiritual wellness assessment or the spirituality assessment scale, and so I was able to use that then to test how are these elements of spiritual wellness related to depression? Because, of course, as I was seeing clients, right, I worked, I did stuff at hospice, I did stuff at the hospital, I did stuff at the Women's Resource Center, of course a typical mental health issue for so many people is depression. And so I did like a comparative study between older adolescents and midlife adults and found that every single element of spiritual wellness was negatively correlated to depression. So meaning that the higher you were in meaning and purpose in life, the lower depression you had, the higher in inner resources you were, the lower depression you had, the higher transcendent you were, the lower depression you had, and so on.

And then found, because we had to take so many statistics courses in our doctoral program, we used this method called structural equation modeling and it's kind of a, I guess, a methodology where you can determine causality. So the one factor that actually could be seen as predictive of depression not just correlated but, like this, causes depression was meaning and purpose in life. So if you did not have, you know, a strong sense of meaning and purpose in life, that could actually lead to and cause depression. And so that just became so meaningful to me. And then over the course of my academic career, I published my dissertation results. I wrote some articles about how to incorporate spirituality into the counseling curriculum because it was really missing. Now it is in our actual standards through the American Counseling Association. It is mentioned in the standards of training, where we really hadn't been mentioned, and now it's mentioned in our ethical codes. It's not like a big focus but it is mentioned, whereas before it was like it didn't even exist.

0:14:48 - Julie

Well, and the statistics show that when somebody goes into a nursing home they don't last very long, for the most part because they're lonely, they don't have a sense of purpose and it's really dramatic. I have one grandmother that went in when she fell. She asked to go to a nursing home because she lived by herself and my parents' home had a bunch of steps in it so she didn't want to live there because all the bedrooms were upstairs and she was six weeks shy of 100 when she passed. But she was in the nursing home for about a year but she would get dressed every day and put her lipstick on and she'd sit out in the lobby and read the paper and do stuff like that. She didn't stay in her room so she got up and moved around.

And then my other grandmother, my grandma Ryan, was in a nursing home for several years and I remember the staff when she went in telling my dad that they were excited to have her but they weren't quite sure what to do with her because she was a college-educated woman who was born in 1900. Wow, which was pretty rare. She graduated in 1922. Wow, and there weren't that many women in college at that point, so they were having to design things that they could do as far as activities for her that were maybe a little bit more intellectually focused than their normal. You know, let's just go do some crafts or something, because they were trying to help her. So I'm sure you would understand that to just help with the patients that are in those kinds of facilities. I distinctly remember that I haven't thought of that.

0:16:31 - Michele

That's really powerful. It really is. It makes me think of my dad. He's how old is my dad? 79? I think he's 79. And he does so much humanitarian. He actually just went to Columbia for a few

months and worked in like a Mother Teresa soup kitchen center for months and I really see him as somebody who is. He's got that drive, you know, I think okay, if he ever had to just stop and not be contributing, you know, to what feels very purposeful to him, it wouldn't be good. You know, I think we all really need that.

0:17:11 - Julie

It's the vibrancy of life. Yeah, it's interesting about that prediction of depression. We had Dr Kelly Brogan on the show recently.

0:17:21 - Michele

It was so good, oh my gosh, I loved it.

0:17:24 - Julie

Yeah, Thanks for listening. I was just shocked when she said one out of four women are on antidepressants in America. I said what?

0:17:34 - Michele

I know.

0:17:35 - Julie

That blew my mind.

0:17:37 - Michele

Yeah, I know.

0:17:38 - Julie

I just thought, oh my goodness. And she was saying and the thing is, they're not always prescribed by a psychiatrist, they're prescribed by a regular GP or by somebody who's an endocrinologist or somebody that just doesn't even know what's going on, but it's just kind of the standard of care. I was mortified when I heard that. Have you run across that as well in your research? And is it the lack of the spiritual wellness that's just one of the big missing pieces.

0:18:11 - Michele

Yeah, I would say more in my practice I do have a counseling, a therapy practice in Virginia because I'm a full-time professor at the small practice and, yes, a lot of my clients, both men and women, are prescribed medication. And it was really cool listening to her talk and I think that the this is maybe old data, but like 60% of people walking through their GP offices they're coming in for anxiety or depression and so that's a lot of times who's prescribing right? And I'm finding that a lot of my clients are missing the trust. I kind of tie it back to that inner resource, like the lack of trust in themselves that they can navigate something difficult. Where's that coming from?

You know, I've been that this in different ages, like college age, midlife, and I have really been I don't know. I mean it does make me curious, like, okay, is it something that comes from trauma? You know, like they went through something really difficult and they didn't quite have the tools to navigate it. So they kind of got into something like substance abuse or they got into, you know, something that wasn't helpful and so they are not sure like, well, what do I do now that I'm not using substances? Now? You know, how do I, how do I? Or it could be, and I do think that sometimes there is a lack of a connection to a sense of spirituality. And I say that without judgment. I mean, I really don't think that it has to have anything to do with a particular religion or it has to fit a certain sort of particular way of being. But I think sometimes people don't get plugged into these concepts, maybe through even their upbringing, and so it's almost like they're missing a whole toolkit.

0:20:27 - Julie

Well, that was my next question. Do you think that there's a correlation between the drops that we're seeing in organized religion, the attendance to the, say, the weekend services, the Sunday services? I, like you, I'm Catholic, so Catholics do a great job of having it. You can go Saturday night, you can go Sunday night, you can go Sunday during the day yeah, so they try and make it convenient. I know at our parish during the holidays they've got three masses going on simultaneously, one in the gym, one in the church and one in the cafeteria, just to try and take care of.

I call all the alumni for all the alumni that show up, you know, at Christmas and Easter, but they're definitely not just in America, but Europe really has seen a decline in church attendance. And is that? I agree with you, it doesn't need to be the organized religion, because I call myself a cafeteria Catholic. I leave what I don't like, I take what I like and everything. Yeah, I think everybody does that and we have since the beginning of time, whether people admitted to it or not. Yes, but do you see a correlation with that? In the last couple of generations? Perhaps?

0:21:41 - Michele

I think so because when we look at the data I looked at it recently and I'm trying to remember what the source is, but there's a lot of great like, maybe even the oh, what's the thing that they do when they go knocking on the doors and collecting people's information?

0:21:56 - Julie

Census, oh, the census, oh, but no, it's done online now. Oh, okay, yeah, okay, the old professor, yeah, professor, it's done online.

0:22:05 - Michele

Everything's online, right.

I think that they collect some of this data through the census, but still a huge number I mean the 90 percentages of Americans believe in God or a higher power, but there's a disconnect right between religion and the belief in God or a higher power.

And I do think, of course, like there's a lot more out there, like on religious trauma and ways that people have been harmed and different things that have happened in families. You know, maybe just even like societally, people don't necessarily go get their needs met in faith communities like they used to, and so I do think it is a real missing piece for people, because they want to find a way to express their spirituality, what that means to them, and maybe they don't necessarily feel connected to formal religion. I haven't read it. A friend of mine told me the other day there was an article in the New York Times about like do we need a religious revival? I guess because of some of these issues that are popping up, like people aren't going to church like they used to, but they are looking for something. So I think there is some type of connection there.

0:23:23 - Julie

Well, and I'm thinking too, as I'm listening to you talk about this, michelle, I'm thinking of my gosh. Really, since the dawn of humanity, there have been pagan rituals or whatever kind of rituals that have been done. I'm thinking of, in particular, may crowning. May crowning was a pagan ritual that dates back to, I think, right after the caveman days, or maybe during the caveman days, where they were honoring ISIS, I believe. Oh, wow.

And it was in May, and then that morphed into the Catholic. You know, the May is the Blessed Virgins Month and they do the May crowning, where they bring flowers and you know and all of that kind of stuff to a statue of Mary. They're not honoring the statue, it's just the reminder of

the Virgin. So I'm wondering if there's something in our DNA and our cellular memory that's so ancient and we really can't even put our finger on it. This may be a paper for you. Yeah, this may be a job for a paper for you.

Yeah for you. You know, is there something that's so ancient in our DNA that's missing when we don't have something to satisfy that need, even though we're not cognizant of it? Is that feasible?

0:24:51 - Michele

Yeah, I mean, I think so. I mean you are the biology expert here, but I mean I think so, right, weren't there books, gosh, written about like, kind of like God in the cells of our body and things like that, that we have these cellular connection? I think so and I don't know, you know, and how do, and we get, I mean gosh, our society, and it is difficult for everybody who's raising kids out there, right, like we're so hooked into this technology and everything is so external and all these pulls. It's like everything pulling you outward instead of drawing you inward and kind of like it's like fake sugar, you know, like making you sort of think you're feeling better but you're not getting what you want, in a way, and it's kind of, I think, everybody getting distracted and thinking that all these other things are going to make them happy, which of course we know that they don't. But there's a lot more pulls, I think, on people, particularly young people. I think on people, particularly young people, away from more of the internal and the connection to. I love this concept.

I read, when I got really into this whole like feminism and spirituality and women's spirituality, I read about a concept called a lower, deeper power. And it talked about how, like in scriptures, male spirituality is like this hierarchical, like you're going to get on this ladder and like get higher and higher. And they talked about women's spirituality being more circular and like getting into this lower, deeper power. And sometimes that's what I think of when I think about, well, what is like a sense of connection and spiritual connectedness? To me it's like getting in touch with, like the strength that's within ourselves and I think that we were born with that and we were given that. But we forget that we have it because we get distracted by a lot of meaningless stuff. That is very reinforced, particularly in our Western culture.

0:27:02 - Julie

Well, women are healers too. Women know intuitively what to do. What's imposter syndrome?

0:27:30 - Michele

What's imposter syndrome? This team at my university we do this every year, this interprofessional education, so there's like seven different professions and we get together to do this training, this case study, and then we have a team of faculty members that puts it together and we do some research around it and everything. And there's this woman who's like so impressive and such a leader and we've been doing this qualitative research project where we're reflecting on our experiences over the last 10 years with this project, and she talked about how much of an outsider she felt like and how everybody was so much smarter than her at first and how everybody had all this stuff to contribute. And I'm thinking, whoa, you know, like I can't even believe this woman was even thinking this, because she is like a heavy hitter in her field.

And I think that it is certainly something that women tend to struggle with a lot more than men, possibly because we aren't taught that it is okay to trust ourselves or that our voice is as important as anybody else is at the table. And I think that's a very convenient way to keep, you know, the other folks in power when we don't feel empowered. So it's sort of it's convenient, you know, until it doesn't work anymore. But so I think that that is something and it's not. I mean, I have plenty of male clients coaching clients, counseling clients that also do struggle with that. Of course it's not just women, but I think it's. Yeah, and I think it does kind of come

back to that sense of like I don't feel like I belong here or that I deserve this or that I have anything valuable to say here.

0:29:19 - Julie

How much does the fake it till you make it mantra enter into play there. Yeah.

0:29:25 - Michele

Well, I always go back to like you know, everybody talks about self-esteem and I think that's kind of a hollow concept. I think it's all about self-efficacy. So it's like okay, no-transcript. And if you think about that, like people who have had kind of a longer career, you go, oh, that's about right. Like when I had this many years under my belt, then I started to feel really confident and I started to feel like really like I got it together, you know. But all behind all of that is a lot of mistakes, a lot of practice, a lot of building up, and I think it's a disservice if we try this word of like just build up people's self-esteem by just saying things to them they need to experience life and they need to try things and they need to fail and also have some success experiences, and I think that really builds up that sense of confidence.

0:30:56 - Julie

Do you find, as a college professor, that your current students are perhaps more willing to incorporate spirituality into their counseling than past generations? You mentioned earlier that the spiritual piece has been integrated into the counseling curriculum, if you will, in the past 20 years. But do you find that your students, who are what? Late teens, early 20s for the most part, and then your graduate students are probably in their mid-20s, I would imagine are they accepting of this or are they bucking the concept, bucking the system?

0:31:38 - Michele

I think it's been, when I think about it, because I got to teach in my doctoral program, like in the year 2000,. I got to teach a class on psychology and spirituality, and I really think the hunger has always been there. It kind of matches up with kind of what's true in humanity that, like most of us really do have a drive for it in some way, shape or form. It looks different for each person.

I think it's always been there, to be honest, and I do think that some people, you know, might feel like it, maybe like they feel like they want to pursue it in a more conservative, religious way. Other people might feel that they want to pursue it in a very sort of open-ended way and some people are very yeah, there is probably a small percentage, which I think has always been there, of like I don't want anything to do with this. So I do think it's pretty variable, but most people are fairly open to it. And then in my field you just have to be really careful that, as in the counselor seat, you're not imposing your beliefs or values on your client. So it's like you take what they bring to you and you're just open to it and you want to hear what they're thinking and what they're feeling and what they believe and what's important to them and kind of help them build on that. So it kind of like doesn't really matter what you think or feel, as long as you're not shutting somebody else's experience down, if that makes sense.

0:33:07 - Julie

To the 2% that doesn't want to mingle the spirituality and the psychology or the counseling. Do they just not take that class when it's spirituality and psychology? Was it a required class or is it something that they can get out of if they don't enjoy it? And if not, how do you deal with those students?

0:33:30 - Michele

So for, yeah, right now. So we have an accreditation body that tells us basically what classes we have to teach and so the standards, anything that would address like diverse expressions of spirituality. They kind of get baked into these other classes, like maybe a multicultural course

or maybe an internship class. I have it in, like in my internship class there's like a wellness wheel and spirituality is a part of that. So like that's one of the considerations that you have when you're conceptualizing a client, so everybody is exposed to it on some level. But really, like, even in our curriculum right now we don't have one particular class. I mean it would be great if we did, but it would be an elective and our classes for our training program are so packed like they would have to add it on. Sometimes we might have workshops and things like that, but we kind of put it into these other courses and it's seen as like a part of the holistic human being.

0:34:32 - Julie

Kind of like hiding the vegetables in the meat pie and covering it with a crust so the kids don't see it. I was encouraged to see that you're the former president of the Association for Spiritual, ethical and Religious Values in Counseling. I didn't know there was such a thing. Tell us about that organization it was really cool.

0:34:54 - Michele

I was so fortunate to be a part of it. I got introduced to it when I was in my doctoral program by a professor that had just come in and he was like, hey, do you know about this association? So I got involved in it and I do think that some of the early founders of it were priests and nuns, because by the time I was the president, some of the board members were priests and nuns and they were lovely human beings, you know. And we, that group, actually went on to publish there's some standards, some spirituality standards, for incorporating them into the counseling training programs, them into the counseling training programs. And I got to.

It was it was really fun. I got to be the president the year that we had our first national conference. So you know, we had all kinds of trainings and speakers and workshops and and now, of course, that organization you know, has a conference every year and they have their own journal. So I was able to publish, you know, their own journal, so I was able to publish, you know, a few articles in that journal and just find like-minded people. You know, just really cool to get to talk to other counselors who are interested in this topic and like how do you incorporate this into your work and into your life and to your teaching, and yeah, so it's a pretty, pretty cool division. It's a division of the American Counseling Association, kind of like a special interest group.

0:36:23 - Julie

Is it a CE credit, those workshops? They get continuing education credit for coming to them.

0:36:30 - Michele

Yeah, yeah, definitely, Wow, that's great, yeah, so I've done like. I think a couple years ago somebody asked, oh, can you do one for, like mindfulness, and it was virtual, and then if you came to it you could get, you know, CE credits, and so, yeah, you can come to a conference and there's one happening this summer. In fact, my friend and I put in a proposal to it.

0:37:02 - Julie

And now I think it might be in DC this summer where they're going to be holding it. I had no idea that this stuff even existed until I got a hold of you, girl yeah, started researching you and I thought, wow, this is something new to me. If somebody's looking for a counselor who does incorporate spirituality, I think most of us, myself included I would think of going to somebody in the clergy or a pastor or somebody along those lines, perhaps a counselor at a hospital that related to.

Yeah, but they are so segmented into the ecumenical, you know, are they Baptist, are they Methodist, are they Jewish, are they whatever? And I think all of them are, for the most part, wonderful counselors.

0:37:49 - Michele

But I just think it's fascinating that this is going on and good for you, yeah, and sometimes you know, I think pastoral counselors tend to have some really nice formal training in the techniques you know and strategies of therapeutic approaches. Sometimes some clergy have that and sometimes some don't. So there could even at times be some damage done if people you know aren't careful. But sometimes some clergy are just incredible and they have extra training in that area. One thing that I do tell people is like you know well, it's like psychology today. If you're just out there looking for a counselor, a therapist, you can use all kinds of filters on psychology today. And I always tell people talk to you know, before you commit to somebody, talk to like two or three people for five minutes or 10 minutes and you'll know if that person's a match for you.

And I remember when I was looking for a counselor myself, I mean I asked them like, or do you? I mean my spirituality is really important to me, like or can you be on board with that, or is that? How do you work with that? And those are fair questions, because if that's a critical part of who you are, you don't want to work with somebody who's like that's I'm not interested in that. You know, I'm only dealing with cognitive cognitions. I don't want to talk about that. Well then, that's not a good fit for you, you know.

0:39:19 - Julie

You're also interested in holistic wellness. How's that factor into your personal and your professional process? So?

0:39:28 - Michele

I was very into like, if we're talking about mind, body, spirit. I was so into like mind and spirit. I didn't know a lot about the body until I got a serious case of neurological Lyme disease oh no, yeah, in 2006. And then, oh my goodness, I just I just had a mirror. I mean, I had a miracle, like I was, I got.

I started refusing to because I was very, very sick and antibiotics for nine months, nothing working. I had a toddler at the time and couldn't had to take a semester off. Like it was very bad. And I just decided one day I will not read any more horror stories because it it was chat rooms right at that time and it was like people saying you'll never get better from this. And I ended up stumbling across this organization, this person in Rhode Island called Advanced Cell Training, and I was like, okay, how could this be real? I called their office and they sent me this whole book of testimonials and I asked them can I call some of your clients and ask them if this is real? And I did and they were like, yeah, I was in a wheelchair. Now I'm walking, or you know, I was able to have a second baby and so I started doing this and then my symptoms started going away and I could walk. I could walk, I could work, I could think, and so that really opened up my eyes to wow, okay, yeah, there's a body piece here that I don't know a lot about. And I was really fortunate At the time.

One of my colleagues was Norm Shealy's son and I was talking to him and he said, oh, you know my dad, I'm sure he'd love to talk to you. And so he and I had a Norm Shelly and I had a phone conversation and he was like you can come out here anytime and take a class. I have this university. And I was like, really, and so I went out and took anatomy and physiology with him and just tried to understand more about the body, because I just didn't really know a lot about it. And then he had us doing these really cool. He would give us like a case study and he would say I guess it was kind of like the Carolyn Mace stuff that I think he had trained her. She was one of his students and she was just so talented. So he was kind of giving us some of these tools and tests and he would give us a case and then we would learn to try to connect into the intuitive piece about, like, what was going on with that person. So it was really powerful for me.

And then, you know, when I came back from all of that, I just went down this whole like whoo, like I'm going to go to Donna Eden energy training and Barbara Brennan energy training and you know everything I could possibly learn psych K, you know wellness. So I just my top of the strength is a love of learning, so I can go like a little bit like, oh my gosh, you know I got to learn about this and learn about that. So that really, you know, I'm nowhere close to being a medical person at all, but I feel like I know a lot more now about the body and the connection and I can kind of trust more of like what I'm picking up. And I can kind of trust more of like what I'm picking up. So, like I was listening to your interview with Kelly Brogan and I really resonated with this sense of like you want to know, like what is the root cause of somebody's depression or their anxiety.

I mean it may have nothing to do with, like you know, their thinking is off.

I mean, it could be totally biological, it could be hormonal, it could be minerals, it could be, you know, it could be anything, but it also could be, you know, based in trauma, or it could be that the trauma changed the brain and the body and now you've got this whole kind of you know, mix of things. And so that's so fascinating to me, and I try to listen really hard when I have a client who's just particularly dealing with anxiety or depression, because, again, I'm not a medical doctor, but I will say, you know, let's think about, like, maybe, what's going on with you physically and like where can you go get some assistance here? Because sometimes it's like I'm like this is not just somebody's circumstance, you know, this is, this is, and sometimes it is, you know, sometimes it is a circumstantial and you have to really dig in with these therapeutic tools, and so I just that is just always so interesting to me like every single person's situation and what are all the root cause of your problem.

0:44:22 - Julie

Well, you, you do that kind of work energetically Well, and it's been my experience also that there's always an emotional component in place before any kind of medical situation arises, whether it be simple or complex, there's always an emotional component and I think it's the most important part of a healing, because we can fix body parts all day long.

But if we're leaking power because we got a rupture in the energy-filled membrane from an emotional thing that most people don't even remember and the energy-filled membrane, as I perceive it, michelle, is this plastic bag-like component of everyone that houses the spirit's energy and the body's energy. And when there's an energy block Eastern medicine, acupuncture, acupressure clear the block, get the cheetah, move, that whole concept. When that's in place from an emotional event over a lifetime those other emotional events energy piles on top of it, causes a blowout in the membrane. But that emotional event can be something simple, like somebody called you a butthead when you were three. And we look at that as an adult and we think, well, that was no big deal, but it was a big deal to your three-year-old little self. At the time it could be something dramatic and it doesn't matter what it was, because as soon as we illuminated it, it eradicates that energy block, that energy-filled membrane heals, body goes back to working on full power and I've never seen one rupture after it's been fixed ever.

Oh, cool I'm not saying it can't, but I've done this tens of thousands of times and I've never seen one rupture.

0:46:27 - Michele

Wow, that's so cool. I need to take your training. Yes, May.

0:46:32 - Julie

Take the next one in May. It's online, absolutely. I have a few more questions here. You say life is about balancing our realities with our dreams. Is that really possible?

0:46:45 - Michele

Well, I think so. Oh my gosh, I mean I do it every day, you know. I mean I for a time was a single mom and raising kids and paying for college and still paying for college, you know. And so there, yeah, I mean there's a reality that we have to live and we have responsibilities, but then there's a lot of dreams that we have right, like I mean I want to live part-time in, probably in Italy, and like it's going to happen this summer for a month, you know, or um, um, I.

I believe that we all I mean having that life force, energy, having that creativity, having the ability to dream, is like a birthright and we all need that, and and it's very sad and disruptive if we can't connect to that flow of who we are.

I think the challenge is that, like, we can get so burdened down with the realities of our lives, and so, yes, I think it is totally possible, and I think sometimes it takes work, and for some people it takes more work than others because the realities of their lives are a little more challenging or more complicated. They might have to kind of like reassess, like you know, what the dream looks like and how to kind of like make it actually something that's realistic in their life right now and kind of work toward it being a little bit bigger at another time. But yeah, I mean gosh, I think that's what makes life worth living is to have aspirations and dreams and hopes. And I would be very sad for myself or my clients or my family members, if you know like if they didn't have that like dreaming part of themselves. In addition to yeah, we're human, we got to deal with the real stuff too.

0:48:47 - Julie

I agree. What's an intentional leader?

0:48:51 - Michele

Intentional leader, I think, is somebody who is grounded in their core values and their strengths and they really come from that place. You know, there's some good old as probably new research too, that talks about it's more productive to build on our strengths rather than using all of our energy to try to be something that we're not or to shift our weaknesses. And so, to me, an intentional leader is somebody who really knows themselves, builds on the strengths and the core values that they have and then, of course, seeks help in the places that maybe they're not so strong, because we can't all be all of the things.

0:49:33 - Julie

How boring would that be if we were Really. You think about it. All right, so if we all thought the same and did the same and were interested in the same thing? Yeah, I agree, Many of us feel overwhelmed a lot of the time. Is this a new phenomenon or do you think it's been this way in our parents and our grandparents and our great grandparents' generations? And how do we lessen the stress? Bottom line Is it a new phenomenon and how do we lessen the stress?

0:50:06 - Michele

Well, I'm going to guess that it is a little bit newer and maybe it's just escalated. I mean, I'm sure that my mother and grandmother probably at times felt really overwhelmed by you know, my mom was a teacher and she's raising kids felt really overwhelmed by you know, my mom was a teacher and she's raising kids, and. But I think we have these added layers of so much input like constant inputs, constant information. Right, you can be driving and listening to podcasts, you're at home, maybe you're on the internet watching TV, getting a million emails. So I think there's so many inputs that that in and of itself can overwhelm our nervous system.

And so, yes, I think there is a larger degree of overwhelm and I think that we have to become extremely proactive, like we know that these the devices and the technology, we're all addicted, whether we like it or not. Right, like it's the truth. And so we have to do things proactively in our own lives to say, okay, you know what, I'm going to have these limits on my work hours or when I do email, or maybe there's a box that the phones go in, you know, or maybe you make your students do that and then, if you do that, then they're on their emails, on their computers anyways, right, well, I know.

And you know I've started to do at the beginning of all my classes I say you know, in this class you don't need to be on your computer. If you do, I'll let you know. Otherwise, please close your computers. It's really distracting to other people and it also takes away from like your experience of this, of this moment. Good for you. How about their phones? Phones usually, you know what. It's kind of funny. I you don't often see the students on their phones, it's more the computer. Like if you don't say put the computer away, like they'll be on there doing emails and stuff during class. So I've had to learn to say, put really strong boundaries around computers. Oddly enough, I don't see them on their phones that much. And isn't that weird?

0:52:16 - Julie

Well, that's a lot about what a good teacher you are, that you're keeping them engaged Well, thank you.

0:52:20 - Michele

It's kind of easy in our profession too, and of course they're in graduate school. They want to be there, they want to learn. I mean, it's a privilege in a way, I realize, because you know they're here for a reason they want to be here. But it is my job to make sure that they're not bored.

0:52:38 - Julie

Yeah, you're not teaching any undergrad classes.

0:52:42 - Michele

No, when I first came to my university, we all had to teach a little bit of undergraduate, but now we don't, so I teach all graduate students. Yeah, that's good. Good for you, I know.

0:52:54 - Julie

Too bad for the undergrads, I'm sure I'd love to have you. Last question why do we incarnate?

0:53:07 - Michele

Well, I believe that life is a personal growth opportunity and I think that you could almost put anything in that blank like marriage is a personal growth opportunity, right, parenting is a personal growth opportunity is a personal growth opportunity. So I believe that we are here in a uniquely designed way to learn and grow in terms of what our particular lessons are and I think that's extremely individual for each person, and I believe maybe this is going back to my very kind of ideal self, but I believe we're here to learn to love, to extend grace to ourselves and other people, and to just go back to understanding, maybe through difficult separating experiences, that we're not separate. We are one. We come from the same source and that is love ultimately.

0:54:00 - Julie

Beautiful.

0:54:02 - Julie

You're extraordinary. Certainly, I think that you're like I just said. I think your students and your graduate students are very, very fortunate to have you. Thank you for stepping out and putting

yourself in the position to integrate the spirituality into the counseling field and to be led to do that and then follow through with that, Because I'm sure you had a few thoughts where you thought, oh, am I torpedoing my career to do this?

0:54:34 - Michele

Oh yeah, oh yeah, Especially at the beginning, when one of the faculty members said are you serious, Like you're actually trying to study the human soul, Like that's not going to happen. I'm like, oh yeah, I think that's going to happen, I think I am going to go on that path and I don't regret it. I'm very grateful. You know, I've been very, very fortunate.

0:54:53 - Julie

Well, you've obviously been led to do this and to bring this combination to the forefront. So people like I said when I was doing my prep to talk with you today, I didn't know any of this stuff existed and that's why I wanted to have you on to talk to you about it, because I think it's really exciting that this is being taught and also there are organizations and workshops and things like that that are raising the possibility and the integration of the spirituality and the counseling.

0:55:27 - Michele

Yeah, and our clients deserve it. You know it's a part of so many people and who they are. It's not fair to come in and into a vulnerable space and not to have that part of yourself be a part of that process. I think it's really important.

0:55:44 - Julie

Well, and everybody's a spirit. That's the main part of us. The body is just temporary, but the spirit is everlasting. So you know, it seems kind of like it's an oxymoron to say, oh, we need to explore spirituality when that's the main part of us and we have just neglected it for a while I don't think forever. I think it's a newer phenomenon and we discussed that earlier. But kudos to you, my girl. Good job, good job. How can people learn more?

0:56:17 - Michele

about you and your work. So my website they can go to my website. It is Michelle, with one L Kelty, K-I-E-L-T-Y.com slash spiritual. We'll talk about my spiritual coaching. But then my website also talks about my. You can find my therapy, you can find my workshops and things like that too, from just michellelcalty.com.

0:56:40 - Julie

Wonderful. Well, thanks for making time for us in your busy schedule, and I certainly appreciate knowing this, and I know everybody listening does as well. So in the meantime, we're sending you lots of love from Sweet Home, Alabama, and from from Virginia too, where Michelle is. We'll see you next time. Bye, everybody.

0:57:03 - Annncr

Thanks for joining us. Be sure to follow Julie on Instagram and YouTube at AskJulieRyan, and like her on Facebook at AskJulieRyan. To schedule an appointment or submit a question, please visit AskJulieRyan.com.

0:57:18 - Disclaimer

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