

## **Aubrey Marcus Podcast #115**

### **Addiction, Stress, and the Way Out with Dr. Gabor Mate**

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Aubrey: It's always special when I get to sit down with one of my heroes, and Dr. Gabor Mate definitely qualifies. He's the author of many books, a lot of which are focusing on how trauma affects you in later life, and he's worked hands-on with a lot of people suffering from addiction, utilizing psychedelic medicine. This is one of my favorite podcasts. I hope you guys enjoy.

So, a few years ago, at Psychedelic Science, I had the pleasure of being introduced to a whole host of individuals, and I remember that your speech particularly stood out. And that was one, not only for the information that you were providing, but the means and the methods. I mean, you are someone who is really willing to go into the heart of the problem, which at that time was heroin addictions in Vancouver, where you're from, go into the heart of the problem and start solving the problem. Not just from a scientific perspective, but truly hands-on as well.

You know, putting these theories to the test and helping people out of addiction, which is actually the subject of your latest book, and so it seems like still one of the topics that, you know, when you talk to anybody you're one of the world-renowned experts in addiction. So we'd love to just kind of dive in and get your take on the origins and the sources of addiction, and then your journey on helping people through those perilous waters.

Gabor: Okay. So right now, we're living at a time when addiction is in the forefront because so many people are dying of overdoses. So in the United States, every day you have something like 140, 130 people dying of overdoses, which means that every month you have the equivalent of 9/11 happening.

Aubrey: Wow, that puts it in perspective.

Gabor: Yeah.

Aubrey: And overdoses of what compounds in particular.

Gabor: Mostly opiates, but not exclusively. And then if you consider the public alarm, the resources, media attention, governmental mobilization, and the intention to do something that was instigated by the 9/11 tragedy. You compare to the absolute lack of action and lack of new thinking around addiction you can see that'd be a little social problem here. And then the social problem is largely in comprehension, misunderstanding of what addiction is actually all about.

Now, your current Attorney General in the States, Jeff Sessions, has just talked about the beautiful work that Nancy Reagan did in the 1980s, telling people just to say "no."  
[laughs]

Aubrey: And that worked really well.

Gabor: That worked really well, as we can see today.

Aubrey: Outstanding policy.

Gabor: Yeah, but he's saying yes we can put prevention back in again. His idea of prevention is to tell people that to choose drugs is a bad idea. In other words, his thinking, but the thinking of the legal system and the society as a whole is that addiction is a choice that people make.

Aubrey: Right, which makes you able to kind of almost justify these deaths in a certain way. It's their own fault and so they screw them. Not that the people actually say those words, but that's the actions that they're taking express that kind of attitude.

Gabor: I've heard people say that kind of thing. That you know, it's just nature's way of weeding out the idiots. This kind of hostility towards the addict. The other view is expressed by your Surgeon General, who says that it's a brain disease which originates largely in genetics, which is more humane. At least it doesn't blame people and it allows for treatment. So it's a step forward, but it also misses the point, because let me give you an addiction definition and let me ask you a question.

So addiction is manifested in any behavior that a person craves, finds temporary pleasure or relief in, but suffers negative consequences as a result of, and still does not give up. That's what an addiction is. I said *any* behavior. It could be sex, gambling, food, shopping, or drugs, or substances, alcohol or whatever it is.

So I'm not going to ask you what or when, but that definition, Aubrey, have you ever had an addictive pattern in your life?

Aubrey: For sure.

Gabor: Okay, so the question is going to be now what did you like about it? What did it do for you, in the short-term?

Aubrey: Well, I was interested to actually talk to you about this, in particular, because I think I'm addicted to stress in a certain way. Like I think in some aspect, I create situations that put myself under considerable stress, and I can't not myself, continue to put myself in those situations.

Gabor: You look forward to those situations?

Aubrey: In a perverse way, I guess I do. I guess it feels like a fuel. It feels like I'm doing something valuable perhaps.

Gabor: Okay, so it gives you a sense of value.

Aubrey: I think so. It makes me feel like now I'm really in the fight, you know. It's some identity piece, whereas if I'm under stress then that makes me a bit more who I want to be of some sort.

Gabor: Okay, I understand. So then, it actually gives some meaning to your life?

Aubrey: Yeah.

Gabor: Some purpose, some engagement. Now, other people might say it soothes my pain. Other people might say it distracts me from my problems. Other people might say it releases my stress. Other people might say it makes me feel more powerful. But whether it's what you said, which is meaning and purpose and value, or whether it's anything else, what we see is that the addiction is not the primary problem. It's an attempt to solve a problem. And your problem is lack of value.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Gabor: Lack of purpose, lack of meaning, and lack of maybe vital engagement with life. And so in other words, to say that addiction is either a choice or it's a primary brain disease is to miss the point that it actually serves a function in your life. And then the real question becomes where did you learn that you don't have value unless you engage with something?

Aubrey: The world. [laughs]

Gabor: Well, no, it's more specific than that.

Aubrey: Yeah, probably my father then.

Gabor: It wasn't the world, but at some point you learned that unless you were really active and doing something, you lacked value. Okay, so the problem is that lack of sense of value. The addiction is just an attempt to solve the problem. Now, would you agree with me that any human being has intrinsic value? It doesn't matter who they are or what they did or didn't do.

Aubrey: 100%.

Gabor: Except that's true for everybody else except you.

Aubrey: In my own, yeah, in my own patterned system. Yes, I mean, it's easy to understand these things, and that's the thing I think with addiction. You can mentally understand the concept, but to somatically believe it in such a way that you can transcend those behaviors becomes really challenging. Because I understand that fundamental truth. Everything you're saying makes sense.

I don't know if after this conversation even, even with greater illumination shed, I'll still be able to quit my stress.

Gabor: I'm not trying to teach you anything. I'm actually trying to show light on a problem, which is that somewhere in your life you learned that you had no value unless you were performing or doing something in a stressful circumstance.

Aubrey: Performing well, even. I'm not even just performing, but performing well.

Gabor: Right. Now, given that value—just to take your example—is an essential human quality, as we both agree. Then your disconnection from your value is your trauma. So something happened, and until we deal with what happened, where you lost that connection to yourself, we can't really help you with the addiction. So the addiction is a secondary problem. Just by teaching you behaviors or mantras or trying to talk you into recognizing that you're of value, it's never going to work. We've got to deal with the underlying disconnects from yourself that's driving it.

So, what I'm saying about addiction is that it's always an attempt to solve the problem. It's not a primary problem. And that the problem arose out of a childhood trauma and that trauma essentially disconnects us from ourselves.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Gabor: So that's where we have to solve the problem of addiction is in looking at what's driving it. The addiction itself is just a symptom or a response to something. It's that something that we have to deal with.

Aubrey: So, going back to the root cause of the problem is something that in all of our medical treatment models we oftentimes fail to look at. We're chasing symptoms all over the place rather than going to the root and the heart of the matter, which is I think, now, why psychedelic medicine is showing to be so effective in so many different channels, because it tends to go to the root of the issue. Whatever mechanism you want to attribute to it, it finds a way to guide your attention and consciousness to the root of the problem. And certainly has helped me unpack many, many problems, but yeah, I mean, I see exactly what you're saying. And I also remember a quote that you said that you know not all traumatized people have addictions, but all addicts have been traumatized.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: You know, it's the common ground between all addictions is a source of trauma. And I never really looked at it that way, but it's that conditional self-love model where if I performed well in a basketball game or in a test or something like that, then I received love from my world at the time, which was my parents. The thing that mattered most in those times where I didn't perform and I missed something, I failed to do something, I played a bad game because I wasn't paying attention or whatever it was, the love was withdrawn.

Gabor: Yeah.

Aubrey: In some ways, while people have a large amount more trauma than me, and it's not a poor me story, there was a certain amount of trauma that got patterned from the love and then the removal of love.

Gabor: Well, I would caution you against comparing traumas, because we all have own experience, and it just doesn't work to compare. One, my trauma is less than yours or bigger than yours. Number two, there's something else going on here as well. There's something very familiar to you about being stressed; familiar, uncomfortable.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Gabor: Now, what what's the root of the word familiar?

Aubrey: Family. [laughs]

Gabor: Yeah. Which is to say, you grew up in a very stressed family. That was the environment. I don't anything about you, but that that was what you just told me. That was the environment that you grew up in. And to some extent, we recreate, we all recreate the emotional resonances that we experience as children. So until you're willing to leave your family in that sense, you're going to keep recreating this and you're still seeking that love that you didn't get the way you needed it at that time, from the environment. And I totally relate.

Now you happen to be big and athletic. I'm not. So basketball wasn't going to be the way I was going to get love. But being smart and getting good grades and validating myself and then becoming a doctor, so everybody would want me, was my particular way. So we each find our attempted solution to the trauma of being disconnected from our sense of value. Other people will find it in the soothing that drugs provide or in alcohol, or whatever it is. But the underlying dynamic is always that childhood trauma. And that trauma is always based on either things happening that shouldn't have happened, such as abuse that happens to a lot of people, or things not happening that should have happened, which is just being valued and accepted for who you are.

Aubrey: Yeah. No, that makes perfect sense. And what was interesting for me is my parents split when I was like less than two. And then, so on my father's side, it's all of my stress addiction, yes, super-stressed. All the time stressed. Up all night. He was a commodities trader, all the time stressed. Also fairly neurotic about a variety of different things. And so a pattern that fortunately for me, my mother's side was the opposite. It was kind of more relaxed and just more unconditional love. And so I find myself wobbling between these two extremes. And unfortunately for me, I had two different environments by which to grow, to pattern off two different models, which I think has allowed me a little bit more elbow room to kind of flow back and forth between it. But in this single nuclear family dynamic, it's this incredibly strong patterning force. Probably way more than we even ever can imagine.

Gabor: Well look, first of all, if your parents split when you were two, they didn't all of a sudden wake up after a happy interlude of two years of joy and then decided to split.

Aubrey: No.

Gabor: That there would have been a lot of stress between them. Now, infants download the stresses of their parents.

Aubrey: How early?

Gabor: From in utero onwards.

Aubrey: Wow.

Gabor: Utterly within the womb. So when a pregnant woman is stressed and the stress means that the stress hormones are high in her body, they go to the placenta to the baby. So we can look at the heart rate patterns of the child when the mother is stressed, and they're different.

Aubrey: I'm glad I'm not bearing children anytime soon. I've got to fix myself before. [chuckles]

Gabor: I don't think you'll be able to bear children anyway. Maybe that's a biological fact you have to discover. [Aubrey laughs] I hate to disappoint you. But in any case, it begins in utero and then basically children just absorb the stresses of their parents. And if the mother is in pain, the baby is in pain, emotionally. It's that simple. But since it's the mother's soothing that the infant needs to release that pain, when the mother is in pain nothing releases the pain. So that means you absorbed a lot of pain from early on.

Not only that. When the parents are stressed and troubled, infants and children being narcissistic in a sense that it's all about themselves, basically there's a deep sense of inadequacy and shame, because the child believes that if this is happening it's because there's something wrong with me. So there's a lot to compensate for. And all these things that I'm talking about are the essence of trauma. So my book on addiction is really all about the fact that addiction is actually a normal response to abnormal circumstances. It's just a desperate attempt on the part of the individual to soothe the pain, to somehow paper over the loss. But, of course, it can't do it. It's a doomed, a failed attempt.

But just to condemn somebody or to think that they have a brain disease. Now, the brain does come into it, because the brain is actually programmed by the environment. And the most important aspect programming the circuitry of the brain is the emotional environment as the child grows up. There's an article from Harvard University published five years ago that says that the brain is shaped by interaction of genes and environment, and the most important aspect of the environment is the quality of adult-child responsiveness.

And when your parents are stressed, like your parents were, they couldn't have been as responsive to you as they might have wished to be. Which means your brain would

have been also affected, which means that the stress circuitry in your brain would have been set at a high level. And when it's not, you don't even feel normal. So, for you normal is to be stressed.

So, having said all that, healing is possible, but this is the basic ground of addiction of all kinds, and of all kinds of diseases as well.

Aubrey: So, getting into the healing part, because this is something. It's one thing to have awareness, something to understand where the root is. And then the next step is to go in there and fix it, you know, because we're incredibly resilient, malleable beings. We take the right steps.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: So what are the steps to get in there and start to remediate these traumas?

Gabor: Well, you recall what I said that the essence of stress, or sorry, the essence of trauma is disconnection from the self. That's the good news. Because if the trauma was that your parents split, they were unhappy before you're 2 years old, and that your father was demanding and judgmental, and perhaps harsh with you when you didn't perform well. If that was the trauma, then you're stuck because that can never be undone. That happened. It'll never unhappen. But if the result was if the trauma was what happened in you internally, that disconnection from yourself, that connection can be regained at any time.

But Western medicine, unfortunately, as you alluded to earlier, sees everything in terms of disease categories. And these are there to be endured or to be mitigated or to be cured, but there's no sense in Western medicine that I was trained in, in the Western medical tradition, of internal healing processes that could be invigorated or evolved or supported. And yet, the healing is in that reconnection with the self. So there are means to do that, but that is the goal, and that is also the promise because it means that it's okay, this stuff happened. Or good stuff that should have happened but didn't happen. But the connection with your authentic self is available to you at any time.

Aubrey: And it's interesting, the connection with self, to me, has often felt like a transcendence of self. Almost as if, in a lot of the psychedelic medicine work that I've done, you get a sense of loss of self, which then ends up in a kind of counterintuitive way, forming those stronger connections to self. It's almost like you have to lose these stories about your identity, identify as something greater than that. That force of consciousness which then becomes your new self, which you can be connected to.

Gabor: Well, so there's the false self and there's a real self.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Gabor: And so what you're talking about is the loss of the ego, the egoic self. Now the egoic self, not to criticize it but just to describe it, is the set of defensive compensations and

identifications and false assumptions that we develop because we lost connection to our true self. And that ego itself, once it develops to protect you against pain as it does in childhood, it's very tenacious. It does not want let go of you because it's desperate for its survival, because its survival is associated with your survival, in childhood. So it doesn't let go easily.

So when you're talking about the loss of the self, you're talking about the loss of that egoic self. That's what they call egoless. Now then there's a larger self that, look at the very word in addiction, healing is recovery. Recovery means to find something again. That's what it means to recover something. You've heard it. When you ask people what did you find when you recovered, 99% of the time people will say I found myself. Which means to say that the true self, the authentic self, was never lost, damaged, or destroyed, but it was obscured. It was obscured by the false self. So yes, to get the true self, you do have to the new self.

Which is what Jesus talked about, by the way, when they talked about that. Unless you're born again, you can't enter the Kingdom of God. Now, he wasn't talking about psychedelics. He was just talking about a...

Aubrey: He might have been. [chuckles]

Gabor: Well, I don't necessarily think so, and I know that we're speaking in the context of a conference on psychedelic healing, so we can certainly talk about psychedelics. But it's important to emphasize that that process of recovering the self, of reconnecting, is not dependent on any one particular modality.

Aubrey: No.

Gabor: There's all kinds of routes to it. Psychedelics, in the right context, being a particularly powerful way, but it's certainly not the only way. And Jesus also said that those that cling to life will die and those that are willing to die will live. I'm rephrasing him, but words to that effect. I could find them on my cell phone because I have them recorded on it.

But basically saying that the egoic self has to die for the true self to live, which is what you're describing.

Aubrey: Yeah, and Jesus' modality in the actual myth is that 40 day in the desert.

Gabor: Desertation, yeah.

Aubrey: Which is like, you know, this kind of classic vision quest, fasting, time alone, meditation, which is what psychedelics can kind of get you to that place. But there's tons of different ways that you can get there, and that's the one in that classic story. And I think it's funny that, you know, and unfortunately in the myth people look at Jesus' coming, having been birthed as perfect from the start. But I think it's a much more interesting myth when you look at him as a man who is uncovering his true God self, the self that he in his deepest teaching says is in all of us.

Gabor: Well, you have wonder why it took him 32 years to manifest himself.

Aubrey: Right.

Gabor: I mean, if he was a perfect right from the beginning, why not at age 18? Now you know, without getting into theology, totally that 40 days in the desert and where he gets tempted. He gets tempted by the devil. You know, he gets tempted by power and wealth and fame and all that, and he has to say, in other words, if he gets tempted by the ego, and he has to say "No, I am not going to choose that" because that's not authentic. It's not where healing or salvation lie. So it's very much a typical, I would say, archetypical story.

Again, about psychedelics, some people listening may be wondering what the heck were chattering about because they associate psychedelics with being hippies and dropping acid and tripping out all the time. And we have emphasize that although psychedelic healing has been a part of plant healing, has been a part of human experience for thousands of years, it can also be misused. So it very much depends on context and intention and guidance.

So, nobody's suggesting that take this substance and you'll be healed. But however, there's a lot of experience that in the right context, but the right guidance, with the proper intention, a lot of people have had beneficial and even life-altering and even life-saving experiences with psychedelics.

Aubrey: And you've seen those firsthand. And I think that's also important too. When people talk about MDMA healing trauma, no one's proven that MDMA heals trauma. What we've proven is that MDMA-assisted psychotherapy has healed trauma.

Gabor: Right.

Aubrey: You know, using this as a tool to get into those deeper states with the skilled both substance and practitioner, combining to release that, I think is a very powerful means. Ayahuasca though, I'm curious because it seems to almost have its own self-guided practitioner in, it seems in my experiences to feel-guided by. And sometimes you can call that "the force of Ayahuasca," "mother Ayahuasca." But it feels like an entity itself almost like a guidance counselor who's taking you on that journey, so that you can have these experiences almost unguided. I mean, you're in the context. The set and setting has to be right, the container has to be right, the medicine all of that.

But do you, when you're working with people with Ayahuasca, do you let the Ayahuasca work in that kind of unguided manner, or do you act as kind of another secondary guide to help guide people through to their issues?

Gabor: Well, it's interesting what you say. Three weeks ago I conducted a healing session with a highly-traumatized individual using, not MDMA, but something similar to it. And my colleague and I took a little bit of it just so that we could be on the same wavelength. The person took the therapeutic amount. And it was a process of psychotherapy

under the impact of this particular substance. It was certainly powerful to be a part of. And the amount of processing of trauma that took place and amount of reconnecting with self that took place within a 6-7 hour period was beyond what it would take years in traditional psychotherapy to achieve. But there was no sense of presence there other than those of us in the room and the substance that we at all partly ingested.

With Ayahuasca, with the plant medicines, people often talk about the sense of presence being there. I'm not an Ayahuasqueros. I don't lead ceremonies. I don't chant.

Aubrey: You don't sing the Icaros.

Gabor: I don't sing the Icaros, the songs, I don't do the energetic healing. I facilitate it beforehand and afterwards, but during the ceremony I'm just a silent participant. And the Ayahuasqueros, I work with, current Ayahuasqueros I work with, they'll talk about Ayahuasca as a presence, as a teacher, as a Madre, as a mother or as a grandmother. And participants often experience that.

Now, however, the presence is evoked by the chanting. The presence is evoked by the ceremony. So I don't believe that somebody sitting on their own in a room by themselves, where there's no practiced and highly-experienced shamanic guidance, would have the same experience as they would in a ceremonial context, where that specific chanting and energetic work is available. Because the Ayahuasqueros I work with, the curanderos, the people who lead the ceremony, they're don't just seeing a playlist of songs, randomly. They'll know what to chant to whom, at what particular time, based on what kind of energies they're reading person emanating at that moment. And they're astonishingly accurate.

And the participants after will say afterwards will say, well just when I such-and-such, they chanted to me, and that something happened. So there's a dynamic interaction between the effect of the plant inside that person's individual organism and the context in which it's taking place.

Aubrey: Sure.

Gabor: So, would the entity show up for some people if they just did it on their own? Probably it would, but not nearly as beneficially.

Aubrey: Yeah, I mean the shamans themselves act is that, you know, I think the Quechua word is "Chaka Runa," the bridge, to help perform, bring that that sense of entity or that sense of connection to something greater into the individual, for sure. And I've certainly experienced some paradigm altering, case studies of that as well.

Gabor: Well, I wish I could say that I have, but you know what? For all that I work with the plant and I think it's—I don't think, I know—it's powerful work, and it's one of the most favorite activities I have, in a sense of. But it's transformational potential is for human beings, I've never had that entity show up for me, in a sense right where I felt.

You know what? Even as I say that, I realize that it's not true. There were times when I felt held and kind of rocked, you know, by something. I actually did. It's just my mind that says "no I didn't." So I have. But some people have had that clear sense of entity and presence much more acutely than I have.

Aubrey: Yeah, for me, I've drunk 17 times and it's been, it hasn't been every single time, but sometimes it's very clear. Sometimes it's a straight-up conversation, sometimes it's conversation with the visual, where we're literally conversing with each other. And sometimes it is just that force, that sense of a great mother of wisdom, more infinite than any human could ever aspire to, you know, kind of holding you and saying everything without needing any words to say it with.

Gabor: You know, I've had many people tell me that in retreats that I lead, but I've never had that experience. [laughs] She's never come and presented herself and talked to me. Now, maybe I haven't opened to her enough yet. Also, you know, everybody has different experiences and we all our own way, but that kind of dynamic interaction that you described, I can honestly tell you it's never happened.

Aubrey: Wow, that's interesting. Well, there's still journey ahead. Who knows? Who knows which way it'll go.

Gabor: Or maybe I have a different path. I don't know.

Aubrey: Yeah, absolutely. So, there's another thing. With this trauma that's kind of sets up, it doesn't just set up patterns of addiction though. I mean, some of your other work has shown that these traumas can create certain stressors and emotional patterns that can also lead to physical illness, as well.

Gabor: Well, we've had people at our retreats with severe physical illnesses that actually goes significantly better, after Western medicine has written them off. And that's not surprising to me. It's what I would expect because it's a false separation of mind and body that dominates Western medicine, the medical tradition in which I trained, separates mind from the body.

Whereas neither in science nor in reality can you separate mind from the body. So what happens, emotionally, because of the interconnections of the brain and the bone marrow, and the heart, and the lungs, and the gut, and the immune system, and the nervous system, these are all one unit. And you can just imagine, if you have a certain emotion, like fear, that would change your physiology in a split second. Well, that happens 24/7, so our emotional life is always an interaction with our physiology. That means that certain emotional patterns will have a negative impact on your physiology. And I've certainly seen, in the case of medical practice, that certain childhood events will set up emotional and behavioral patterns that will stress somebody, which itself will predispose to disease.

So whether you're talking about cancer or rheumatoid arthritis, or ALS, or multiple sclerosis, or colitis, or Crohn's disease, in every case there's significant child trauma,

which then becomes translated into certain rigid coping mechanisms, which then predispose to disease. And if you can reverse those patterns, quite a lot of healing is possible.

Aubrey: Yeah, it's interesting. I don't know, are you familiar with Dr. Joe Dispenza's book, "You are the Placebo"?

Gabor: Well, not that book, but I'm familiar with his previous book.

Aubrey: Well, it was really eye-opening for me to read that because "placebo" is this thing that science kind of discards.

Gabor: Dismisses, yeah.

Aubrey: You account for it in all the studies, "You know, it's just a placebo effect." Like wait a minute, "just" the placebo effect. What you're saying is that the mind is curing the body in every known condition, because you're accounting for it in every known condition. And the great point that he makes is how about let's focus on that thing.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: About focus on the fact that the mind can cure the body. And he also has a lot of case studies of the nocebo effect, where the mind believes that it's going to become ill or some harmful effect will happen, and how much that affects. And despite that being proven over and over and over and over again, the Western model typically just disregards it. Disregards the ability for the mind to heal the body. And it's really baffling that we're still in an era with that information available, but we can't make that shift.

Gabor: Not only are those case studies available, we even have the science to show why they're plausible. So there's a real disregard of science in the practice of medicine. There's at least there's a very narrow view of science. There's the Dispenza's book, there's Kelly Turner's written a book called "Radical Recovery," where she's collected a lot of people who have, on their own, recovered from so-called fatal illnesses in ways that Western medicine can't explain.

There's a very famous book, "Dying to be Me" by Anita Moorjani, who's deathly ill with lymphoma and he's got three weeks to live, and has an out-of-body experience which transforms review of herself. And she walks out of hospital completely healed, and still is, years later. There's examples that I've seen. Not to say that there's an easy answer to everything, but to say that the mind-body unity and how to explore it and how to work with it is an important area of investigation and practice that Western medicine completely ignores.

Aubrey: Yeah, and I think that's a really good point. This isn't an easy thing to do, because what you're talking about is altering your emotional and mental state of being in chemistry.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: Like think how hard it is to get a song that's stuck in your head out of your head.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: You know, it's hard to get a song out of your head. But think about having to do that, and Dispenza talks about that, when he was healing his own body, going through and truly unifying and uniting all of your belief in a way that you can actually translate it, emotionally, into the body, into the cells, into the secretions of the neurochemicals that are going to alter your states.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: That is hard-ass work. Or it can come in a transcendent, beautiful, out-of-body moment that some people are fortunate enough to experience. But if you're going to go down the road of creating that yourself, it's a very challenging path.

Gabor: It's challenging, and personally, I don't know whether I'd know how to do it for myself. It's one thing for me to advise others and to write my books about the mind-body entity or what, but it's quite another even to deal with some very simple basic patterns of life that are not helping me, but I have difficulty giving them up. So, self-beliefs.

So it's difficult work, but again, it's possible and plausible and there is all kinds of reason why it is plausible and possible, that is scientifically not even controversial. So it's a question of where do we put our attention. And unfortunately, in the West, we tend to put our attention on things that, at best—well sometimes was particularly successful when it comes to acute issues, acute things. But in terms of chronic conditions, whether the mind or the body we're desperately poor at healing them. At best we mitigate the symptoms.

Aubrey: Yeah. One of these things that I know you spent quite a bit of time on is ADD and ADHD.

Gabor: Right.

Aubrey: And this is this kind of rampant catch-all disorder that everybody seems to have these days. Not only that, the medication for it is pretty much a recreational drug for most of the people I know.

Gabor: It can be, yeah.

Aubrey: And it's a very interesting time we live in and I think you have some interesting takes on kind of where this comes from and what this is actually a symptom of. What is the root of ADD and ADHD?

Gabor: Well, my first book was on that. Then I wrote that after I was diagnosed with it myself, in my fifties. But I never bought into the idea that it's a genetic disease or a disease at all. Because tuning out, the absentmindedness, the scattered attention is not a disease. It's actually nature given coping mechanism.

So, if I were to stress you right now, I mean really threaten you or abuse you, you have a number of options. One is to fight back, the other is to escape or to other of your colleagues in the room here, you could ask for help.

Aubrey: [chuckles] Yeah.

Gabor: But what if you couldn't do any of those things? Then what your mind would do is one of the things your mind could do to protect you, at least from the stress of it, is to scatter your attention, to tune out.

Aubrey: Makes sense.

Gabor: Now, if you take the environment I grew up in as an infant, which is a highly stressed environment, and as an infant I can neither ask for help nor leave or fight back, then my mind is tuning out when my brain is developing, which develops under the impact of the environment, as I said earlier. So that means I'm tuning out a lot when my brain circuits were being formed. So the tuning out then gets programmed in as kind of a default setting in my mind, in my brain. And now, 50 years later, or in some of the cases five years later, that one is diagnosed with what they call is a disease. But it's not a disease. It's a condition that was meant to be a temporary state under conditions of duress, but now it becomes a long-term trait because the stress was so long-lasting.

And then you would given this diagnosis. And if we go back to the question that you posed of why we're seeing all of this sort in society right now it's because the parenting environment for so many families has become so stressed that more and more kids, as infants, are having to tune out. And that's not the parents' fault. It has to do with the disconnection in society, the lack of community, the lack of support, the economic stress on people. Both parents having to be absent the whole day for the child, because they have to make a living. And the parents' stresses themselves. That become absorbed by the child. And this is in the best-meaning and most loving families, let alone families where there is severe trauma and maybe abuse and so on.

So, it's a mark of the culture that more and more children are having to tune out and then they're being diagnosed. And then again, what Western medicine does, "You've got this disease" and we're just going to change the biology of your brain temporarily by means of this particular chemical. But they're not looking at how to help that child develop new brain circuits, what conditions their children need for healthy development in the home and in the schools, and the families.

And so, if medication needs to be a part of it, in some cases, well I've taken them myself. I'm not against them. But they're not the answer. At the very best, they mitigate symptoms. They don't deal with causes. So, I mean, all my books, whether they're on addiction or stress and health or ADD, I'm just interested in the roots of things, which means to be radical. Radical actually means the root, so to be radical, you have to go to the roots of things and deal with that, as you said in the beginning,

rather than just with the effects. And ADD and addiction and disease are effects, they're not causes.

Aubrey: Do you feel like you were able to do that with your own struggles with ADD, that you were able to get at the root?

Gabor: It's been a decade or more that I've taken medication for it. In fact, when I've tried them more recently—I mean, years ago now—all I get is negative side effects. I no longer get a get benefit, which means my brain must have changed.

Yeah, I've dealt with a lot of it. But that means looking at the stresses in my life, looking at my physical health, exercise. You know how I eat. It means some mindfulness practice, in my case. Belatedly in life, I've discovered yoga or yoga's discovered me, I should say, finally. Dealing with the stresses in my marriage relationship, because the most stressed you are, the more scattered your mind's going to be.

Aubrey: Well, it seems like it mimics the original trigger, you know, these stressful environments.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: Mimic the original trigger, which scatters your attention as an additional coping mechanism.

Gabor: Absolutely.

Aubrey: Yeah, makes sense.

Gabor: So if you deal with all that, then why wouldn't it get better? Which is very different from just taking a pill.

Aubrey: Right.

Gabor: So, if you're going to take pills, well, see them as a short gap holding action while you go and do the work that you really need to do. And it was actually at an Ayahuasca ceremony that the shaman I was working with, and we had somebody in the group with really severe ADD and at 2:00 in the morning, the shaman comes over to me and says, "I just got what ADD's about." And I said, "Yeah, what is it?" He says, "It's an intense fear of the present moment." And of course it is, because as children, you become scared of the present moment when the present moment is painful. Why wouldn't he be scared of it? And then we try and escape from it, at all costs.

And if we could find a way to come back to the present moment, which is to say come back to ourselves, that's what the healing is.

Aubrey: And that's where the fun is. That's where the magic is.

Gabor: That's right.

Aubrey: You know, if you're always escaping the present moment, you're not going to taste nearly the cornucopia of pleasure that's available in this life. Maybe you'll diminish and scatter some of the pain, but you're also not going to experience the positive. I mean, that is where, you know, that is where the juice is. That's the juice of the pear.

Gabor: Well, it is, and the thing about escape from the present is that when you escape from the pain, you also escape from the joy.

Aubrey: Yeah.

Gabor: Because life holds both those possibilities pretty even-handedly, as potentials, depending on circumstances. And if you determine not to experience the one, you're not likely to experience the other either.

Aubrey: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. If you could go back and offer some wisdom to younger Gabor, what would that wisdom be at different stages? Let's say, 18-year-old Gabor or a 30-year-old, 50-year-old, what wisdom would you offer? Would it be the same advice all throughout?

Gabor: You know when you asked that question, I'm just so grateful, that I'm not any of those. [laughs] I mean, I'd love to have my body back at age 18, with what I know now, but I don't want to go through that stuff again. [laughs]

When I look at my diaries in my 40s, just frustration and depression. This is despite a very successful professional life and three kids and other wife that loves me. None of that made any difference, internally. So what advice would I give? It's not to look for the solutions inside yourself. Don't keep thinking that if you do this or get that you'll be happy.

But that both problem and its resolution exist within you right now, at this very moment. So put the attention there and get the help, so you can put the attention on it. You can't do it on your own. So don't be afraid to ask for help. Be vulnerable, be open, and be very curious about what's happening inside you. And it's not going to be through your political activism or your workaholism, or going to bed with this person or that person, that's going to improve the quality of your life, ultimately.

Aubrey: It seems to be one of the great myths that we're all subject to and that we all fall under, this idea that changing something externally is going to permanently change our internal environment. "Oh, if I just get to this thing, if I just get this thing and had this thing happen, everything's going to be all right." Everything is just a false summit. It's just another stop in this mountain that you'll always be looking for, until you start pointing that focus and attention inward.

And then, miraculously, what I've found is the more internal work I do, the more the external gets eased, the better my career gets, the more available love options I have. Everything ends up working out. So whereas you think like, "Oh, I don't have time to focus inside. I've got to focus on this outside," it's actually the opposite. The more you focus internally, the easier everything gets externally.

Gabor: Absolutely, and the very American dream, the pursuit of happiness. When you're pursuing happiness, it's something outside of you that you're running after. It's a dead end. It's actually not a pursuit. It's an investigation and inquiry into the self and it's totally true, that the external will reflect the internal.

Now, having said that, I want to be careful because there are people in your country, in my Canada, who through no fault of their own, are in terrible circumstances. They just happen to be the wrong color or the wrong class, and they didn't create that. So, we don't want to defame people by blaming them for their life circumstances. I didn't choose to be a Jewish infant under the Nazis. I didn't create that.

So we're not talking about that part of it. That part of it has to be kept in mind. But what is true is that for any one person, the more they understand themselves—and it doesn't matter what class or situation they're in—the more they understand themselves, and the more they will get related to themselves, the more freedom they'll have to respond to their life circumstances.

Aubrey: Yeah, even in the worst circumstances, if you can help manage your internal environment, you can help manage the thing that matters the most. I think one of the most compelling stories I read was from Ryan Holiday's book, "Obstacle is the Way," and it was someone who was stuck in a prisoner of war camp, POW camp in Vietnam in horrible conditions, daily torture. And in his own mind, he played a round a golf on his favorite course back home, just to keep his mind sane, and controlled those thoughts, and would play the holes sometimes. He'd get in the sand trap, have to swing himself out of the sand trap. Played this every single day, and while people around him were dying and suffering. He managed to keep that thread and eventually got out, survived. Eventually got out, went out to that, and the cool end of the story is when he went out to his course that he played in his head every day and shot par. [laughs]

Gabor: Wow.

Aubrey: And made it out there. And the moral of that is, yes, the external world can be real, but by managing your internal reaction to it, you can minimize the suffering associated with the pain.

Gabor: Absolutely, and there's a wonderful quote from Viktor Frankl. And Frankl was a psychiatrist from Austria, who as a young man, served time—if you can call it that—in concentration camps. And he went through the worst camps, like Auschwitz, and Dachau, and Buchenwald. And he survived. And he actually writes. And as I'm speaking, I'm searching for the quote on my cell phone here, but I'll find it in a minute here. And here's what he says.

He says, "Between stimulus centers [and he actually learned this in the camps] there's a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth, then our freedom. Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to

choose one's own way." And very similar to it, the story that used to be recounted, there was a story in *The New Yorker* a few months ago of a Black Panther from here, I think from Oakland, where we're speaking, who gets framed and jailed on a completely false murder charge. And he's in solitary confinement for three-and-a-half decades.

Aubrey: Wow.

Gabor: Literally spent most of that and he survived. And he did exactly what your prisoner of war camp, the story also implies. He just, in his mind, he said, "I will not be subject to this. I won't let them do this to me. I won't let them destroy me."

Now, I don't think you're saying and I'm not saying, it's just easy like that, that anybody could do it, but it's possible for human beings to be that responsible for their responses, no matter what the circumstance. It's at least possible. And the question that we have to ask is how do we help ourselves and how do we help other people attain that degree of responsibility, that degree of ability to respond.

Aubrey: Yeah, absolutely. And how do we look at these external circumstances as potential training grounds, as ways that we can hone this response. In the most extreme stimulus, you can develop the most extreme skills and power, and ability to master those. So, whatever situation you're in, whatever dark place you find yourself in, you can use that as the grindstone to sharpen the steel of your will and your spirit.

Gabor: This yogi that I met in September when I did this yoga program I told you about, I told them, "Listen, I can help a lot of people, but internally I just have a hard time shifting my moroseness." And I said, "That goes back to suffering in my early childhood," and he said along the lines of what you're saying. He said, well when you suffer a lot you should become wiser. [laughs] You should let that teach you. And that means you should be the most joyful of all because you have learned all the stuff.

And he said, "That suffering of yours happened a long time ago. What's holding you back now?" He says, "It simply that you've got a sharp mind that can cut like a scalpel to the truth and help a lot of people see reality, but internally, you don't know how to use the mind. That sharp knife of yours keeps cutting your self." You know, just that little conversation and then the practice that followed has made a huge difference for me.

Aubrey: I can see the smile coming out of you, even when you talk about it.

Gabor: Yeah.

Aubrey: It's a beautiful thing. It's beautiful too that you just recently discovered yoga. It's not too late to learn new things and develop new practices. Wherever you are, I think it's one of those other fallacies of the mind. We love telling ourselves it's too late. Bullshit, it's not too late. It's never too late. There's always an opportunity to learn and grow.

Gabor: Yeah, my line about that is I'm 73 now and I'm really glad I'm not as stupid and young as when I was 72. [laughs]

Aubrey: That's beautiful and I think it's a good way to end. Where would you like people to go to? I know you've got a great website, blog up, and some books out. If people want to learn more about what you do?

Gabor: Well, I speak all over the place, so my speaking are always listed at my website [www.drgabormate.com](http://www.drgabormate.com). My books on addiction, mind/body health, child development, ADHD. You can see them at my website and purchase them online. Not through me, but online bookstores any bookstores. And a lot my writings and YouTube lectures are collected at my website. No cost to any of that. So, basically, anybody interested in my work, the best place to check it out is at my website and on YouTube.

Aubrey: Awesome.

Gabor: And, by the way, I'll be offering some online courses. Finally, I'm getting into the 21st century.

Aubrey: Outstanding.

Gabor: And if people are interests, again, they can sign up at my website.

Aubrey: Awesome. Well, when those come out, I'll make sure to share all the links and let everybody who's listening know for sure.

Gabor: Thank you.

Aubrey: Gabor, it's been a true pleasure and an honor. I'm happy we got a chance to sit down. That was great.

Gabor: I enjoyed talking with you. Thank you.

Aubrey: Yeah, for sure.

End Podcast

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So the third supplement we ever came out with it on it was a product called Shroom TECH Sport. And the idea was to create a pre-workout that was different than anything else out there in the market. I remember taking stuff and was all jittery from all the caffeine and I wanted something that could fuel me, give me energy, but didn't have all the crap in it. So we created something that was an adaptogen-based formula, built around the Cordyceps sinensis mushroom, methylated B-vitamins, decaffeinated green tea; a lot of nutrients that can support the body, and actually make it more healthy to take a pre-workout, rather than something you're doing that's going to help you work out but you're going to pay the taxes on it later.

So Shroom TECH Sport came about. It's something that's a mainstay for all of our athletes. You'll hear Joe Rogan talking about it, giving him an extra roll on the jujitsu mats, or hockey players

saying it extends their time and shift on the ice. It helps with oxygen utilization, it helps with motivation to get out there into the gym.

And we wanted to offer it to everybody, to give it a try for free. And so if you sign up at [onnit.com/amp](https://onnit.com/amp), you can get a free bottle of Shroom TECH Sport. You've got to pay the shipping and handling. And then if you don't like this subscription, you can cancel at any time. We make it super-easy.

So really, you got no risk. You can try it out, see if you like it as much as we do. And if you do, then integrate it into part of your lifestyle. So, [onnit.com/amp](https://onnit.com/amp).