

Podcast Series, Holistic Nature of Us

Episode # 19: Meet Ellen Moyer, Ph.D.

judithdreyer.com

Hi I'm Judith Dreyer,

Thank you for joining me for my pod cast series "The Holistic Nature of Us".

My intent is to take us, you and I, into a better understanding of the concepts behind our holistic nature and how that ties directly to the holistic nature of the world around us. How can we connect the dots in practical ways that we are nature and nature is in us?

I will be featuring authors and educators, practitioners and others whose passion for this earth helps us create bridges. We'll see what's trending, what's relevant to our world today, not just for land use, but to connect the dots between ourselves and nature. It's time for practical action and profound inner change so our natural world is valued once again.

And today I'm delighted to welcome back Ellen Moyer. Ellen Moyer is a Ph.D. whose mission is to help preserve the environment and promote a healthier way for us to inhabit this earth. She is the author of numerous publications including *Our Earth, Our Species, Our Selves – How to Thrive with Creating a Sustainable World*

Good morning Ellen, it's a pleasure to have you back here today. How are you?

ELLEN: Hi Judith. Thanks, I'm great and I'm very grateful for being on your show again, so thanks so much.

JUDITH: You are welcome. I invited Ellen back because I wanted to touch upon the holistic implications of our socio-economics contributing to sustainability or not. And today we're going to focus on our food system. There are many facets we can talk about. Hopefully we'll get to a few of them and show the socio-economical downfall of some of our current

practices, as well as highlight the positive things that are taking place in our food world.

Ellen, how would you like to start?

ELLEN: Well I think a good place to start is just to put the whole subject in context. Food is how we fit into the entire web of life and so it's incredibly basic. It's so important to any organism's survival, including our own, and when you look at a lot of the animals out there, they spend a good part of their day looking for food and taking care of that aspect of life. We today are lucky in that others provide a lot of our food and it frees up our time to do other things. But the forces that have been taking care of our food have been favoring quantity and profits over quality and what makes us healthy. So, our food system has really gotten off-track to the point that it is endangering our very survival. We can talk about some of that but also one reason I love this subject is because everybody participates in this issue and everybody makes a difference whether they know it or not, whether they like it or not, whether they try to or not because what we choose to have for our next meal has incredible implications not only for our own health and well-being but also has implications for the climate, for our soil, for water quality, air quality, our forests, just really every aspect of our environment. It's a great place, food is a great place for people to start to be more aware of what they're doing and the implications of what their doing and to also make a difference. So that's why I'm so gung-ho about this subject.

JUDITH: Well that's a great place to begin. Carolyn Myss in her recent work...

ELLEN: Do you want me to talk about some things people can do to make a difference?

JUDITH: I do, because I want to get back to the power of choice. I like that idea Ellen of focusing on food. For me, I listen to Carolyn Myss a lot. She's one of my favorite authors. She is talking a lot today on the power of our choice. We make 100 choices in any given minute, but we don't stop and think about the long-term, far-reaching implications that it has for all of us. Because if we're connected then every choice we make has some kind of connection to the world around us. I would love you to give us an example of playing it forward.

ELLEN: Okay. There are a lot of things we can do in the area of food that helps our own health and well being, and that also helps the planet. Maybe one of the most important choices is, how much meat are we going to eat? If we cut back on meat, say just cut back one meal a week on the meat we eat, we are going to be helping in so many areas. I'll probably forget some of them, but I'll try to list as many as I can.

JUDITH: That's okay, we want to hear you, you know, play that kind of example forward so that it's practical.

ELLEN: If we eat less meat then chances are we're going to be helping our own health because most affluent Americans eat too much meat for their own health. There are many ways that (one action) helps our health. We're going to help the climate because meat production is the most damaging industry there is on many fronts, including climate change because of all the land that's cleared for growing the food for the animals that we turn into meat. I'm focusing mostly on industrial meat production. It's going to help water quality because we won't be putting so many fertilizer nutrients and pesticides into our water system, and also pesticides and other neurotoxins that hurt everything, including ourselves. We will be helping the soil. We will be helping forests because land is cleared for animal grazing. A lot of the forest cutting in the Amazon is for growing beef, for example. We'll be helping air quality because things like glyphosate, the main ingredient in Round-Up used on many of the food crops for farm animals gets into our air, our water, everything else. And we'll probably be helping our finances because meat is generally more expensive than other foods. We'll be driving our food system in the right direction by signaling what we want by voting with our dollars. I think that kind of covers it. I bet a lot of people never thought that what's on the end of their fork made such a difference, but it really, really does.

JUDITH: Well that's interesting. I had some research that I did concerning bacon and pork and if we played that forward, and I'm talking about factory farmed pigs, there are terrible pictures on the Internet about how terribly they're treated as a species, number one. Number two we don't know how they're medicated and how extensive that is in that industry. So that gets into our food chain; and that's number two. Number three, their pooh. They have huge pooh farms in North Carolina and they're running out of physical space to actually dump the pooh and unfortunately those folks that thought they were having a nice retirement or their livelihood was down there,

they've been living in that neck of the woods, the odor from these pooh farms is so bad, it's completely dropped their property values. So economically they're hit very hard because their property value has plummeted because they're next to a pooh farm. That's something that my class participants and students don't stop to think about when they purchase something. Do you have any other information on that?

ELLEN: Oh completely. You know manure in a sustainable healthy kind of farming rejuvenates the soil and adds organic matter and nutrients back into the soil when it's spread out in a large area. But when they cram all these animals into a tiny area in a building and they never see the light of day and never get fresh air; they're just driven crazy. Their waste is also concentrated, and it has a huge effect on groundwater, surface water and quality of life for the people living around them. And the horrible hormones, antibiotics and things must be given to the animals because they're crammed into small filthy conditions that end up in our food. Milk, typically like cow's milk that people think is so great for their kids, if it's not organic it's full of like, 20 different drugs, steroids, growth hormones, really nasty stuff that has health affects for us. One of the main lessons that I've learned and that I tried to incorporate into my book is that when we hurt the environment, and that includes other living things, we hurt ourselves. And it's not just some indirect thing. It's directly. We directly hurt ourselves. There is sort of a divine justice to all this but in our own self-interest we need to get away from this warfare-like mentality. We're always fighting things. Andrew Kimbrel and attorney who heads this really great organization, The Center for Food Safety, talks about the delusion of extermination. We think we can just get rid of what we don't want, like microorganisms, killing them with antibiotics or weeds, killing them with Round Up. We think we can do that, but we can't because Nature bats last and Nature bats a thousand. We need to give up this immature warfare mentality that we have toward everything, including our own food and instead have a more cooperative mindset where we're trying to work with nature and nurture things rather than destroy them. Food is a perfect example of that.

JUDITH: Well that is a great example. You talk about how we've had a more "command and control" kind of attitude which is immature, because it doesn't take into account the long-term implications of what we're doing. It's more of the here and now. I want it; I gotta have it; I'm going to get it kind of mentality. And what we're trying to do, through your book, through

the writings that you do and in other ways through this podcast series is to try to grow a mentality of connecting with nature and collaborating with nature.

ELLEN: Yes, and we're healthier. We have more fun. It's good for our economy. You know the health care costs that we are paying are skyrocketing faster than just about everything else and a lot of it is due to the crappy food we're eating. If you think about it, most of the chronic diseases that we are suffering from, and that conventional medicine is not doing a very good job with, are self-inflicted ailments or diseases that are strongly linked to our food. One example is overweight and obesity. Two thirds of Americans are overweight or obese and this leads to things like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. You know, the big killers that are killing us. And the news is not much better for kids. You know kids are our future and our kids are not healthy. There's a lot of obesity, diabetes, autism, depression, suicide. You know it's not like we're impacting nature but it's in order to have a healthier, happier lifestyle – no. We are suffering as much or more as nature with all these ailments; autoimmune diseases are going through the roof. Heart disease was unheard of practically in 1900 and now it's the biggest killer. You know we need to connect the dots here.

JUDITH: Yes, I agree. It's a complex subject, isn't it? Because when you talk about the power of choice, so we're on the road, and we're on a highway, which I just was yesterday, and what do we have for choices when we're on the road other than fast food. And even if we stop at a restaurant, you know a popular restaurant, they are not necessarily buying the best food because they have to mass-produce their menu, you know? We forget about the fact that those things occur because we don't see them; they're not in front of us.

ELLEN: Yes. We have to plan ahead. People like Dr. Mark Hyman who's at least a ten-time New York Times number one best selling author talking about health, he's on the road all the time. He has said you just have to plan ahead and bring your own stuff or go to Whole Foods (that are usually close by to where ever you're going.) Yes, it takes effort and there's a lot pressure from people you know. If you go to a family gathering and you want to eat uncontaminated food, well that's threatening to some people and they're going to say, "Ah come on, just have some cake, you'll like it." There is this whole thing of breaking bread with people and sharing food which is a very social thing and sometimes that pressure makes you succumb and eat food

that is bad for you. It takes strength to resist that and be an example for people to say, “Hey, you know I’m not talking about it but just eating healthy food and being healthy and looking healthy.” They go, “hey you look great. How did you do this?” You can tell them and then they’ll be inspired. It takes more effort to go against the grain and bring your own stuff. When I travel, often I’ll bring a lot of organic nuts because they’re small, compact and nutritious. Often, I’ll just have almonds or something for lunch. But it gets easier and easier the more of us there are because then there are more Whole Foods around. There are more food co-ops, healthier choices on menus. We help drive the transition when we say hey I’m not participating in this poisonous food system. I’m doing something else. And thank god we have organic food and have things gradually moving in the right direction.

JUDITH: We do, and you know everything (change) does take some time. There is some great sociological data that says that once a movement begins, it can take about, they actually have figured out, 10-15 years before it starts becoming mainstream. It’s not just Whole Foods any more. We actually have supermarkets that are creating their own product line, buying organic. There is a tremendous need for more organic growers, for example, out there.

ELLEN: Yes. And I didn’t mean to be plugging one company. I guess it’s more from experience when I was traveling much more than I am now. Wherever I was I would just put Whole Foods into my phone and it would take me to something 10-15 minutes away rather than researching what else is out there. I would just do that.

JUDITH: Oh, I totally understand that that can be an easy way to do it. And like you, when I’m on the road, I bring my own snacks. I bring my own fruit. I don’t buy. Usually on the road I’ll buy a bottle of water or something like that if I have to, but that’s about it. And even that’s another choice that gets us into trouble because you can’t get a liquid easily that’s been purified in some way that’s not in a plastic bottle. From what I’ve read, the ice machines and water machines at some of the fast food restaurants are extremely dirty. So, if you don’t want to use their paper cup, which is more biodegradable, you really have to buy a bottle of water.

ELLEN: Yes, and don’t think that the water is clean because some of the plastic chemicals have dissolved from the bottle into the water and that is not

good. And in fact, Dr. Mark Hymen has said that each American has roughly two pounds of plastic in their body.

JUDITH: Oh, that's an incredible statistic. So again, we have a lot of plastic. The dot I like to connect is what my natives said to me, my native elders taught me. It's that what's in our bodies is in the earth, what we do to the earth we do to ourselves. If we look at the incredible pollution of plastics that we've created on this planet, it doesn't surprise me that we have an enormous amount within our own physical structure.

ELLEN: Yes, and actually there's another thing I should have put on the list. You know when we eat trashy food, chances are there's more plastic packaging that goes with it and other packaging. If you buy a squash or something at the market, hopefully organic squash, it doesn't come in synthetic packaging. It has it's own packaging. So that should be added to the list.

JUDITH: Right and I'd love to be able to bring my own containers into stores for their bulk section because they're still using plastics for bulk. I think the West Coast is more progressive than we are in some ways on the East Coast. And I think they do have stores where you can do that very easily. There might be a few here and there on the East Coast but it's not a wide-spread mentality of, "come on, we've got to stop doing this."

ELLEN: Yes. But the counter movement is growing, and I find it very gratifying to look at the winds that we make and things are heading in the right direction. But wow, all the suffering in the meantime. All the children. I mean kids are born with hundreds of toxic chemicals in their blood before they even take their first breath. You know things like DDT and lead, arsenic, mercury, just really nasty. Our kids are at such a disadvantage and their exposure to toxic chemicals like Round Up in everything practically that we eat.

JUDITH: Well you know, on that level, what I didn't realize when I was doing some research in the GMO issue, (because I'm in the field but I didn't understand some of the implications of how they're created, etc.), what I discovered is that an antibiotic or antibiotics are used as adjuvants with the glyphosate chemical and that's what they drive into the cell of a plant. So if it's a GMO seed, all of that, it's not just glyphosate that gets into the seed, it's the adjuvants. It's the additives. Then if they spray the fields on top of

it with more of the glyphosate chemical, the antibiotics are also going into our soil and there can be some uptake with that, or animals are grazing, and it still gets into our food chain.

ELLEN: Oh definitely. And it kills soil microorganisms. It kills the soil. It gets into us and the way this works is it can make holes in our gut and that can let undigested food directly into our bloodstream and our immune system goes nuts. It says, what the hell is this? This does not look good. I'm going to attack it. It's probably part of why there's so much autoimmune disease now too and there's so much corruption around pesticides and especially glyphosate. I'm reading a really good book on that by a reporter from Reuters who is talking about all the sleaze and corruption over getting glyphosate not to be tested in food. It's the most heavily used pesticide in all of human history but it is not on the list of things that food samples are tested for because of lobbying by the manufacturers. And they do things like, they have papers written and put in peer review journals and authors sign things saying, "I was not paid by anyone to write this article." But come to find out, a lot of these so-called peer reviewed articles are ghost written by people being paid by the chemical companies that made these products. It's really incredible but, the truth is coming out in a democracy, messy though it may be. Ultimately things come out but just think of all the damage done in the meantime. In the Midwest, in a lot of the growing areas, there is glyphosate detected in rain samples, air samples. It's in most of our blood and it's really nasty and it makes holes in our bodies and who knows what it does to our brains, probably not good.

JUDITH: Well again, we've got that connection about what we do to the soil for example with the microorganisms and if these particular ingredients are killing them off then they're also doing the same thing in our gut with the food that we ingest. And what Dr. Seneff out of MIT is showing us is that not only does it poke holes in the gut, but it actually helps support the more detrimental populations in our intestines that are kept at a certain amount. It increases them and it actually decreases the "good guys" so to speak in our gut and that's where we open the door to dis-ease happening, just depending on our biological inheritance. Some people may get diabetes and other people might get rheumatoid arthritis for example. So, it seems to be we've created this cycle. Can you give us three examples of the positive things that are happening that you see with the work that you do.

ELLEN: First can I just add one thing to what you just said?

JUDITH: Sure, of course.

ELLEN: I watched a talk by Deepak Chopra the other day in March 2018. He pointed out that in the human body, we get about 25,000 genes from our mother and father, but we acquire 2 million to 20 million additional genes from microorganisms that colonize our bodies, most in the gut than in our skin and all over the place. He adds that in many parts of the industrialized world, we have lost 30% of the microbiome, that's what these microorganisms are called, due to things like pesticides and things like that. You know we have outsourced a lot of our activities to microorganisms. We have fewer genes than a rice plant.

JUDITH: I've heard that, yeah. I don't think we're aware of that in general.

ELLEN: Because we live with these microorganisms and they do a lot of our functions of breaking down foods, fighting pests and things like that. And Deepak Chopra says this is a big threat to our very survival because we're losing a lot of our genes to things like pesticides. It's even worse than we might imagine. But as far as good thing happening, well I think the increasing demand for organically grown food is one example of that. And another is Farmer's Markets and community supported agriculture and all these kinds of local forms of food production are skyrocketing. More and more people are getting on board and they're saying, "I'm not going to feed my kid poison, come on." I want to be a good parent. The momentum really is growing. And then a third is something you mentioned a minute ago and that is conventional supermarkets have increasingly more organically grown food. And that is only because of consumer demand.

JUDITH: Correct, yes.

ELLEN: If we weren't saying "I want this," they would not provide this. They will sell what we want to buy. It's a direct thing there and that's why we have such immense power because we create 2/3rd of the US economy with our purchases and people do what we pay them to do. We are calling the shots even if we don't know it.

JUDITH: That's true. And again, I'm going to go back to the power of choice. I think if we really were to sit down and look at the choices we make for our families on any given day, what practical action can we make today. What simple thing can we make today that would actually have positive consequences instead of perpetuating a system that we know really

isn't working and has a lot of issues that impact us in many, many, many ways. So thank you Ellen. I really appreciate that. That's a good way to leave, a good way to end.

ELLEN: Can we just end with one more concrete thing people can do?

JUDITH: Absolutely!

ELLEN: Okay, one thing you can do is go in your kitchen and just look at each thing and anything that has an ingredient you've never heard of and can't pronounce, or that has partially hydrogenated oil or MSG, or high fructose corn syrup, just throw all that stuff away. Don't give it away. You're not doing anybody any favors. Just throw it away and then the next time you go shopping get good stuff instead of that junk.

JUDITH: Right. **Label reading** is really what you're suggesting getting us to do more actively label reading.

ELLEN: And the best thing to do really is to buy food that doesn't have labels.

JUDITH: Yes, to make the bulk of our diets those fresh foods, hopefully organic, that supports our biology and was meant to support our biology.

ELLEN: Yes, and by doing that we support the environmental biology out there and our life support system.

JUDITH: Yes, very good. Well Ellen, again, it's been a pleasure to have you back. I would like to invite you again for another aspect of the work that you do but for today I'm going to just end with your story, "Our Earth, Our Species, Our Selves" does make a case for hope and optimism and you offer many practical solutions that we can take individually and collectively to green our technology, green our economy, strengthen our democracy and create social equality. I highly recommend your book. Could we please end with your contact information?

ELLEN: Oh sure. My website has everything and it's: EllenMoyerPhD.com and I'll spell that because there are a lot of ways to spell Moyer – ellenmoyerphd.com. Thank you, Judith, for having me back. I so appreciate the opportunity and I love your series. I've been listening to all the podcasts. They're amazing.

JUDITH: Thank you. Thank you for your comments.

I'm going to end today with saying thank you to Ellen and to all of you for joining us for her talk and practical advice.

This is Judith Dreyer, author of *At the Garden's Gate* book and blog. And my book is available through my website which is www.judithdreyer.com as well as other distribution arms such as Amazon. And I'd like to remind all of you to please like and share the pod casts. Let's get the word out!

I want to end *The Holistic Nature of Us* with a quote from Paul Hawkin who's an environmentalist and author, who reminds us:

"Sustainability, insuring the future life on earth is an infinite game, the endless expression on behalf of all."