

Podcast Series: Holistic Nature of Us

Episode # 86 : Meet: Ajamu Ayinde

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Welcome everyone to my podcast series The Holistic Nature of Us. I invite you to take a journey with me into a better understanding of the concepts behind our holistic nature and how that ties us directly to the natural world around us. My intention is to be your guide for this half hour as we begin seeing our world with fresh eyes, gaining more understanding and learning how we can connect the dots in practical ways that we are nature and nature is in us.

I feature a broad range of guests deeply concerned about the environmental issues of our time and more; authors and educators, practitioners and others whose passion for this earth and for all species help us create sustainable bridges of understanding. These folks are innovators; they're action oriented, creating solutions in a variety of ways that honor us and the planet's holistic nature. I am so honored to share their stories, their projects, and their passion with all of you. So thank you once again for joining me today for another engaging interview.

Today I welcome back Ajamu Ayinde. Ajamu is a certified medical hypnotherapist and transpersonal hypnotherapy trainer. He has been certified in clinical hypnosis since 1995. Ajamu specializes in hypnotic childbirth preparation, pediatric hypnosis, and cancer support. He was honored as therapist of the year by The International Association of Counselors & Therapists in 2004 and he received further honors from the National Association of Transpersonal Therapists in 2012 and 2017 for his work with athletes and pregnant couples. He currently sees clients in the Westchester NY area and worldwide via Skype.

So welcome Ajamu. It's a delight to have you come back again and share your wonderful wisdom with us.

AJAMU: Thank you so much for having me Judith, it is a pleasure.

JUDITH: Well as we talked about in preparation for today's interview, Covid-19 is on everybody's mind. And as a hypnotherapist you're obviously working with various levels of the mind, body, spirit issues that

are getting pushed and triggered during this time of our sheltering. I like to call it sheltering. So some people are going to you for relief on all these different levels. Tell us a little bit about what you're seeing in your practice. What people are coming to you with. How well are they coping. That kind of thing and then we'll get into your beautiful explanation of hypnotherapy and why it's an important practice.

AJAMU: Well what I'm seeing is not so different from what I have been seeing. I've been doing this kind of hypnosis, Skype based hypnosis for awhile now, about eight years. And when people look at hypnosis in terms of a modality it's something that can work with lots of things, especially things that are stressed caused, or things that are worsened by stress. So I'm getting a lot of the same things, it's just that people are having a much harder time dealing with those things.

So for example people who have a preexisting kind of anxiety condition already prior to Covid-19, it's that much worse. So I have clients who are front line essential workers that I assist, and they are having a very difficult time because all of their normal anxiety has been ramped up to a level nine or a level ten as a result of these things. And one of the other challenges for them is that their normal ways of destressing may not be available to them now. So people who might have gone out dancing or people who might have gone to a concert, or a ballgame or something like that, they're not able to do that. And sometimes people with, at least with what I have found, is that many people with anxiety are also mildly claustrophobic and so that's another thing that starts to rear its ugly head.

I've got a new client that I've taken on who, she's eight and she has a fear of the dark and she has a fear of insects. It's just gotten that much worse now that everyone's at home. Mom and Dad are at home and the siblings are at home. So all of intended fears and insecurities and doubts and such that were all there are coming to the fore. And people are reaching out to me because of those kinds of things.

People are reaching out to me because they've been very successful in managing their weight up until now. So now with the Covid-19 upon us, people have gained ten, twenty or more pounds since we became sheltered. Since we started sheltering. And they're wanting to find ways to not do that, to change the way that they relate to food, to change the way that they relate to activity. It's not as easy to do some of the kinds of...someone had a gym

membership and now they don't and that was their preferred way of exercising. Helping them to find a new way, so helping them with their diet adherence. Helping them with exercise motivation. So these are some of the kinds of things that I'm seeing. I'm seeing a lot of people who are concerned, who can't sleep at night and it may be related to concerns about illness, especially if the client is a little bit older. But it often is related to people just worried about their stock portfolio, worried about their financials and whether or not things are going to be what they need it to be in order for them to feel that they are comfortable financially.

JUDITH: Wow, you've touched on some really important areas. I think one I'd like to highlight is that our typical ways of decompressing have been changed. And so as positive as it is for us to have parades in the neighborhoods with teachers and students and all that kind of thing, there is still...you can't just go to the library and have a change of pace anymore. Or as you mentioned, go to the gym. And I've heard this a couple of times, you know, people say that they are eating more because they're homebound and it's kind of a go to mechanism that we have when we're bored, you know?

AJAMU: Often times.

JUDITH: Seeing the same four walls. So we've got social isolation. We have jobs that have changed. They've been reformatted. We've got children underfoot while we're trying to get our jobs done. We can't get even a break from that easily. And if you live in a more citified area, what are families doing in big cities to help with the children nowadays on the sidewalks playing? What's happening?

AJAMU: It's tough. It's tough and I'm a product of the city. I was born in the Bronx and I've been out of the city since about 1998 and I couldn't imagine being there now. As much I love New York City, being quarantined in a little can of an apartment, I just...it's tough. It's very tough. And you add children; you add elders to the equation – it's a lot. It's a lot sharing space, bathroom, whatever. It's a lot. Even with people that we love, it's tough. And so parents...I'm recently married. I just got married at the end of February.

JUDITH: Congratulations!

AJAMU: Thank you. So we're having an extended honeymoon. It's not what we had expected of course when we came back from our honeymoon to find ourselves in the midst of all of this. So even with someone that you're deeply in love with, being unable to get away from them for even a very little while is challenging.

JUDITH: It is. It is. I have family with children at home. Grandkids at home and luckily, they have a neighborhood where the kids can keep distance, but they can get outside on the grass and run around. I think that's a benefit of what's happening. But in the cities, it's different and now you've got a family of four who normally go their own way because of their lifestyle. Their work commitments are all under one roof, you know. And is that going to create an anxiety for the little ones when they have to break away from that. You know that was one of my questions. How are the children handling some of this stuff going on?

AJAMU: Well I think that the go-to mechanisms, like we mentioned food, the television and screen time in general are filling up a lot of people's days. The amount of time that people are, children are spending on the schoolwork is not the same; I don't think. And so they're doing a lot more video games. They're doing a lot more snap chats and things of that sort and it's going to make it that much harder, I believe, once the situation changes and we "return to a more normal way of being", they're going to have more difficulty with those crutches that they've always had but they started to rely on more so being quarantined.

JUDITH: Yeah and we know that those can become addicting. You know? And we've already addressed that in a global way. There's a lot of studies on that, you know. Get outside. Get off your phone. Get off your tablet. Get out and engage but now we've been forced to go back into that scenario, so it's an interesting time that we're in.

Ajamu tell me something, tell us about your practice with hypnotherapy in terms of how are you helping first responders right now handling what they're seeing?

AJAMU: Well first I feel that what people sometimes forget with hypnotherapy is that it is therapy, and it's not just hypnosis. So for me a lot of what I do is listen to what people are dealing with, even if I've heard something similar earlier in the day, it doesn't matter. I am that person who

is the listening ear and the caring shoulder that they can vent to whether it's anger. Whether it's fear. Whether it's tears. Whatever it may be.

So a lot of what I'm doing is listening empathetically, active listening, helping people to just process what they're feeling.

In addition to that, what we do with hypnosis is to help people to find their inner safe space, to create a sanctuary inside of themselves. I talk about people going to the heart of their minds, and that's my little metaphor or gold phrase that works for me but we all could benefit from a vacation but we can't fly. And who knows what the situation is where we will land, in terms of their exposure. So a mental vacation is something that many people are glad to accept and it's really inexpensive by comparison. So what I do with people after I have them kind of decompress and process a little bit of what they're going through, is I take them on a little bit of a journey into a place that we create together. They give me some feedback as to what kinds of places they've gone on vacation. What kinds of places they really like and feel safe in, and then I take them there.

One of the metaphorical images that I really love, and I think you'll really appreciate this, because for many people hypnosis may not seem like it's connected to nature but hypnosis is like water. It takes the shape of whatever vessel we put it in. So for me I'm a nature guy and I spend a lot of time outside, even now. I'm fortunate that in the complex where we live, I'm able to get out every day and not have to worry about...I still wear a mask. I'm very, very good about that and I can get out and about and I remember the things that I see. I stop and I touch the trees, and I touch stones and I look at things in a certain sort of way and I bring those things back to my guided imagery so sometimes what happens is kind of magical where I might mention a kind of tree, or I might mention a fountain, or something and then the person will tell me later. "Oh, just before you even said that I saw that!"

JUDITH: Those are fun.

AJAMU: Yeah, there's a way that we connect when we go into an altered state. We connect with the other person in meaningful ways that we still don't fully understand. So I do my very best, regardless of what condition or what presenting challenge they are coming with, to give them a dose of nature in their time with me. And there are many things in the natural world

that I see as powerful metaphors and great healing forces. Water is one of the most common ones that I'll use. So whether that's a person's relationship to the ocean or whether it's having them imagine rivers of relaxation running underneath their skin, or whether it's a waterfall that has magical properties that they can step into and then they can be cleansed of whatever it is that they're dealing with. Whether it's anxiety, what have you.

Another nature image that I really, really love, is the sun and the setting sun specifically I found very effective in working with people with different kinds of chronic pain. So whether it's fibromyalgia, which I had a support group for a bunch of years in Ulster and Dutchess Counties for, and having them take the pain that they're experiencing in their bodies and project it outward to the setting sun. And so as that sun takes that pain, and as that sun gets smaller than they also are experiencing whatever they were experiencing in a less, in much less of way. So it's really bizarre and strange how we can play with things like color and things like shape and size in order to affect a difference in the way that we process pain, but that's something that we've been for a very long time successfully with hypnosis.

JUDITH: Yes and what I love about your explanation is that you engage all the senses, you know? When you ask somebody to see the setting sun or to think about water, different senses come into play and again that's holistic because we are made up of so many senses. You know we have the typical five but we're also more complicated than that. So it engages us on different levels by using that kind of imagery and getting people back in nature however they can. And I'm thinking, as you were talking, of some of the big high rise apartment buildings. You've got elevators. What do people do when there are all these upper floors and you have to get down to go to the grocery store? How many are they allowing in the elevator in an elevator, for example?

AJAMU: Right.

JUDITH: So that's kind of hard to be with nature in those situations. You go down the street on sidewalks. Yes there might be a tree or two but that's about it. So what you're offering them is a way to decompress from that kind of isolation typically found in cities. So I really like that.

You also talk about transpersonal hypnotherapy and I think that gets us into, more deeply into the field that you've just described. Can you tell us more about that? I loved in our last interview you said something about the power of possibility and I always liked that. So tell us more.

AJAMU: Thank you. Well for me transpersonal is a term that is not very widely used but one of the organizations that I'm member of, actually the organization that I became a trainer through initially in 1998, is called the National Association of Transpersonal Hypnotherapists. And once upon a time they were based in Virginia and now they're based in North Carolina but Transpersonal simply means spiritual. It simply has to do with whatever we define, or whatever the client actually defines as spiritual. So for me I have a pretty wide palate of ideas about how one might approach Spirit. So I'm very open to people who have different ideas of God, or Goddess and I do my best to also incorporate the people who may not believe that there is a God out there. Who may identify as agnostic or atheist because I feel that for those clients, they're often times the most spiritual people that I get to meet because of what they're really doing. They're not doing it in the name of a deity but many times they're much more concerned about animal rights, or they're much more concerned about other kinds of things, how we're dealing with the earth, than someone who may profess great, great faith and go to temple or go to whatever it is every time they're supposed to, and yet their relationship to their fellow human; their relationship to animals; their relationship to nature maybe not quite as strong.

So I believe, I'm a big believer in...because what we do in hypnosis involves closing your eyes, it's all about imagination and much of what is spoken of in spiritual circles has to do with just that; with faith, with imagination, with being in a place where the barriers between ourselves and each other go away. And we are liberated from our self-imposed limitations. So for me spirituality gives me a kind of emancipation from a mental slavery in a way that some people would maybe see it as the opposite. But I see it as just that, as a way of becoming freer by being able to use the stories that we learn in different spiritual teachings as metaphors, guidance for how we might grow.

JUDITH: Yeah, and again, I love your point about imagination. It does soften the barriers. It softens our inner barriers and it can soften our outer barriers as well too. And what I like about that is the way that you explain transpersonal hypnosis and hypnotherapy in general, using the imagination

takes us away from maybe the Hollywood version of hypnosis, which can be a little bit off putting. I know I don't want to walk away from somebody and start barking, you know?

AJAMU: Indeed.

JUDITH: And that kind of tom foolery that occurs with some of these modalities. But instead, what I hear is that it's heart based. It's emphatic and you're using where someone's coming from and joining and meeting them there.

AJAMU: Yes.

JUDITH: And that to me is holistic.

AJAMU: There are two main ways of doing hypnosis, to make it as simple as I can. There is what we call suggesting therapy, which is what most people know. If you were to want to stop smoking, if you wanted to manage your weight you would enter into a relaxed state with a hypnotherapist. He or she would guide you into that place and then they would offer you some suggestions. Now these suggestions may be ones that you came up with on your own, or ones that you came up with in collaboration with the therapist, or it could be entirely something that the therapist is saying to you. But either way, it's a kind of one-way communications. The client is quiet and still. The hypnotherapist is speaking.

When we look at doing things more transpersonal or more spiritually, we're looking at the client in a different way. We're looking the whole experience as being a two-way street as opposed to a one-way street. We're looking at the wellspring of wisdom that lies within each and every client and we're asking that person, while they're in hypnosis, "Well what do you think?" "How do you feel this might be resolved?" So many times what I end up doing in hypnosis is kind of being kind of a glorified secretary. I help someone to get into a relaxed state and then I ask them the questions that they want to have answered. I don't have those answers for them. Fortunately, they have those answers but they're not coming from their conscious mind. They're coming from a deeper recess than that and so I'm feverishly writing because I write faster than I type. So I write it down. I record it and then after they emerge from hypnosis I share some of those insights that they had and many times they're absolutely amazed and

stunned with the kinds of things that they came up with that will allow them to live their lives in a different more full way.

JUDITH: Hmm, that's beautiful. I love how you related that. What this reminds me of is that you know nature has the answers as well for us here, and there's a direct relationship to what you're saying doing our inner work in these ways with looking at nature or including nature in our healing work because they're both interconnected. You know? And we forget that the problems out there can be solved from nature out there, especially when we start bringing nature on the inside within our awareness we can get so much from that in terms of solutions. I'm saying this because on my podcast show I talk to people all over the country, Canada. I just talked with somebody from South Africa and it seems like there's a unifying principle of what we have done to nature we can undo if we just simply sit and ask nature how we can be of help. That gets us back into going deeper and your practices help us to go deeper if we are puzzled by something, whatever that is.

AJAMU: Yes. Yes indeed.

JUDITH: Very nice. Ajamu do you have any short stories for what's happening right now that you've seen that you feel that there's been a breakthrough, or an easing up for someone recently through the Covid?

AJAMU: I do. I do. And I'll cite the same client that I was mentioning earlier who's a frontline person. He's a schoolteacher in Queens. He deals with anxiety on a regular basis prior to the Covid-19 crisis and now he's dealing with it in a different way. But since we've been working together, he's just had some amazing breakthroughs.

So many times we will read things or maybe we'll hear things in classes, and we want to hold onto them and we want them to be true for us but maybe they're not yet true for us. And by taking his story and creating the hypnotic space for him to revisit his story and change the pattern of how his story has played out, he's seeing some really amazing things happening in terms of how he's relating to his work and to also his home life. He happens to have an Autistic child at home which is, again, can be very challenging in the best of circumstances but he's finding that his ability to relate to himself better is improving his ability to relate to the people that matter to him; so whether that's his colleagues, whether that's the students that he's serving remotely nowadays, or whether that's his own family. So I hold him up as someone

who I really, really enjoy working with because he's very honest and I have to be frank. Most of my clients are not men. Most of my clients tend to be women. Most of the people who seem to seek out holistic therapy, in my experience over the last twenty-five years, have been women. So when I do get a man it might be to stop smoking or something of that nature. But someone who is so brutally honest about what he's feeling and where he is in that crucible, it's so refreshing. It's so wonderful and to be an ally, to be a partner in his healing is really just the highlight of my day often when I get a chance to work with him.

JUDITH: Oh, that's a great story. The other thing I hear in the story is that these are the silver linings of the Covid-19.

AJAMU: Yes. Yes. And the way that people are reconnecting with other people. So I've been writing letters. I've been reaching out to family members personally that I just wasn't finding the time to reach out to. Am I less busy now? Am I more busy now? I...you know some days I'm busier, some days I'm not busy at all. It varies but what I've realized is what's really important is those connections of those people. We cannot take those things for granted. So **writing a letter, an old fashioned letter, sending an old fashioned card on someone's birthday.** These things are SO significant and when I go out to get the mail, and if I'm fortunate enough to see the mail carrier, I always, from a safe distance, strike up a conversation and thank them so much for keeping the mail flowing because it's not all internet. It's not all text and Facebook. That real communication often happens through those other means, the old fashioned means.

JUDITH: And again, maybe this pause that we're in, because that's how it feels to me, that we're in a pause. We've pressed the pause button. Is that maybe because we've been or have created a society that's filled with business, this pause is helping us to reevaluate just how special we are and how precious we are to each other. You know? I agree with you. I miss the old fashion letter writing thing. And I love getting a card in the mail but I also love writing one to someone and being more mindful as to my words that I use and how I frame my little message to them. So again, there's that pausing. It gives us a chance to evaluate what's really important.

AJAMU: I'm with you. I think that for people who maybe were in a good place to start, then I think a lot of these epiphanies might be happening. But depending on how unconscious someone was prior to this, they may not be

seeing the silver linings in the way that you and maybe some of your listeners might be. So that's our work, is to help bring that awareness, especially to the younger generation when we talk about letters. They're not really of the generation that have experienced that. That's not their normal to write a letter or get a postcard or something like that, or to make a call that lasts more than a couple of minutes.

JUDITH: Right. Right.

AJAMU: They don't know that world and so to introduce them to that world or to reintroduce some of the people who are maybe more in our age category to that and what that meant, it was so meaningful to get a phone call once upon a time, and now we kind of dread getting a phone call.

JUDITH: Yes but we have instant access with the Internet to write a couple of sentences but that isn't a meaningful conversation either. You know?

AJAMU: It's not.

JUDITH: And I'm grateful for the Internet because I can at least see my grandkids and we can be on for an hour, at a time. So that's kind of a good thing.

Well Ajamu this has been wonderful again your sharing and your knowledge and your wisdom, I really appreciate it. Do you have any thing else before we sign off?

AJAMU: Well I just wanted to do a little plug for what I do. I've been doing remote hypnosis for eight years. As I said earlier I've been able to help people in twenty-eight states since that time, in eight foreign countries since that time, so I would love to be the person that you choose as your partner in healing, especially if you are expecting a baby, because that's one of the things that I'm most passionate about is helping people to have their babies with a minimum of medical intervention. To really be able to manage those symptoms and side effects that go with pregnancy and to eliminate that fear and anxiety and to have what we call a pain free birth. That is something that is very possible for you, if you are pregnant at this time, and my heart goes out to anyone who is dealing with bringing a new life into the world during this time and if I can be the person that supports you on this last phase of your pregnancy, I would love to.

JUDITH: That's wonderful, and we will definitely have your contact information in the transcript.

How about giving us your e-mail and how people can contact you right now? And I understand, that you've made yourself available on different platforms, so why don't you give us just a little synopsis of that so that people realize the different ways that they can reach you and how they can work with you.

AJAMU: Yes. So some people are very comfortable doing Zoom, but then other people are more comfortable doing Skype. So you can find me using both. My Skype handle is samba mindman. So I've had that for a long, long time but I also have a Facebook page. You can find me using my name. I have two business pages on Facebook; one is Advantage Enterprises, the other is Awakened Birth. So if you're specifically interested in the childbirth work you find me there or you can just look at the general information that I have on hypnosis at my Facebook page Advantage Enterprises. I'm also on Linked In, you can find me there and let's see...

JUDITH: Do you have an e-mail?

AJAMU: Yes of course. My e-mail is my full name at gmail.com so it's ajamuayinde@gmail.com

JUDITH: Wonderful. Well I think that just about covers it and I wish you just continued success. I know you're a gift to your patients and I'm happy to have you here as well. So thank you again.

AJAMU: Thank you for continuing to do this. We need this now more than ever. I feel such a deep connection to nature, and I thank you so much for being an advocate for that, for all of us.

JUDITH: Great. Well everyone, again another beautiful interview with Ajamu Ayinde and his talk about how we can help ourselves and manage again and see maybe some of the good things with this Covid-19. And I'm grateful to him for his very inspiring talk and practical advice.

This is Judith Dreyer. I'm the author of "At the Garden's Gate", book and blog. My book is available through my website, which is www.judithdreyer.com as well as several distribution arms such as Amazon, Nook, Goodreads and more. I'd like to remind all of you that a transcript is

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