

Podcast Series, Holistic Nature of Us

Episode # 14 Meet Jen Frey

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Hi, I'm Judith Dreyer,

Thank you for joining me for this podcast 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 nature and ourselves. It's time for practical action and profound inner change so our natural world is valued once again.

And today I am delighted to introduce you to Jen Frey. She is a healer, a mentor, an earth advocate and voice of the plants. She is the founder of Heartsprings Sanctuary where she helps people deepen their connection with nature through plant communication. She is also a certified flower essence practitioner, a certified plant spirit-healing practitioner. Jen, welcome. I'm delighted to have you here today.

Jen: Thank you Judith, my pleasure. I am so grateful for the work you're doing.

Judith: Thank you. We all want to get the word out right, that this world is worth taking care of. You have many things that you do in the plant world. Besides plant essences you are a healer. You also have consultations. You help folks and you work with music. Let's start with communication with plants. What does that mean to you?

Jen: Wow, communicating with plants is something that I teach to everyone and I believe it's something that we come into this world knowing how to do. The plants want to communicate with us but for most of us we've been culturalized that this is something we can't do, or you have to be special, or you have to be trained over your lifetime before you can actually communicate. And the truth of the matter is that plants communicate all the time to us and in many different ways. Sometimes it's with their scent. Sometimes it's with a feeling. Sometimes we're just walking and suddenly something pops into our head that we wouldn't have thought of before. This is what I do with my students. I train them on the biggest stuff is to get into your heart space and to really be centered so that you can be receptive. I train them how to do that and I train them on broadening our perspective. Because when we talk about communicating with plants, so often people immediately go to like Moses and the burning bush. You know? They think there will be this voice. "Jen you left the stove on!"

Judith: Right, that's funny, but it's true.

Jen: Isn't it? It is. And really just like you and I right now we're communicating with our voices, but we also communicate with our physical gestures and the energy. You know you can have somebody walk into a room and you automatically know what's going on without them ever saying something to us. And it's the same thing with the plants. They also communicate, actually on a wider variety than humans do because they have this ability and intelligence to communicate on a broader spectrum.

Judith: Hmm. That's very interesting. My first thought is children, you know? I think of them first, that they have this innate ability to do that if they were trained, you know?

Jen: Well many children don't even need to be trained. They come in knowing that. It's just, then they get so called schooled. They get told that you can't communicate with plants. But I've taught students about plant communication and when I taught it's nothing. I simply ask them to sit by this dandelion and tell me what you think. They have no herbal experience, you know, no prior knowledge. They sit down, and they come back, and they tell me exactly how the dandelion is used in the herbal community. They tell me exactly like, "oh, I sit with the dandelion and I feel so joyful." Or "I feel the energy right in my belly" which is the solar plexus. That's the chakra the dandelion supports. It's like, yeah, they get it over time. And there are adults that keep that alive themselves but over time, you know, we generally lose that skill. Though, we can always regain it.

Judith: That's true and I know herbal programs are very good at helping us to reconnect with the plants on whatever level. I often think of the stories, and I've experienced this myself, where you walk in a field and everything is dead still. But there's this one little plant that's kind of waving at you, you know? And why is that happening? Could it be a mouse in the ground? I mean our mind goes to all these different things but the gift in it is that it awakens us to the fact that there's more out there than we've been taught to believe.

Jen: Absolutely. And yeah that plant waving is saying, "Hey Judith, I want to connect with you!"

Judith: It feels like that at times, it really does. Tell us more about your work with flower essences and how you approach the intelligence in plants.

Jen: Yeah, Okay. How I approach the intelligence of plants is a huge subject. You know plant intelligence has kind of become the hip word right now. You know there's a whole lot of energy behind it. There's actually a whole field called plant neurobiology right now. Stefano Mancuso in Florence Italy is one of the pioneers. He wrote "Brilliant Green" and prior to that back in the 70s it was Cleve Baxter who really started bringing up this idea in the scientific community that plants are intelligent. Though for people who work with plants and of course for the indigenous communities, this is the information we've always known. That plants are intelligent. Plants have so much to

offer us and all we have to do is listen. Their intelligence is different than ours, but they don't have a brain. But as the work of Stefan Mancuso and the other scientists are showing, they don't have a center and that's actually a benefit to them because they are able to receive information in a much wider variety of ways than we can and transmit it. Because they are stationary, though some plants do move, just slower than human scale, on a whole they're considered to be stationary. They have to learn how to manage with the environment that they're given. They've developed other skills that help them to adapt and change and you know if bugs are coming at them, they can't run away and hide inside. They have to create defense mechanisms to protect themselves for a bug infestation and they do. They'll change their chemical constituent. The tobacco plants will change their bloom from night to daytime. You know they're really incredible. We just have so much to learn from them and they can really help us in these huge changing times how to adapt and learn to work together. Because that's one of plants great skills; it's community and working together.

Judith: Yes, and I don't think that that is stressed enough. But like you said, there's some new research coming out. I just picked up "The Hidden Life of Trees" by the German author and I'm so impressed with the level of (tree) communication. What makes me sad, is recently I saw a hill, I don't know how many acres it was, but there were beautiful oak trees there and as Doug Tallamy says, an oak tree will support over 500 species of critters. They were completely taken down so that apartment buildings could go in. But based on "The Hidden Life of Trees" where were the mother trees in there, the grandmother trees in there? (Deforestation) completely disrupts the entire ecosystem community that's been living there for I don't know how many years, you know? I would like to see us create a different awareness about building so that we can keep these forest communities intact in some way and show respect for them but in a sustainable way so that the forest ecology system doesn't get shattered, because that's what happened. It gets shattered. And what I found (living nearby) the existing apartments, landscapes were very sterile.

Jen: Yeah.

Judith: I think I saw three species of birds, that's it.

Jen: Right.

Judith: Crows and blue jays and maybe some sparrows and squirrels. And I didn't see any other wildlife.

Jen: Right. Yeah, as you said you know cutting down one tree has a huge impact on the surrounding environment. And that doesn't mean we can't cut down trees.

Judith: Right, right.

Jen: One of my dear friends she lives on the base of a mountain and they totally clear-cut it. This was a place that I had done ceremony for years on it and I can feel it in my heart

and when I go there it's so sad and yet I buy wood for my house. I know that. But there is a way that we can manage working with the plants and working with the forest. If we listen to the trees they can help us with that, because they really do want to give, and they know they have certain roles in their lives. They know that they provide shelter for us and they know they provide food for us. But right now, it's pretty much a one way relationship and nobody wants to be in that kind of relationship with somebody who is just take, take, take. What the plants want us to do is to come back into what I call, or what is called that co-creative partnership where we're also giving. If we can communicate with them, if we can pay attention to their intelligence then we can do that with ease and we can see what's in the highest good for all of us because as you're saying, in my opinion, living in a sterile environment isn't great, you know? I like to look out and see the animals and see the other plants growing around me. That's a medicine. They provide so much for us. So yeah, it's not to our benefit to just clear-cut and I mean we know this right?

Judith: Yes.

Jen: We've seen it in the global warming and everything else. We know what it does to cut a forest and the best way to, well there are many ways to look for healing from global warming, but we know having an intact forest and having that soil be so healthy, both the trees bringing in the extra carbon and the soil just absorbs that carbon too. It's just a better situation for everyone.

Judith: It is, and I'm so glad you've brought that up because we forget that we have a relationship with trees even if we're not aware of it. They give us oxygen and we give them carbon dioxide. They help sequester that carbon and bring it back into the soil instead of it being released into the atmosphere. If we go back to this apartment complex that was being built, then all the trees taken down, that's a huge amount of carbon that was released into the atmosphere instead of bringing it back down. But, you and I both know that people are making a difference with replanting trees and trying to create healthier communities and even if it's one yard at a time, it's happening on those levels. The other point is trees live longer than we do so their vibrational energy is different from ours and that's what brings the skepticism in, doesn't it?

Jen: Yeah. Well any time you say energy...

Judith: Yes.

Jen: it automatically brings skepticism. Just because, you know our science is starting to catch up. We have, for instance Stefan Mancuso and there are other people too that are starting to study the vibration. Science is catching up. But for the longest time we did not have scientific machines that were able to measure vibration or energy and that's one of the great aspects of the work of Cleve Backster because he started to. He started, you know he was an expert with the lie detector test and just by accident he did a study on a plant and noticed that the plant was responding to his reactions. And that was the beginning. I mean it's still not quite vibration or energy but it's showing that plants

interact with us and it showed that plants are intelligent. And yeah, our science is starting to catch-up. It's going to get better and then it will be easier to put aside the skepticism. But the people who work day to day with the plants, we know, you know, the vibration of a tree is different than my vibration and it benefits having a tree in my yard. I can stop at the tree before I come home and just get centered in my heart. Like any of that stress that I was carrying through the day, it's gone! I can come back into my family and greet them with an open heart rather than focusing on whatever crisis was happening at work.

Judith: That's a good point. You do music with the plants, so you talked about some of the science, some of the technology that's sort of catching up with what our ancient ancestors knew as a given. We can now see the connecting dots (between) with the science and that knowledge.

Tell us more about your work with music with the plants.

Jen: Yeah, I first learned about music with the plants over 5 years ago. I had heard about this device and then my first experience actually was in Ireland. I was there doing a ceremony with hawthorn plants. We were each working with a particular hawthorn tree and playing our instruments for the tree and singing to the tree. And all of a sudden, I heard the most angelic music I've ever heard, and I was just like, I need to go check that out. So, I said to my tree, "I'm sorry, I'll come back to you." I went, and I just followed the music. Meanwhile I saw everybody else who was in a group; they were all doing the same thing. It was just like this beacon. We show up and here it was a hawthorn tree that was connected to this instrument we called *music of the plant's device*. And this tree had never played before. It's the first time it was hooked up. A friend of mine who was along had a flute and he started playing with the tree and the tree responded. And then our teacher's son brought out his guitar and then she started drumming and there was like, if you closed your eyes you were listening to a quartet and it was just like a jam session, you know? Sometimes the tree would lead. Sometimes somebody else and it was so beautiful.

Judith: Wow.

Jen: It was so beautiful. At that moment I knew I needed to have one of these devices. I had no idea how I would ever work with it or what I would do but I had to have one. Since then it's just been this magical journey. Now I'm the U.S. distributor for these and I get to work with people all the time. This device actually came out of that work with Cleve Baxter. While I've been working with it for 5 years, it comes from an eco-society, in Italy called Damanhur and one of their main goals is to connect humans and nature and really heal this divide knowing that the survival of humans is dependent on this.

Judith: We don't realize that whether we like nature or not, we need nature.

Jen: Oh, absolutely!

Judith: You know?

Jen: Yeah. All of nature – yes, but in particular plants because if all the plants die; we need oxygen, you know? They provide our breath of life. But yes, all of nature because you can't really separate out one thing or another.

Judith: Right, right.

Jen: But yeah, so Damanhur started. They knew about the work of Cleve Baxter and were so inspired. They just created all different types of devices. Some were robots, they would hook the plant up to electrodes and the plant could determine the way that the robot moved.

Judith: Oh wow!

Jen: Yeah, and so they would actually sit the plant on the robot so that the plant could determine where he wanted to move. And the plant would always go towards the sun. Other experiments: they had plants control, in Damanhur they call it nucleo so they live in different communities and each nucleo has a gate. The plant could control the opening and closing of that gate and the plant would only open it for the people who lived in that nucleo. So, yeah...

Judith: Isn't that amazing?

Jen: So incredible, so incredible. So out of that then they created this device called the *Music of the Plants*, where a plant is connected. It's basically a biofeedback machine. The device reads the electrical impulse between the leaf and the root and each possible value within a certain range is assigned a note. (It's how) we get to hear them sing. The really cool thing about this is that the plants learn how to play this device and they remember.

Judith: How about that! Tell me more. This is so interesting. You know I think we have this amazing opportunity right now to click on You Tube. We can see some of this, but it still isn't mainstream.

Jen: Right. It's becoming more and more popular though. I will say that but yeah and one of the things that I love about this program is, as I said earlier, when I teach my plant communication classes, you have to work with people to overcome their limitations, to help them realize that they're receiving messages from the plants. With this device we just plug it in. I mean I have to do some work with the plants ahead of time because, you know, not every plant wants to be a performer first of all.

Judith: Well that's interesting. Who would know?

Jen: It's an experience, let me tell you. I have to work with the plants ahead of time, some we have are good singers who wants to perform. I just have to turn it on and everybody is able to hear that the plants are communicating with us. What I've discovered is that opens their heart in a way that most people have never had their heart

opened. It's a common occurrence that people will start to cry because they recognize, it awakens in them this ancient memory of our connection with plants. And several people have told me, "I know this song. I've heard this song all my life." But they did not realize what this song was. It's just an incredible experience.

Judith: It has to be so inspiring for you and rewarding for you too, to be that facilitator.

Jen: Oh, it truly is. It's one of the reasons why I'm so glad I do it because I get to see, it's just so great to just see that awakening and that realization that plants are intelligent. Most of all that they want to communicate with us. My healing work is also just wonderful in the effects that it has on people's lives. Being the distributor, I have the bonus of hearing all the incredible ways that people work with this device. Because people are way more creative than I am. And I'm not a technology person, so you know it took me a lot to learn how to work with the device. Now I have it down so it's easy and I can help anybody. But at the beginning, I prayed that none of my knobs would move.

Judith: That's funny. Do you have a favorite plant, a favorite plant music, I should say? A plant that really stirs your heart in particular.

Jen: Okay, so no. That's like asking a person if they have a favorite child.

Judith: Okay, I get it.

Jen: The plants that I work with the most, (particularly because) they're really good performers. And again, for me and my work that's important because nobody wants to go to a plant concert and have a plant be silent.

Judith: Right.

Jen: For the average person it's not a big deal. They can have any plant they play. But the plants I work with the most are Tulsi. Tulsi is just Holy Basil, sings just a sweet, sweet, song, and begonia. Begonia is another really incredible plant. When I said plants learn, there are certain plants that when you turn them on the first time, they're immediate singers and they're just incredible. Begonia tends to be that way, too. Orchids are another one that tend to be just an immediate singer because they are kind of like divas.

Judith: Okay. That's funny. Wow this is so interesting. What would you say to people, what kind of tips based on this discussion would you share with our listeners in terms of plant intelligence, communication, the music, the work that you do.

Jen:

1. one, do it! Just **go out in nature and be open**. If you can learn how to get into your heart space, which honestly easiest step is feel gratitude. Just focusing on what you're grateful for really opens you up to that receptive state.
2. Also, practicing **good energy hygiene** is really important. And when we do that, it just clears away all the static and the filters that it takes for the plants or whoever has to work through to get to us.

Judith: Well before you go on, how would you recommend somebody do that who's never done this before?

Jen: I was just going to say, I actually have an e-book on my website where people can download that, and it gives lots of great information. It's only snippets; you know there's so much more. But common ones are smudging. Honestly being in nature itself. You know just being in nature will help clear your energy hygiene and then you're present with the plant and you can communicate. And then there are more advance stages, like doing a plant limpia hour, an egg limpia hour and working with practitioners but it's all just about clearing our energy so that 1) that helps us get into that receptive state more easily and 2) like I said, if our energy is all static and chaotic that's just a big filter. It's insulation that whatever it is that we want to receive, whether it's connecting with a person or connecting with a plant, they all have to work hard to get through that (type of barrier). The easier we can clear that, or the more we can clear that, the easier it is for us to receive the information that we really want to receive. We need to receive. We don't have to want to receive it.

Judith: Well hopefully we want to so that we can strengthen our communication with nature and then we'll grow a different level of respect. And like you said, our society has been very egocentric. One of my podcast guests stressed we want to be ecocentric, you know, where we really respect the land again and make that our focus instead of take, take, take and me, me, me kind of a mentality, which hopefully we are getting away from.

Jen: Right, absolutely.

3. And that would be the 3rd step that I would say is **reciprocity**.

You know what you're saying is take, take, take and we're not giving back. And just little efforts as far as traditionalist tobacco, beads are another great thing. I give chocolate sometimes to plants. I ask the plant what is it that you would like? Sometimes I sing them a song, or I write them a poem. Sometimes I dance with the plants. You know it's whatever we can give that's from our heart to the plants of reciprocity, recognizing the incredible gifts they give to us that really help strengthen this communication and connection. And it brings us back into that co-creative partnership. We're closer to that rather than the one-sided relationship. We actually have a two-way relationship.

Judith: Thank you for that because that's the point of the podcast series. It's to inspire people to get back into a co-creative relationship with nature. And we can do it one yard at a time. We can put different species in our front yard and in our backyard. Front yard gardens are becoming more popular, more accepted. People are actually speaking up against ordinances. They're changing the face of their community because we're speaking up differently now in terms of, what we're doing with nature.

Well Jen this has been wonderful. I know our listeners would like your contact information.

Jen: Before I do, I just want to say one more point that you brought up. That's a good point (here), is that we don't need to go out to some, like we don't need to go to Yosemite. We don't need to go to the tropical islands to have this experience. The best way to connect and communicate with plants is to start with who is at your back door, or your front door, or who is on your windowsill. We can just start with the everyday. It's so much better than making it into some huge grandiose thing. It's just those small everyday actions.

Judith: On that level, one of the many things that my native elders have taught me is that whatever we need is usually right beneath our feet. I have stories about that. People are looking for something when they have an ailment and then when I tell them the plant, they say "Oh my god it's in my front yard!" They had no idea about it. It's about paying attention too and having patience to listen. It may not be in the moment. It might be over time because we've walked it; we've sat with them and we've gotten to know them on their terms in a way, not on our terms.

Jen: Absolutely, yeah, I totally agree. Yes, I too have so many stories about that.

Judith: That's funny. All right, so how about your contact information?

Jen: my contact information is, the best way would be to go to my website which is: www.brigidsway.com and from there you can have my Facebook. I have a newsletter. Again, my e-book for energy hygiene is there and Instagram. You can access You Tube. You can access all my accounts. My cell phone is there, so you can also feel free to call me or text me. Yeah, and e-mail me.

Judith: That's wonderful. Well I want to tell the listeners that I do have another treat for them today with this podcast. When we're done you'll be able to listen to music from the plants.

Thank you everyone for joining us at Holistic Nature of Us. And I hope you feel as inspired as I do by my discussion with Jen, her practical advice, I'm really grateful.

This is Judith Dreyer, author of At the Garden's Gate book and blog. For more information go to my website judithdreyer.com.

I always like to end with a quote from Paul Hawken. He'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."

Thank you everyone. Have a great day.