



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 88 with Katya Nova

CONFESSIONS: ANCESTRAL FOODWAYS,
MODERN MATRIARCHY, & THE POWER OF
RADICAL HONESTY

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[0:00:00]

(Excerpt from today's show by Katya Nova)

Our body, our ancient body, brilliant body, knows what to do with bone broth. When we nourish ourselves with, yeah, the sacred animal foods, there is a digestion and the kind of calming to the nervous system, and a deep nourishment that happens in a way that our ancestors would have recognized.

(Intro music: acoustic guitar, folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Intro]

[0:00:35]

Amber: Hey friends, welcome to the Medicine Stories podcast where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth. This is Episode 88. I'm Amber Magnolia Hill. Today I'm sharing my interview with Katya Nova.

It sort of goes in two parts. The first part is all about Katya's life, being born in Ukraine, now in Costa Rica, living with her ex-husband and their four kids and his new partner, Nikki, and her three kids. So, three adults raising seven kids in the jungle and how that all came to pass and what it looks like. And then we get into food and nourishment, from our vegan pregnancies and postpartum periods, to now, after long, meandering paths, eating for our biology and not our ideology. And underlying the whole conversation is the question: how do we balance parenthood, sexuality, nourishment, and fulfilling our deepest dreams and desires? I don't think there's an answer for that, but I think it's a question worth exploring that every woman and mother I know is constantly exploring.

You'll hear at the very beginning of the interview the story of how Katya and I met. It's really beautiful, and we've stayed connected online ever since. And in 2020, Katya invited me to be a part of her new project called Matriarch Collective which is a collection of online videos, interviews, talks, resources from a bunch of different women, wise women, matriarchal women. And it was this amazing village. Like she said, it was almost like a festival with frequent Zoom gatherings and rituals, and it was a wild success. And it was super fun to be a part of, and I learned so much from watching the other women's interviews and videos. And I'm so stoked now to be a part of what she's calling "Matriarch 2.0: The Confessions."

So it started out being called Confessions of an Ex-Vegan, and I was really stoked watching this idea unfold in her Instagram Stories. Katya is always sharing a lot about her process and what she's going through and creating, and I just loved it because I came out as ex-vegan 15 years ago. It's a big part of my story that I've shared it a number of times on this podcast, but go into it much deeper and share things I've never shared before in my talk on Confessions. And then it evolved though, into *Confessions of a Well Nourished Woman* when Katya realized it's not just about transitioning away from a plant-based diet; it's about so much more than that: psychedelics, sexuality, relationships, everything, all the things we modern matriarchs deal with in our day-to-day lives.

[0:03:38]

A couple days ago, I was taking a walk with my beloved friend Suuzi Hazan, who was my guest on Episode 18 of this podcast — the first one, really, where I talked about my vegan journey, and we talked really openly about animal-based eating. And on this talk, Suuzi said something that will always stick with me. She said, "Well, yeah, it's not medicine lessons. It's medicine stories." We were talking about how we learn through story, we learn through conversation.

These really, like, didactic, preaching at, classroom-type ways of learning tend to shut people down, and information doesn't stay with us as well as it does as when it comes through people's shared stories often in a conversational form. So that's why I do this podcast. That's why I love Matriarch Collective, and now The Confessions within Matriarch Collective, because it's a collection of stories that will help you step away from diet culture towards a more prometabolic way of eating and living, and gives you the most simple, delicious, nutrient-dense and kid-approved recipes and kitchen hacks.

So my most recent Episode 87 with Kymber Maulden just went crazy, like the amount of responses I have gotten — and Kymber, as well — has been overwhelming. So if you loved that one, you're going to love this one. In my talk within The Confessions space, we, yeah, we go into my whole vegan and vegetarian history, and again, I share things I've never really been comfortable sharing publicly on the podcast, so I'm sharing them there behind the little paywall, the moment I woke up to what I had done to my health all those years and coming out of the vegan closet.

I kind of turned the tables on Katya and become the interviewer, and we talked about what piece of information in the book *Nourishing Traditions* made Katya cry, the story of her birth and how the doctor slapped her mother, how her mom's milk dried up when Katya was a three-month old baby, and then now recently Katya's milk dried up when her fourth baby was the same age that she was when her mom's milk dried up, and turning to ancestral practices for feeding infants when mother's

milk isn't an option anymore — so homemade whole foods, formula recipes, goat milk, other nursing women.

We talk about why intuitive eating isn't enough, why we stopped forcing our little ones to eat vegetables. I challenge Katya on a post she made that said, "Animal foods build. Plant foods cleanse," and we explore why I question the second part of that sentence. And we talk about the legacy of my mom's constant dieting and desire to be healthy as I was growing up, and what I wish I could share with her now if she was still here. So those are all part of my talk in The Confessions. Of course, there's a link in the show notes, it will be the first link down there.

Other women interviewed who have been on this podcast include Rachelle Garcia Seliga, Kymber Maulden, Ariella Daly, Mikayla de la Myco and Marysia Miernowska, other women who have not been on my podcast but I would love to be, and I repost their content on Instagram all the time, our Tara of Slowdown Farmstead, Veladya of Earth Mama Medicine, and Kendra of the Holistic Mother. So, link to get access to all of this will be in the show notes, as well as the link to a masterclass taught by Katya and Nikki, her sister wife, called Cosmic Meal Plan for picky eaters, which is amazing. It's all about how they feed their collective seven children every day, in and out, in and out, in and out.

[0:07:42]

Amber: So there's also two Patreon bonuses to go along with this. The first one is an extra, like, 17 minute conversation between Katya and I, at which we talk about cultivating Bumble expertise, and the power of clear intentions and unadulterated honesty when dating online, the vulnerability of dating and sex again after marriage and four kids. So, she's like super duper honest here about what her post-divorce, online dating sex life looks like, and it's different than anything you've heard from anyone before about this. And I share the two second action that never fails to snap me out of the state of feeling annoyed with my husband or children. So it's like some really deep, ancient, biological, primal shit that so easily snaps me out of that stressful state.

The second Patreon bonus is an ebook from Katya called *15 Ancestral Kitchen Tips for Recovering Vegan*. It's lovely. And oh, I love this quote that I saw in here from one of my favorite ever cookbooks that I discovered very soon after I stopped being vegan, *Full Moon Feast: Food and Hunger for Connection* by Jessica Prentice. The quote is, "The more a culture is intact, the fewer cookbooks it produces." I mean, how many cookbooks does our culture produce? How many cookbooks are on your shelf? I have very, very many, very, very many.

And I encourage you to listen to the end. I do a little outro and in that I share one tiny food change, one prometabolic biology hack that I have made since recording the last interview with Kymber. So I hadn't done this yet at that time, that has me sleeping through the night and put an end to my night waking and many other friends have done this as well and are so stoked that they are waking up completely refreshed. It's so simple. And again, it's just rooted in our ancestral biology.

[0:09:54]

Amber: So one last thing before we get into the interview, I want to share where from this post by Mineral Shaman on Instagram. This account has been blowing my mind. It's somewhat new. I see other people I love to follow the most sharing his words, as well. So the post goes:

Humans are the only species that need to read books about what to eat, or how to give birth or how to breathe.

The deer don't have doulas or midwives or ob-gyns. The lions don't take breathwork classes. The rabbits don't rely on their nutritionist to plan out the perfect meal plan. The eagles don't have life coaches.

— that's my favorite.

It's in our nature to know these things, too, but humans have been overthinking since the dawn of civilization.

We must relearn how to feel deeply, to revel in connection with the elements and earth, and to listen to the whispers of our body's innate wisdom. We must re-member ourselves into community where we can fully see support and heal each other. We must let go of what we think we know about who we are, and allow ourselves to become so much more.

So here we all are. We're living in these modern times, not living in ancestral times, needing that help, needing that guidance, even though we know it's not ideal or not how our ancestors lived. We are modern matriarchs, making the best of the culture that we've been given. And I'm so grateful for wayfinders, like Katya, and for creating amazing containers like The Confessions, like Matriarch Collective. I'm so grateful to have this podcast and be able to share medicine stories with you instead of medicine lessons. And so let's dive right into this beautiful interview with Katya Nova.

(Transitional Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Interview Begins]

[0:11:59]

Amber: Hi, Katya, welcome to Medicine Stories.

Katya: Amber, my love, I'm so happy to finally be here.

Amber: Yes, we've been talking about this for a while. And you know, I want to spontaneously actually tell the story of how we met. I know that I told this at the end of your interview with me for Matriarch Collective, but I just want the people assumed to know who you are. And this beautiful moment that happened.

So it was at the Spirit Weavers Gathering, and it was in Mendocino at the time, 2016. I was just getting into my seventh month of pregnancy, and it was the last day of the gathering. And there was

this beautiful ceremony, the closing ceremony that I had participated in in previous years, and other women's gatherings I'd been to had done similar closing ceremonies, and it's very emotional. And my mother had died in a car accident six months previous. And I was like, "I can't participate this year. I'm going to be a weeping mess, like I'm gonna fall apart if I participate. So I'm just gonna watch."

So I watched, like, the first half from the upstairs of the big lodge that was right there, and I felt great. I was like, "This is so beautiful. I love all these women." And then I walked downstairs into the little tea room, and I don't know if it was the change in sitting or what happened, but as soon as I walked in that room, I fell apart. I was a sobbing mess, and it was one of those times where I was like locked in it, like, I couldn't get a breath. I couldn't find my way out of it.

And then at some point, this beautiful woman appears in the doorway, pushing a stroller with a baby in it. Was he like one, maybe, at the time? And I didn't know who you were at the time, but you saw me, and you just came. You sat right next to me. You showered me with the love and witnessing that I needed in that moment (*Amber cries*).

And I don't think a lot of people could have done it the way you did. It was just perfect. And it was exactly what I needed, and I was so grateful. And, you know, we talked a little bit and then so I needed you and you moved on, and the ceremony ended and then later I found you online. I was like, "Oh my gosh! Look at this amazing beautiful woman doing all this work in the world and holy shit."

So thank you so much, Katya, for just blessing a total stranger with your love and attention that day.

Katya: We're one minute in and I'm, "Aww baby," (*both laugh*). I love you, and this just speaks to how interconnected we are, and how we are all just part of one big womb, one big pulsing organism. We show up for each other in small ways and big, and we have never really know what impact, one hug, one moment of holding space can make. So thank you. I love that story so much.

And Spirit Weavers was such an extraordinary experience for me. I flew from Dominican Republic where I was living at the time with a one year old, which is crazy. And he was, you know, we call him a "spirited child" (*both laugh*). And so I had many moments of breakdown where other women helped me during that week. (*both laugh*)

Amber: Yes, I took, when my oldest was two, I took her to the Northern California Women's Herbal Symposium, and I left after one night. I was like, "This just actually isn't worth it. Like, I'm not enjoying myself, I'm not relaxing. It's so hard." So since then, when I'm at these gatherings, I really try to support the moments with little ones. You know, like camping and getting yourself to breakfast on time, and let alone trying to enjoy a class. Like, good luck.

Katya: Mm hmm.

[0:16:00]

Amber: So I want to... I don't know a lot about you, actually (*Amber laughs*), even though I told you I'm pretty sure I see every story you put up on Instagram for years and years. I would like to know,

maybe we can kind of base this quick bio on, like, geography. I know you've lived in many countries, the places you've lived, the people who are a part of those moves, and your family.

Katya: Thank you so much, that's a great place to root (*Katya laughs*).

Sometimes I joked before what's unfolding in Ukraine as of recent, I've joked that I am a citizen of the world, and it feels really true to me, because although I was born and raised in Ukraine for the first 12 years of my life, I then proceeded to live the second kind of third of my life in Canada. And then the final third, thus far, in Dominican Republic before moving to Costa Rica, where I've lived now for a little less than a year. So I've really been kind of all over the place. And that feels really exciting for a young woman, and also, it's really easy to forget who you are.

And so I really appreciate your question, because now more than ever, I've been on this never-ending search for: what does this ancestral healing mean, in my life? What does it mean to be a rooted woman, a woman steeped in tradition, a woman healing through her ancestry, and also thriving through her ancestry.

So yeah, Ukraine is never a place that I consider really like my home because I was very young when I left. But it's through cooking and song that I've been reclaiming my roots and just remembering the wisdom of my grandmothers through some of these ancestral traditions.

Now, living in Costa Rica, I'm happier than I've ever been in my whole life. I think this was my favorite place that I've ever lived, and it feels like this is going to be home. This is the place where I will root into, in a way that I never have before, because we just closed on a property on a piece of land. It's a beautiful place up in the mountains, about two hours away from the coast. If anyone knows, Envision Festival, it's kind of a two hour drive up towards the mountains, a colder area of Costa Rica. And it's a four and a half acre piece of land that I am so looking forward to stewarding. And we can get into it, you know, but geographically speaking, maybe that's where, yeah, that's where I feel like I've really landed now: being 35, feeling like I'm this modern matriarch of my family, and finally, having found a place, an actual place to be.

[0:19:25]

Amber: Yeah, we're definitely gonna talk about how your family, four kids, sort of dissolved and unmade itself anew in Costa Rica there.

But I'm curious, with the devastating news out of Ukraine and having your feed flooded with this news and talking to your family members who are there and talking to folks there — I mean, you can talk about any any piece of that you wish — but are you, is it evoking memories that haven't been present in a long time?

Katya: Yeah, absolutely. Let me touch my heart and touch my womb space and just see what wants to come through about that.

Of course, the two places where we go are grief and joy when it comes to memories of childhood. And I remember the very first time that I visited Ukraine after we had emigrated to Canada. I was 18

years old. And I remember coming back to my childhood home, and just falling to my knees in front of my childhood house and bawling my eyes out, because nothing was the same.

And you know how when you're really small, everything seems really big (*Katya laughs*), physically, right? And I was looking around, I was like, "Wow, everything is so tiny, and everything is so, like, just... it doesn't feel the same," because the spirit of my family was no longer in that house. And so it was just this realization that memories just live within us, and not in the physical places anymore.

So just that realization that that was really not home, and I had to find a home within myself. That was really challenging. And then fast forward, maybe another decade, there had been a fire that completely destroyed the home. My family back in Ukraine, they sent us a picture. And I actually printed out the picture, and I have it on my altar on my ancestor altar, because now that place feels like an ancestor.

And so, all the memories that I have of growing up in Ukraine are just so beautiful. We lived in the countryside, I had a big garden, there were chickens. I love to just go into the garden with a big pitcher of water and just washing strawberries and dill and eating everything, picking eggs, and all of those memories are kind of finding their way back into my life now as I'm preparing to start a homestead.

But yeah, it's just adding to the beauty and the pain, as I see the devastation happening in Ukraine. And I know that there are just so many narratives, as we don't know what to believe, as we watch the news and our Instagram feeds. But what I see is what my family and friends tell me, and they say things, like my best friend just sent me a message, and she was like, "You know, I just started smoking again because," since the last time she smoked was when she was 12 years old, when we were hiding behind our school (*Katya laughs*). And she says, "You know, I started smoking because I can't breathe. I can't. I can't take a breath because our cities are being bombed, destroyed. And it's hard to leave."

And so, it's these stories that feel so gut wrenching that I'm not sure if I'll ever be able to come back, or if I'll ever bring my children there. And yet, there's this pride and there's this soul that's awakening in all the people. It's like this collective strength and resilience, and being here in Costa Rica, I feel it, too.

For the first time in my life, I have been feeling truly fucking Ukrainian (*Katya laughs*). Like, okay, what can I do other than meditate and send love and raise money? Well, I'm going to make my sauerkraut. I'm going to make cabbage rolls. I'm going to remember my grandmother's prayers, and I'm gonna sing in Ukrainian. And so there's this really interesting thing that happens, I think when we feel the pain and the grief it's strengthening our rootedness kind of into them, like on a cellular DNA level, you know? Yeah, so that's what I'm feeling, that's like a really long-winded (*Katya laughs*).

[0:24:23]

Amber: That's so beautiful. Just last night, I listened to Barry Weiss's latest podcast, her podcast is called Honestly and the title of this was "Things Worth Fighting For." And she writes about that in the beginning, this, like, collective spirit that's rising in Ukraine. And it was so beautiful to read about and to understand. And then she's comparing it to America, which is just being torn apart by culture

wars and identity politics, and so, she's kind of making, like, that comparison. But to then hear that from someone with people who are still there, from you, and to really, it's just really beautiful.

And I mean, when you interviewed me a few days ago, and I was in South Lake Tahoe, my hometown, every time I'm there, which is a couple times a year, I go on a drive by myself. And it's usually like, I went to the grocery store, and then I'm leaving. And I'm like, "Oh, I wonder if I could find my way to Lindsay's old house. Oh, yep. There..." you know. And then I always end up sobbing every single time I saw, as I drive around, and I always go to the house I grew up into, and I did that this time, and it's different. The people have changed it, and I'm looking at it, and I'm like, it's the same, but it's different. And I think about that all the time. And I have no words for it. I can never find the words, like memory and nostalgia, and how things live inside us, even though they don't exist anymore. And my favorite writers and speakers are people who can actually do justice to these giant feelings of loss and childhood and memory.

[0:25:58]

Amber: Why did your family move to Canada?

Katya: Hmm, that's a big loaded question. Why does anybody leave the place where they're born?

Amber: Yeah, and then why did you leave Canada?

Katya: So I was 12 when we left. And so, let me just see how concise I can be. Well, it sucked to be living there (*Katya laughs*). The Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, and my parents were doctors. My dad was at that time an ENT surgeon, one of the top surgeons in our city, which is Kharkiv — maybe some people have heard it, because it's being bombed heavily. It's, yeah. So that's my hometown, and my mom was a neurologist there.

So we were a family of, you know, like upper middle class, and yet, it was really hard to make ends meet. The only way that we could was because we had a house in the countryside, and we, you know, my mom was canning tomatoes, and like preserving meats, and we had a root cellar, and that's the only way that we could survive, also bartering. And I remember my dad was being paid for surgeries in, like, chickens. Or if somebody worked at, like a chocolate factory, the only way that they could pay was in boxes of chocolate. It was an interesting way to live, and people still choose to live like that in many places in the world. But my parents really wanted a better life for me, and so they had done everything they could to leave.

And there were several options — of course, the States. Everyone tries to go to the States, and it's challenging. Canada was maybe the top choice. Peru, even, was a consideration. And so it was such a process to apply. And my parents sold everything we had in order to pay a lawyer and find a way to immigrate, and the process took three years.

So I remember there were conversations kind of in hushed tones around the dinner table. And we never, my parents didn't know what the outcome of that process would be even though they paid everything to this immigration lawyer. And then one day, I remember it was such a celebration, although I didn't really know what that meant for our life, but our lives would change forever. My

parents received a letter of acceptance, to come to Vienna for an interview. And upon, you know, successful completion of that interview, we would be able to leave and move to Canada.

And we came to Canada with I remember about three suitcases (*Katya laughs*), not a whole lot of money, something like, maybe an equivalent of about \$200. And we relied on the help of a church and some kind of neighbors and slowly built our life. That was in '99, so many, many years ago. And with that unfolded, of course, a teenage journey of being in a new country, learning English language, getting into a whole lot of trouble as a teenager, all of that.

Amber: Oh, yeah. How are your parents now?

Katya: Oh, they've built such a beautiful life. They were actually able to become nurses, because, as it goes, diplomas are not recognized when people move like this. But they've built really beautiful careers. And even now they're there, in Canada, and yeah, they come visit. When I lived in Dominican Republic for 10 years, they would come usually twice a year. They haven't visited us here in Costa Rica yet, but that's coming. And it's getting harder and harder because now we have all these beautiful kids. And they miss the kids, and I do hope that we're going to be living in one, one place in the near future.

[0:30:09]

Amber: So what brought you to Dominican Republic?

Katya: Oh my gosh, isn't that interesting how fate, destiny has a way of magnetizing us to these really unique places? I became a wedding photographer, even though I have a degree in psychology and business, which is pretty useless (*Katya laughs*).

Amber: Not really, though! I mean, thinking about, like, the businesses that you've built, and you're really good at marketing (*Amber laughs*).

Katya: I guess, but, you know, all of that knowledge, I would say, did not come from school. It came from learning from people who were actually doing it.

So I remember sitting in lectures in university with my laptop open and just reading the lecture ahead of time, so that in class, I can zone out and do research into photography, because I knew that I really loved people. I really loved creating beautiful motion, moments and the emotion. And I saved up for a camera, like a, you know, a really nice one. And it was a really lovely way to make a bit of extra money, and I was always taking it a little bit further, a little bit further.

So where I learned my business skills is really, I would say, okay, who is really doing it right? And at the time — so this was maybe a decade ago, and I would say even now — SoCal was the place where photographers, wedding photographers were making a ton of money. There was, like, celebrity status wedding photographers. So I would take their workshops and fly, you know, save up my money and fly to learn.

And then eventually, I got a booking for a destination wedding, and it was in Dominican Republic. That was, interestingly, a time when I met Rob, who would become my husband. And I said, "Hey, do

you want to fly with me? These people are paying for my trip. I'm staying there for a week. Come on vacation with me." And so we went and, it's of course, so beautiful, stunning beaches, white sand.

And I remember we went for a walk maybe the day after the wedding, which went really beautifully. And I remember thinking, "Wow, okay, there's tourists. Yes. But also, these people look like they live here. They're wearing jeans (*Katya laughs*), they're not laying on the beach. Wait a minute, what if we live here? That would mean that people don't have to fly us. We're already here. What if we could establish ourselves?"

And at that time, there wasn't really anyone of the caliber that North American brides were seeking. So we just did it. We made the move. And at that time, there wasn't Instagram, there wasn't Facebook groups. There was none of that. So it was a really grassroots effort, too, which I was not new to that. Like, okay, let's. We can do this. And we just ended up staying.

Amber: And your relationship was new.

Katya: Very new. Yeah.

Amber: You're like, really, the queen of leaps of faith and trusting what's calling you and going for it 100%.

Katya: Thank you! Thank you for seeing that. Yeah. When I think back to that time, it's, I mean, we were young, we didn't have kids. We rented this apartment that costs about, I think \$400 or \$500. The water was so harsh and smelled like sewage. And because we were so close to the beach we had terrible furniture and cockroaches. It's not what you think. You think like, "Oh, you move to a Caribbean island. It must have been so wonderful." And it was, but at first we really, yeah, we really had to work hard to be known.

And I remember my parents were like, "Oh, you just wait, when you come back home with the tail between your legs from your extended vacation, don't worry, you can stay in the basement. You can live in the basement." (*Katya laughs*) So the rebel and the matriarch in me was like, "Fuck, no, I'm gonna make a beautiful life. I'm not coming back to live in your basement." And I never did.

[0:34:33]

Amber: So at that time, what was your and Rob's vision for your life and for your future? And how has that shifted?

Katya: Wow, you just are going right for it (*both laugh*).

I mean, the vision was so beautiful. We loved to travel. We loved festivals. We loved mindfulness, we loved wine, and so all of those things we did. We ended up, we would work really hard for a season, and then saved up. And we took several trips to India to do different yoga teacher trainings. We traveled to places like Bali and Thailand, so many festivals, Burning Man several years, all before we started having kids.

And then, you know, when you love each other, and you, yeah, you want to form a family, that was the next step. And so we got pregnant, and we did like one big trip. It was India - Bali - Thailand - Burning Man. And then we were like, "Okay, I'm never going to conceive." And so we did. And we still would work our weddings in Dominican Republic, and started having babies and turned out we were really good at that (*both laugh*)!

Yeah, how many was it? Like five pregnancies in seven years?

Amber: Two boys, and then a girl and then a miscarriage, and now you have a baby boy?

Katya: Mm hmm. That's right. Yeah, I don't know how the last one snuck in there. But I joke sometimes that I'm like a 3D printer for souls. (*both laugh*)

[0:36:37]

Amber: At some point, you and Rob started this podcast, Honey Talks. And I think — I mean, even though I had, you know, we had already met, and I'd been following you — but that's when I really started tuning in. And that was a lot about sex and the female body and relationships, and you guys are very honest and vulnerable about how having kids changes a sexual relationship (*Amber laughs*). And I guess I don't even know what my question is. Well, let's talk about the evolution of your marriage.

Katya: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, this is a really important piece. So I want to preface this by saying that I am a manifesting generator, and I, once I started learning about human design, I really gave myself permission to kind of just be okay with having so many cookie jars in my life, just having so many projects. So I know that throughout this conversation, we're jumping around, and there's like, Matriarch Collective, there's a Honey Talks podcast, there's my past life of being a wedding photographer, and just all of these things that I've done in my life. There, of course, is a common thread woven through it. But yeah, there's a lot of projects that sometimes felt seemingly unrelated.

One of them and maybe the first time that I really, other than my Instagram account, put myself out there and really put our story out there was with Honey Talks podcast. And when Rob and I went on, especially road trips, or especially when a little bit of wine was involved, we would have really good conversations, and we would constantly say, you know, "We should be recording this because I bet you, other people are experiencing this too."

And, you know, even now, like we're not together anymore. For anyone who doesn't know, spoiler alert: we, after 10 beautiful years, are not together anymore, but we've always been such good friends. That's always been the common denominator. We laugh so, so much. We're truly a solid team, even now. And so, because we were working together, living together, traveling together, all of it — well, maybe it's a bit of a cliché — but intimacy tends to kind of take a backseat. Like, I'm talking passion and good sex tend to kind of fizzle out when you are working together and often kind of snapping at each other because one person didn't do this or that, and it just slowly fizzles out. Add to that a child then, yeah, oftentimes, it gets even worse.

[0:39:35]

Katya: And so the first episode of our podcast, I believe, was called something like, "Is there really sex after kids?" (*Katya laughs*) It was something click-baity like that. And so we recorded a really honest conversation because after I had Zion, my first, who is six now, six and a half. I had a beautiful pregnancy, I had a beautiful birth with a midwife. She never touched me, she never checked me. It was like textbook perfect by all accounts, and yet, sex was painful for a year, maybe a little more than a year after that. It literally felt like there were shards of glass at the entrance of my Yoni when there was even a hint of penetration of any kind. And I go into this quite deeply in my newest project called The Confessions. We talk about this with Carly Rae and kind of the healing that has, that is connected to often like plant-based journeys and the resiliency of our tissues.

But at that time, it just really took me by surprise, and I was feeling so much inadequacy and grief that as this new mom who was super healthy, drinking my green juice on the white sand beaches of Dominican Republic, behind the scenes I was having no sex at all, and no libido, no desire. And so for a while, you know, like, a husband can be wonderful and understanding, and something needs to change, right?

And so, that actually led us to healing modalities, and one of them was a THC-infused lube that our friend made. And that was what changed things. So I don't know if it was a combination of things. I mean, I, we hadn't had sex for over a year. And I was healing, more or less. And so with that THC-infused lube, that was just made by a friend. We were finally having, like pretty decent sex for the first time in a long time.

And so Honey Talks was kind of a project where we would speak very openly and honestly about our life behind the scenes, our relationship, our sex. And the idea was to bring that product out into the world. And so we created a brand called "Fkn Honey." It's still on the back burner. Maybe one day, we'll make it. But we were just so inspired, yeah, that those two things were supposed to be fused. And then Honey Talks just became a place where I could say things that I couldn't in a short Instagram post.

Amber: And you started interviewing all sorts of healers, and it was really all based on, yeah, like women's health, sexuality, pelvic health, I remember the one with Christine Kent. Is that her name? That really, really shifted some things for me.

But yeah, I've been a mom for 15 years now. And every time I'm with my mom friends, other women in heterosexual relationships, this is what we talk about. We talk about the difficulties of being married to a man (*Amber laughs*), raising children together. We talk about sex and the lack of desire that comes after you have kids. But we talk about you a lot, too, especially since you've been so honest about your relationship dissolving and reforming.

Like I have a really close girlfriend who, two little kids, and she's going through a divorce. She just she like woke up one day and was like, "I'm gay. First of all, why did I marry this man 11 years ago." She hooked up with a woman. She's like, so vibrant and vital and stoked on life and starting all these new projects. And really, she like loves you since I introduced her to you. And she's like, "Oh, shit, how do I make this work, financially? Oh, God, where, how are we going to live? What is?" you know. And I've just, I've seen so many women go through this, including myself, with my first partnership.

[0:44:03]

Amber: So and like, you know, when *Sex at Dawn* came out, too.

Katya: Oh, yeah.

Amber: Well, I led a book group all about that. Me and various friends have always talked about other relationship configurations that could happen. So I... Oh, man, you were, like, teasing your followers for so long (*Katya laughs*), though, with your fourth. You're pregnant with your fourth, and you're like, "We're opening up the marriage. I'm connecting with my ex. I'm flying up to Canada to meet him." (*Amber laughs*) You just had us all on the edge of our seats, like what is going to happen?

How do we? I don't know. It's such a big question. I don't even know if, like, fulfilling our needs is what I'm looking for. How do we follow our deepest dreams and desires while being mothers in partnership? I don't think there's an answer for that, but tell us how this has unfolded for you.

Katya: Yeah, absolutely. I know that to some people it sounds and looks insane what I had done, but as you so kindly put it, I've just taken leaps of faith in my life. And I don't know if that's ever going to change. And so some people say like, "Oh, you're so brave for doing that," but it doesn't feel brave to me because it feels like the only way because if I don't do it, I'm going to suffocate.

And so there's something to be said about following anything that makes your heart feel expansive. So even as I'm saying this right now, I'm feeling like my shoulders go back, and my heart open a little bit. At any time, even in the day, we always have a choice: do I follow the impulse that brings my heart forward, or do I not? And the more we practice doing that, the more it's like the obvious thing, even if it feels really scary, or really inconvenient, or just plain crazy. And so what I did was plain crazy, and it didn't work out (*Katya laughs*). But it also did really beautifully, and there were clearly, really big lessons.

[0:46:29]

Katya: So yeah, there's a lover that has been a catalyst in my life for a lot of heart expansion, and also a lot of pain. I was in love when I was 20 years old, and things didn't end well then, but I never was able to forget him. And so, 14 years later, we had never kept in touch. We had one friend in common that I knew I could reach out to, to see how he was doing.

And I don't know what possessed me, Amber. I don't know! Something did. And I didn't even realize that it was Valentine's Day. This was last year, February 14, I'm eight weeks pregnant, something possesses me to reach out to a mutual friend and ask about this ex-lover. And he answered right away, and I got a phone number. And like without even realizing what I was doing, my fingers were already typing a WhatsApp message to this man that I hadn't spoken to in 14 years.

And almost immediately, we started talking, and then, like I remember, I went to the beach and my heart was pounding because we were gonna have, like, a video conversation. And so there I was, sitting on a kind of lawn chair, wind in my hair on the beach, didn't know if I was going to, like, cry or laugh or what, seeing this man's face. And I thought we were gonna just talk one time and that

would be it. I just wanted to see how he was doing, if he was married, if he had kids, but that's not what happened. We talked again, and then again, and then again.

But it was that very night, on February 14, the first time we talked, I came right back home to Rob that evening. I was like, "You know, I have to be super honest with you. I reconnected with an old love. We just talked, and I want to ask you: how would you ever feel if, like, he came here, and we had a weekend together? Or like at some point in my life ever would you be okay with me connecting with him in an intimate way?" Because Rob and I had talked about non-monogamy a ton on our podcast, and you know, like behind the scenes.

But it was always kind of hypothetical because I honestly had no desire for sex. I had no libido. I thought there was something wrong with me for so many years because the way that I would describe it is it felt like things were, I'm seeing sexuality in black and white. Like, I know what it feels like, I know it's there, but I'm not seeing color. It's just gone. Like there's just no desire, no libido, and I thought it was connected to you know, breastfeeding for so many years, the pelvic prolapse, like all of these things. And yes, that is true, but also I apparently needed a catalyst to wake me the fuck up in that in that way. And that's what this lover did.

Amber: Yeah.

And I went to see him and Rob was like, "Of course, go!" because he thought, you know, this is going to spice up our marriage, it's going to be wonderful. I remember Rob's saying things like, "Why don't you go see him now, before you're too pregnant?" (*Katya laughs*) Yeah, and I did. And so then the conversations about polyamory unfolded in our family. We dive deep into everything. So it was podcasts and books.

Amber: And what's the main one?

Katya: *Ethical Slut* is the main one, and of course, *Sex at Dawn*. Then there's also *Untrue* by Dr. Wednesday Martin, who I interviewed also on Honey Talks, that was a really eye opening book about how the myths we believe about female sexuality are just so off. So off.

But things did not unfold the way that we were hoping. I thought that I would just be this modern matriarch with two husbands. At that time, we were looking for land in Dominican Republic and I thought, you know, I can have it all, I really can. I can stay married to Rob, whom I love dearly there can be all these children, and then I'm also going to have my other love living with us. And so, like, everyone was on board with this. But, you know, life has other plans.

[0:51:19]

Amber: So what happened when you went to Canada?

Katya: We had a passionate two weeks. I realized that there's nothing wrong with me (*both laugh*). I can see in color. And the wheels were set into motion to figure out how to merge our lives together. And it was a really beautiful time. It was really kind of heart expanding time, but I was also stuck between these two paradigms: I knew that I wanted to live in a place, like Dominican Republic or Costa Rica. At that time it wasn't really an option. But I knew I didn't want to be living in Edmonton,

Canada, in a residential neighborhood, and how it's not really set up, that kind of a life is not set up for polyamory (*Katya laughs*).

What I was imagining was a beautiful piece of land with, you know, several like homes and communal areas. And it quickly became apparent that my lover wasn't exactly down with that. At first he was, but then he really wanted to be in Canada. And so the more we talked about the vision, the more it became apparent that the pieces just don't fit, and so a lot of heartbreak followed. And we actually came back to Canada for a time. So I, by that point, I was pretty pregnant, like seven, eight months pregnant.

And I know that a lot of listeners are probably shaking their head and thinking to themselves, "Come on, Katya, like, you should have known that this is going to, this is not going to end well." And I understand that, I understand that point of view. But again, I just couldn't not follow the call of my heart.

Interestingly, at the very same time, our life in Dominican Republic on the island after 10 year beautiful years, had begun kind of falling away in a very mysterious way. So I don't know how deep we want to go into it, but I had a school that was called New Earth, and I felt so tied, and it's such a beautiful project that I felt I could never leave. But then it just so unfolded that our landlord very sneakily took over the project and kicked us out and on our contract we couldn't enforce. And that was really, really sad.

Then, the kind of true matriarch of my household, her name is Carmen — rest in peace, beloved Carmen — she died at 60. And she was full of energy. She ran, basically, my household while I did all these projects and helped me raise my kids. And she had a tumor and died. Yeah, it was devastating. And I also thought I could never leave Carmen, like this is my family. We sold our house, and it just felt like all of the roots that were tying us to Dominican Republic, everything was dissolving, saying like, okay, the island was, literally, felt like the island was kicking us out.

Our search for land also was steeped in so much mystery because we would find a beautiful piece of land that was in our price range and had everything we thought we wanted. And then something super bizarre would happen, like the realtor would call us and say, "Guys, I'm so sorry, I actually showed you the wrong piece of land. It's not for sale." (*both laugh*) I mean, it was humorous, actually, you know. It's like spirit was playing with us.

Amber: I remember I was following along in your stories during this time, and it was a lot of hopes dashed and up and downs and back and forth.

Katya: So then, we realized that maybe Dominican is not a place for us. And at that point, yeah, it was pretty clear that our marriage needed to transition into something else, when we were much better as co-parents. And yeah, I realized that I didn't want to be married anymore. That was really, really hard.

Amber: Yeah, pregnant with your fourth.

Katya: Yep. Going through two heartbreaks. Oh, yeah, Zadie, my last little one, he's a very special soul. I always thought, like, "How much pain are you holding, helping me hold in my womb, in my

heart?" I mean, it was the kind of pain... I've never felt this kind of pain before in my life. It's the kind of pain where you want to wail. You want to just throw your body onto the earth and wail in it, and nothing helps.

[0:56:46]

Amber: Yeah, so how did you end up in Costa Rica? And how did you end up having the opposite of what you envisioned, which is Rob lives on a piece of land with his two wives? (*both laugh*)

Katya: Well, I gotta, I gotta plug my beloved sister and friend, Karla Muzyka. She is an Akashic records, extraordinary clairvoyant reader, and she was really helping guide me. And I was sharing these stories on Instagram, as well, as everything was unfolding but I would basically call her up and have a session once every few weeks (*Katya laughs*) "Karla, tell me, tell me what you see!"

And so one of the first sessions that I ever had with her, we were looking for land in Dominican Republic. And so she dropped into the Akashic records, and she was saying, you know, "I see something else. It's not on the island. And she said, there's options on the island, but they feel really heavy. And there's this ancestral work that is just, it's so heavy, it's not joyful. So you could really push through and get a piece of land and stay in Dominican Republic, but there's something else waiting for you."

And she just kept gesturing with their hands with their eyes closed to this other landmass that was kind of like, geographically close, but different. And I would just shake my head and be like, "Karla, no," (*Katya laughs*), "like, check again, because we have a school here. I have a house here. My nanny/support, the biggest support in my life, everyone is here. I'm not leaving the island. Like no, check again." But she kept saying, "I see a blue house maybe with like a blue roof. And it's definitely not in the Dominican Republic. And there's so much joy, the energy there is so much lighter and more joyful."

I had no idea what that meant. It felt exhausting to even imagine that we would uproot and sell our home and would pack a container. I mean, I couldn't even imagine that we would do this. But then when we were pregnant (*both laugh*) — yeah. I'm always pregnant. I was actually going through my miscarriage, and I received maybe the most beautiful email I've ever received from a woman who's really, really dear to my heart and always will be.

She wrote, "You don't know me, but I've adored you for many years and follow you on Instagram. And our dreams are very similar. I'm watching you, you know heal from a miscarriage and your search for land and your search for meaning. We are in Costa Rica. Why don't you and Rob come, just jump on a plane? We don't know each other, but let's meet and see if it aligns because we are looking for a family to start a homestead project." And that's what we did. And I love her so much. She's so beautiful. She took care of me in my pregnancy and postpartum with this last baby. And she was really such an angel in my life.

So that's how it happened (*Katya laughs*). All of a sudden Costa Rica was on the map, and it hadn't been before. And so it was the transition from Dominican Republic and staying for a couple of months in Canada. So I guess I did stay in my parents basement? (*both laugh*) I did come back for a

little while. And then yeah, it was just like the leap, right? I felt like I was standing at the edge of the cliff, and I was begging the universe to please, please show me where to leap next, please, because I knew that Canada was not it. And so yeah, Costa Rica was the next step.

[1:01:01]

Amber: So you get there, you have your baby, you find your land. You can go into any aspects of this that you want, but I want to hear about Nicki coming into your lives, specific to how your life looks like now.

Katya: Yeah, you know, so Instagram is so interesting. Like the algorithm kind of sees who you connect with, and then shows you posts and comments sometimes from a while back. So it was really interesting because Nikki and I had never met, but we were following each other as mamas in this web, right? Like, I'm sure everyone listening to this has had an experience like that, too: deeply connecting with someone or feeling deeply connected to someone on Instagram, and maybe never meeting them in person or meeting them eventually. And so it was kind of like that.

We were having babies at the same time. And I remember considering the name Gaia for Zion if he had been a girl. And so she, she called her baby girl. Suley-Gaia. And so we connected over that. And she was just so kind, and we would comment on each other's things back and forth for years, for years.

And I remember once she commented, you know, "We'd love to have you in Costa Rica, we have a little guest house. I hope that you come and visit one day. I just adore you, and our kids can play." And I remember reading that and thinking, "Oh, Nikki, you're so sweet, but that will literally never happen." Because we were in Dominican Republic, and why would you go from one beautiful warm place to another with a bunch of kids? Right?

Well, little did we know. And so that first trip to Costa Rica, to scope things out, we were only coming for about maybe four or five days. And it just so happened that there was an Ayahuasca ceremony. I was too pregnant to attend, but Rob got very excited about going, and so she did.

And there was this place called the Garden of Eden. How fitting. He went to the ceremony, and Nikki was there. And I remember, I brought him there. Like, we drove there together, and everyone was wearing white, and it was so beautiful. And Nikki recalls seeing us come out of the car, and she just kind of, you know, had to rub her eyes like, "Are they for real? Am I seeing straight? Is this Katya and Rob?" because it was the very first time that we would be meeting in real life.

And so Nikki and Rob sat in an Ayahuasca ceremony, dealing with a lot of their own shit, and releasing past relationships, basically, at the same time, and opening up to source and opening up to being surprised and delighted by what came next. At the same time, isn't that totally wild?

Amber: She had three kids, and she is done with that relationship at the same time.

Katya: Yes, yes, she has been going through a divorce. And she recalled that Ayahuasca ceremony as kind of the initiation of surrender of true surrender to what was next and releasing the sadness and just the grief, too, around that relationship ending.

And I remember, so her kids were there in the morning, and I made a joke that her kids looked like Rob's kids. Like I knew, I'm telling you, I knew, I knew this was gonna be a thing. And it's true, her kids could, like they all look like they could be Rob's kids. *(Katya laughs)*

Amber: Wow, so the seven of your kids that are now all being raised together, look like they're real siblings. *(Amber laughs)*

Katya: They do. 100% do.

[1:05:09]

Amber: Okay, so now you guys found this piece of land. And my understanding is that Rob and Nikki are in the main house with the kid, and you're on the land, but you have your own space.

Katya: Yeah, yeah, I mean, I think here, I really want to talk about manifestation a little bit. And I'm, you know, it's a little bit of a cringeworthy term, because we use it and overuse it. But I really was calling in help from the universe, because I just felt like I was on my knees begging for such a long time for relief, really, for relief, because it was to so much intensity around pregnancy and birth and living out of suitcases and not knowing where to land, looking for land for like a year and a half, and just not getting any answers. And so there's just something to be said about surrender. And I already mentioned it, maybe my biggest prayer is to be surprised and delighted. I really like to say that I am open to the universe surprising and delighting me, something that's simple.

And so this place where we are now as we... so Rob and Nikki are building a house right now on this piece of land that we that we closed on. My yurt is coming, it's been taking a bit longer than usual, because of the state of the world. The universe really did surprise and delight us because in this small quaint town, in Costa Rica, we found a place very, very easily to rent that has a main house that's big enough for all of our family needs, and five minutes down the hill is a cabin. This is where I'm recording with you now, and you may hear cows and birds chirping. So it really could not be any more perfect because we wanted togetherness, and we also wanted boundaries and healthy separation.

So the most common question we get is: what about the kids? How did you break the news to the kids? Was it hard? Was it traumatic? And I'm really just amazed at how it all unfolded. Because first we started as friends: Nikki was coming over, we were cooking dinners together, all the kids were together. And kids don't really, you know, they don't, they don't want labels, they don't care. They're getting love, they're getting snacks, they're good, right? And so with this living situation, we're all on the same property. And so to the kids, and to Katya or Mommy is down in the cabin, where she works and sleeps, but it feels to them like this is my office, and they can come visit me any time. But then we're still all together, are still all living together. And that feels so beautiful and so important to me.

And because Nikki's, too, one of the most beautiful humans, maybe the most beautiful people you ever meet, she is pure love, she's love embodied, she would kind of divide and conquer a bit. So I'm here working right now, to be able to afford the land to be able to feed our family, and she is feeding our family in a different way. She's really brilliant with all things, nourishment, spiritual and physical.

She used to run and co-owned and run a restaurant in Philadelphia. And so she's just such a genius when it comes to potions and making food that the kids devour, even though they're all really picky eaters. And so it just really, really works.

Amber: I mean, you know, even I'm sure, literally, every mother listening, even the ones who are judging are like, "I want that!" (*Amber laughs*) You know, I am jealous of this. I am jealous that you have all the space to be alone and to work, that you have someone else in the kitchen (*Amber laughs*), and that you love her and that you're good friends, and that your kids have this amazing extended play community and love community. Like they're so lucky to have you two as their Mom and Aunties!

And so I also, you know, like, yeah, manifesting can be cringy, but I think people also kind of turn their noses up at the idea of following your heart, but I am just a strong believer in that. I talk about this all the time. Like, you can see the difference in people who are happy and living the life that they wanted versus those who aren't. And obviously, they're like bigger systems in our lives, and I understand all that, but it's just each step along the way. Do you follow the heart strings that are pulling you forward? Or do you say, "I can't do that," out of fear, or whatever it is, whatever it is.

And so like, yeah, like you said, you had a vision, you had multiple visions that didn't come to fruition, but look at this beautiful place that you have landed.

Katya: Thank you. Yeah, it really is humbling to realize that there's never really an end goal, like, we think that we're going to be happy when we get to this place, or this or that. It's a windy ass road, I'm telling you (*Katya laughs*). We have to keep putting one foot in front of the other, which, again, is a cliché, but it's true. You have to follow what feels more expansive. You absolutely do. And it will lead to another heart expanding step. And I don't know what's next, maybe we'll record another episode in a year and my life will look completely different. Right? But it's finding joy now, and it's just being okay with the wild unknown.

Yeah, and I really appreciate how completely honest and open you are about all of it, despite the fact that you have over 100,000 followers and plenty of judgment and hate coming at you for it. We are in a time where people and couples are choosing alternatives. And just to have people blazing those trails and being real about it, I think is super important.

[1:12:01]

Amber: So I now want to talk about nourishment, food. You know, one thing we haven't said through all this is that you were vegan through almost every part of the story that you've shared so far until very recently. And I want, let's start with you mentioned Carly Rae. So I recently watched her and Rachelle Garcia Seliga, has been on my podcast twice, who is a part of your Confessions project, they did this online course called "Mother Foods," and it blew my mind when Carly, who does internal pelvic work on women as a body worker, talked about the women who don't have plant foods in their diet have, like brittle tissue down there.

[1:12:47]

Amber: Hey, just jumping in real quick to correct two mistakes in something I just said. The first you probably figured out is I'm talking about women who don't eat animal foods, not women who don't eat plant foods, of course. And I wasn't sure if "brittle" was the right word that Carly actually used. So I got in touch with her, and she said that brittle is not correct, but the tissue inside the pelvic area, when she's doing internal work, it's less responsive, more dehydrated, and just less potent. It doesn't communicate back to her in women who did not have animal foods in their diet. Blew my mind and the ones who do have this supple tissue as it should be. I'm still, like, wrapping my mind around this.

And so yeah, let's talk about your food journey. And again, this is a big deal, moments that every ex-vegan has when they reveal how they've changed their food choices.

Katya: Dun, dun dun! (*both laugh*) I love that you're going there, and I was kind of chuckling to myself a moment ago because an interesting segue to, you know, between like the haters and transitioning to veganism is I'm not sure when I got more hate and more unfollows, like it's a tie. When I shared that I'm, you know, gonna go see a lover while pregnant or when I announced that I'm introducing animal foods into my diet, people really got their panties up in a bunch about both of those things. And I really think that sharing honestly, does more good, but it was worth it. It was worth it.

Amber: Yeah. That's good to hear.

Katya: Mm, yes, I absolutely adore Carly Rae and Rachelle Garcia Seliga. For anyone who hasn't seen that class, I'm sure that they have a replay and also we cover those topics extensively in the Confessions, which is coming out and will be evergreen as well. And so, yeah, what a journey! I mean, this loops right back into my story of painful sex and how it felt like there were like shards of glass. And I had no idea that it could be linked to my nutrition. Years later I would find out from practitioners like Carly Rae, also Kimberly Ann Johnson, is a somatic practitioner who has done a lot of hands in, hands on work.

And so what these practitioners notice is that the tissues — I'm talking, internally — of women who are plant-based, feel different. They are less resilient when it comes to recovering from birth. My midwife friend here in Costa Rica said that often when she's stitching someone, it really feels it's jelly it doesn't even hold sutures.

Amber: Hmm. Oh wow.

Katya: Yeah, to give a visual. And I was lucky not to have torn in my birth experiences, but this is what birth workers and sexological bodyworkers are noticing. Because we are not, if we are plant based, the truth is that no, we cannot get everything from the collagen powder and the chickpea burgers. We need animal fats, we absolutely need those fat-soluble vitamins that only come from animal foods. Only.

And so it was a really humbling journey for me, and just now I'm speaking so passionately about this. And this is why I started this container of conversations of how our vegan journeys affect our health in every way, every way. And so we're just beginning to see. And it's these frontline professionals, right, who work with the female pelvis are noticing what's actually happening.

So I love Carly. Recently, she talked about how she's in a new relationship, and her boyfriend was saying, "Your pussy feels like butter. Like it's like pottery. Just so juicy and so soft." And yeah, we, I was telling her that I am getting the same responses because I've been doing her course called "Flesh and Blood," which is really amazing. And so we work on our own, with our own tissues. And I've been nourishing myself so, so well over the last maybe year, especially in postpartum recovery after baby. And I'm happy to report (*Katya laughs*) — I told you, I'm an open book, and so I've had a few lovers since, yeah, since recovering from my last birth, and the comments I get are phenomenal. (*both laugh*)

[1:18:17]

Amber: This is still just blowing my mind. This is how deep, real nourishment goes.

So okay, I'm curious, like, why you became vegan, what your belief systems were, why you felt that this was best, and then — I don't know this story — what finally opened you to the possibility, the reality that you needed animal foods in your diet?

Katya: Mm hmm. Yeah, that's so, so big.

I want to start by saying that we all want to be good., and everyone listening, too, whether you've ever had a vegan stint or you're still vegan, I love you. We want to do the right thing. We don't want to cause harm. And so it just, especially for a young mind, and we discussed this a lot from every angle in *The Confessions*, we want to do the right thing. And because what we're putting on our plate is a choice that we're making, literally, you know, two, three, four times a day. It's right there in front of us. It's kind of easy to do.

It's like, "Oh look, there's no death on my plate. I'm not participating. Right? I'm doing the right thing." And so for many people, it feels really good. And then add on top of that the component of kind of cleansing and feeling lighter, you know. You and I talked about that at length in your amazing talk for *The Confessions*. We feel good and often for a long time.

I mean, just the other day I had a message, a kind one at least, from a mama of five who is vegan. This is a follower, and yeah, she's got like 20,000 followers. And she's saying, you know, like, "Look at me: I breastfed all my babies. I'm fine. My babies look healthy. I have a ton of energy. I've been vegan for X amount of years." And it's like, "Yes! How wonderful. I'm so happy for you. And can we talk about long term health? Are you open to talking about long term health and the impact that this is having?"

Amber: On generational health?

Katya: On generational health, exactly. And for me, it was, actually, I have to thank my dad, who is very diplomatic and tactful. And I think Zion, my first, was maybe a year and a half, and I breastfed him pretty much till two.

I remember my dad saying — because my parents were devastated that I was vegan, and that I was three, intending to raise my children vegan — and I remember my dad saying, just sitting down with

me so gently, so gently, and saying, "Okay, okay, I trust you. Can you answer me this? Can you be 100% sure that he's getting everything he needs? Can you say beyond any reasonable doubt? Yes, you've read The China Study and seen a few documentaries and mothering intuition, blah, blah. Can you be sure?"

Because you were being fed eggs and broth and every kind of traditional, sacred food, liver, when you were a little girl. You were healthy. When your mother was pregnant with you, she was eating all those foods. When you were little, yes, you are healthy woman because you are built from those building blocks. Can you say the same?"

[1:22:04]

Katya: He just offered me that question. That's all he said. And everything began to — my ideology, and my conviction — began to crumble, brick by brick, because I could not say yes to that question.

Amber: And that was like five years ago or something. So was this like a slow unraveling for you?

Katya: Yeah, I mean, I was considering like, okay, I guess. Let's see, maybe I'll feed him some eggs maybe. But then my breastmilk wasn't... I felt like it was, you know, enough. And then when he was about two years old, maybe two and a half, Zion's teeth began crumbling out of his mouth. And for any mother, this is devastating. It is scary, and devastating. His teeth were soft, like chalk. So that led me to...

Amber: It's shameful, too, because everyone can see it.

Katya: Yes, exactly. Exactly. It was right there. And so, that began the wonderful rabbit hole of Weston A. Price, thank goodness. I'm not sure how that entered my field. Again, we dive deep into this in the Confessions project.

The first thing that I realized was the connection of vitamin K2, which is only found in grass fed animal sources, and bone and teeth health. And because teeth form in utero, I had a fully vegan pregnancy, proud and vegan, hashtagged the shit out of that (*both laugh*). It made sense to me, and it was really humbling and really sad.

I began eating those foods myself. So we did, and I know people looked down on cod liver oil. There's a lot of controversy around that. But I got at the time, the best quality that I could, it was a Norwegian brand that I think called Receita. It was cold pressed, Norwegian, cod liver oil. So Zion was getting that, high vitamin butter, ghee because ironically, I had come from an Ayurveda background, which is a whole other story. And so slowly, we were introducing these foods. There's a book that I bought called *Curing Tooth Decay*, which is very Weston A. Price-y. And so then, after the kind of, like, the gateway drug of the cod liver oil and the ghee, then we started getting into organ meats.

And guess what? His teeth, literally, remineralized. It was extraordinary. Of course, we couldn't bring back that which already had crumbled, and his teeth were kind of still, like, yellowish, but they were strong.

Amber: Yeah, luckily they were.

Katya: Making up for a whole lot of time because now he has a mouthful of metal caps.

Amber: Oh, on his big boy teeth?

Katya: Well, he's...

Amber: I mean, his adult teeth?

Katya: Not yet. Yeah, like I don't, I'm not gonna go too deep into it. But, you know, people can make their own conclusions about this. But my parents actually took him to a dentist in Canada.

Amber: The older boys stayed with your parents for a while, while you were figuring out where you were going to land in Costa Rica.

Katya: That's right. So it wouldn't have been my choice. I would have preferred to find a holistic dentist, that I just have to trust that this is part of my journey, and I have to forgive myself for that.

Amber: Parenting (*Amber laughs*), all the overwhelming choices we make.

Katya: Mm0hmm.

[1:26:08]

Amber: So, okay, how long were you eating this way before you came out on Instagram that you were?

Katya: Yeah, that's, that's a great one. So I was honest because, like, as soon as his teeth started remineralizing, and I could see, I'm telling you, I could see the difference. I was like, well, I can't. I cannot be living a lie. I cannot still be sharing all my... and I was still cooking plant-based mostly for us, because that's just been the way for so long.

I made a couple of posts about Zion's teeth, and I was flooded with messages that were really beautiful and supportive. Also messages from dentists who just were saying, "You're stupid for not taking him to the dentist and for trying to fix it with nutrition. You're a negligent mother for attempting that." And then the majority of the energy pouring into the confession was from the angry vegans. Because my entire following had grown to, I think the top was like 124,000-125,000. And almost overnight, it went down by like thousands and thousands and thousands of people.

Yeah, and the hate poured in. I mean people took the time to write really, really mean emails even. Like they found my email and sometimes they were people with really big followings, too. Not going to name, but there's one mama in Hawaii, who has a really big following, really beautiful photos, really, like, inspirational content. And she just tore me a new one. She wrote me an email that was so long, about how dare I do this to the, you know, the vegan, I was the beacon of the vegan community and now I'm spreading misinformation (*Katya laughs*).

Amber: I mean, so many, I've seen so many people go through this with their kids' teeth. And I've had people privately write me, and be like, "Oh my gosh, you know, I'm not... I'm too afraid to say anything, but we had to stop being vegan because of my daughter's teeth." And then I've seen people, you know, come out and be open about that journey, always based on their kids teeth.

I have friends who remineralize their kids teeth with nutrition like you did.

[1:28:43]

Amber: But man, it's so interesting, isn't it, how our diets become our identities.

And since I found prometabolic — which seems like you and I stumbled upon this at the same time. My most recent podcast episode with Kymber Maulden is all about this. You interview Kimber for The Confessions — I have had this little tag line in my head, which I don't think I've seen anyone share, and I'm like, why isn't this everyone's like tagline, which is: eat for your biology, not your ideology. *(both laugh)*

So how did you find, then? So I stopped being vegan 15 years ago. We talk more about this in my interview for Confessions. And then I had 15 years of incorporating animal foods but not eating for my metabolism. That's just a few months old for me and has made just as big of a difference in the shift in my health as when I stopped being vegan.

So how did you find prometabolic and how has it been affecting your life?

Katya: Oh my gosh, I love it so much. I've always been a foodie. I love food. I love good food. And because we're such multifaceted beings who have to do it all and sit in front of the computer for so long, you and I talked about this, too, it's really easy to kind of come around and realize that it's been hours since you'd eaten last. And then you're shaky and you're hungry, and you didn't do any food prep. So you go to the fridge, you grab a piece of cheese or, you know, whatever, make a sort of a quick sandwich. And so it goes for many people.

And so, combining the ancestral ways of nourishing ourselves, which includes bone broth, fermented foods, maybe I'll just stick to those two examples for now, requires preparation, requires a little bit of forethought. And that's what's needed to eat a prometabolic or to live a prometabolic lifestyle, which is really great because it's anti-diet. It is not a diet, and I love that so much. Whether we've ever been vegan or plant-based or whatnot, even if you never were, odds are, if you're listening to this, you've experimented with restrictive diets and something.

Amber: Are you a modern woman? *(Amber laughs)*

Katya: Yes, yes, yes. Check, check, check, check. So I just love the freedom within prometabolic eating because you just eat a little bit of everything. And so I eat honey, every time I have a meal, I try. I really love hot foods, and they really work with my constitution.

So Nikki has been so amazing at making all kinds of soups and broths, and like, we just always have broths going, Yeah, we're doing a lot of things was organ meats. And I've mastered a liver pate recipe that everyone loves, that we sneak into everything. And so food is just something that I think

about a lot, but I don't obsess about it as much as I did before because there are these beautiful staples that keep us so deeply, deeply nourished and that helped curb any cravings. So maybe that's kind of what I want to say about that.

And then what I really love, too, is that there's this beautiful thread woven through all of this food preparation and food, like it feels poetic to me, that it is also ancestral nourishment. And you know, I'm really passionate about talking about ancestral healing.

Anytime we are fermenting vegetables, there's fermented foods in every culture, anytime we are preparing bones for broth, or just looking for scraps of veggies for a broth. We are, this our ancestors talking through us and nourishing us. And I really, I really, really love that, what nourishment looks like in our home now.

Amber: Yeah, it feels so good. Even though it does take time, it takes mental energy, it takes us slowing down that most of us are uncomfortable with. But it feels so good, when you're really taking care of yourself and your loved ones. It's just...I found it to be so worth it.

[1:33:33]

Amber: What inspired Confessions of a Well Nourished Woman? This is a huge project. How did it evolve? Like, what was the moment where you're like, "I need to gather women and have conversations about this."

Katya: Mm hmm. Yeah, thank you so much for going there with me.

So two years ago, the idea for Matriarch Collective came to me at a really uniquely pivotal time on the planet because when the pandemic — or some people say plandemic, whichever you want to subscribe to. It was just kind of happening, began happening. And we all were in our homes. We didn't know what this was, but we knew we wanted to gather.

And so Matriarch Collective was, it started out as a collection of interviews and talks and classes by women who I thought were true example of a modern matriarch or a powerful woman. And these conversations centered around the things that we wish our mothers would have taught us, our foremothers, but they didn't. You and I had a really powerful episode. And I realize that having kind of like a set container, like a collection, really worked beautifully. And then we wanted to keep having those conversations. So that's how Matriarch Village, you know, was born.

And so I felt two years later now that there's another container, like the 2.0 version of that, that was needed. And so, yes, it's good to be having these kind of scattered conversations here and there, but I wanted impact, and I wanted the context, and I wanted women to be able to connect the dots in a way that they maybe haven't heard before, which is why, even in this conversation, we're talking about nourishment, we're talking about sex and pelvic floor health, and all these things that you'd be surprised, right, that many women don't think are connected.

And so The Confessions is a project that I'm ready for because I feel strong enough to withstand the shitstorm (*Katya laughs*) that comes with having these conversations. I wasn't ready to truly come

out. I wasn't ready to take pictures on my Instagram where I'm holding a tray of bone marrow bones. Now I am. *(both laugh)*

And yeah, so it's a really exciting project because I started gathering confessions of women who were vegan, and then, yeah, just like me, they each had a story of healing. But then I realized that it's so much bigger than that. I didn't want this collection to be just a collection of stories of how my kids' teeth are falling out, and I stopped being vegan, because when we talk about being "ex"- something, we're not necessarily talking about, like, what's next, right? And so are we going to swing to the polar opposite of that and going to full carnivore diet, which is still restrictive? Are we doing keto, which is also, can be quite intense? So I wanted to be in a position where not only am I talking about the ex-vegan journey, but also giving this really grounded perspective on what we do now.

Yeah, and that's where prometabolic comes in and all these extraordinary women, like Carly Rae and Kimberly Ann Johnson and Rachelle Garcia Seliga, and so many others, who actually know they won't — and Kelly Brogan, as well — they won't even work with someone who's not willing to eat at least a tiny bit of animal foods.

[1:37:52]

Amber: Yeah, and you're even bringing it a little bit beyond food and nourishment, too, like, you interviewed Mikayla, who was on my podcast a couple episodes ago. Amazing. You guys' talk about sex and psychedelics.

Katya: Honestly, it is one of my favorite conversations I've ever had with anybody, ever.

Amber: Yeah, me too, when she was on my show. Love her.

Katya: Oh, it was amazing! It was amazing.

Amber: Yeah, so you're focusing on nourishment in a really big picture sense. I can't wait to watch it all. I thought that Matriarch was a brilliant idea, and I loved the way it worked. I loved, once I was in, just scrolling through and "Oh, yes, I want to watch this interview. Oh, yes. I want to hear what this person has to say." And there's a lot, too. There's like, bang for your buck.

So how does this work? Like, let people know, if they're interested in Confessions, what that looks like.

Katya: Yeah, yeah. So this time, we're doing it even better. I am getting our team to kind of cut up each of the person segments because we do dive so deep into 15-20 minute kind of lessons. And so there is a beautiful, it's essentially a really beautiful course that you're getting for \$97, if you're listening to this before the end of April. After that, it's a bit more expensive, but so worth it.

I mean, if you were to get a consultation with any one of these brilliant women, it would be, you know, that price or more. So it's like thousands of dollars of value. And we're going to put it on sale probably twice a year, as well. So, yeah, whenever you're listening to this talk, it's definitely meant to be super affordable because everybody needs this. If you're living in a female body, or if you love

someone in a female body, they need to have these conversations? So yeah, it's a beautiful course. We talk about deep nourishment in every way, and it's really entertaining, too.

I mean, these topics can get quite heavy. And for me, it was heady, and steeped in shame, because we realized maybe we had been doing it wrong, so to speak. But, you know, you and I are both so passionate about story medicine. I really believe that is how we learn best. And so yeah, there's something for everyone. And really, really beautiful and juicy topics are covered. So yeah, psychedelics, sex, pelvic bowl, health and recipes.

Amber: Yeah, because what I think is so brilliant about this way of doing it, too, is that — I mean, I love online courses. I definitely take a lot of them, but I also love conversational learning. Like, obviously, I have a podcast and things just come through in conversation that don't come through when it's one person speaking into their computer. And things come through stories in a way that they don't when you're just giving facts.

Katya: They land completely differently for us.

Amber: Yeah. And so, it's basically this giant library of conversations.

Katya: Yeah, and you can browse topics and go by speaker.

Amber: And then with Matriarch, at least, there was no, there's just like all these bonuses and extras and live meetups on Zoom and like, really, very well done. You can tell you put your whole heart and soul into it. Amazing connections happening. I found so many new people and friends through Matriarch. So I am just honored to be a part of it. Thank you so much, and I'm so glad you and I finally had this conversation for Medicine Stories, too.

[1:42:03]

Katya: I love that so much. Oh, I should add: so we're constantly like, "Oh, you know, let's make sure that the Confessions is really, you know, easeful, and not as intense as it was," because it was essentially a festival. I put on an online festival last time. But of course, we're adding more layers and more complexity, but it's so much fun because Nikki and I are co-teaching a masterclass. She's mostly doing the teaching, I'm just going to crack jokes, which is going to be called "Cosmic Meal Plan for Picky Eaters," I think. Something like that. Because she's honestly like, she's just so brilliant with the way that she feeds our little tribe of little kids.

And I think we're also going to have a virtual dinner party. There are a couple of chefs that I'm obsessed with, with whom I'm in conversation with. And so we were talking about doing, like, a ritual cooking class where you could have ingredients ahead of time prepared. And we're going to drop in and do a beautiful prayer and actually cook together. I'm really looking forward to that.

Amber: Yay! I'm excited to learn from Nikki, too, because hearing you talk about the way she comes up with food for the kids, that's what I need. And that's... I mean, I need recipes. I need people being like, "Here. This is how you do it." Like, I just don't have that particular genius in the kitchen, so I'm really looking forward to that.

Katya: Yeah, yeah, me too. And like, honestly, there's so many times that I come up around dinnertime and I look, I'm like, "How did you? How did you get them to eat this? Like, they're all, they're all eating it, and they're not saying anything. How did you do that?"

And even more than recipes, part of her genius is telling you straight up how she makes it and the variations because sometimes we can get paralyzed if we kind of see a list of ingredients. You're like, "Well, I'm not going to even attempt to make this, unless I have every single thing on the list." So what I love is that she really teaches like the basic concept, and then whatever you have in the fridge you can, like template it from.

Amber: Yeah, I can't wait. I'm so excited for this. And when I first saw you posting about it. I was like, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! And as it builds, you know, I've been, I've been, like, promoting it in my stories, because I just know. I mean, the feedback I'm getting from my episode with Kymber is so overwhelming. It's crazy how uninformed we are, how far astray we've gone from ancestral and biological wisdom when it comes to nourishing ourselves. And so, I just... my heart is in this. My heart has been in this for 15 years since I first transitioned from a vegan diet and really started being wildly curious about what true nourishment is.

Katya: Yeah, what are some of the things that people are saying?

Amber: Just that either they, this is new to them, and they're like, "I literally cried listening, because this is what I want in my life. And I've been so confused." Something that I said in that episode, and this is something that my husband, Owen, said to me, too, is that, "Everything I've ever heard about food and nutrition that did or did not make sense to me, makes sense within the prometabolic framework." And I had someone write the exact same thing to me. She's like, "Once I found that it was like, everything that had been confusing, became clear." And someone else, what did she write about, like clearing up her Hashimoto's? I mean, it's just extreme gratitude for being introduced to a way of eating based on biology, not ideology.

And I feel like, I mean, I have been talking about nourishment for 15 years online. I told you in my talk with you that everything I do online now can be traced back to my first blog in 2008, called *Nourished Mother*. I mean, like, here, I still am. And there's so much more information now, and so many women who are smarter and more experienced than I am. And so I love being — this is what I think of my role as a podcast host is — just being a connector, a bridge between people and other people, between people and ideas. And I'm just, I'm so glad you're doing all the work for this, so I don't have to, but I can just send people over to it.

Katya: But isn't it so cool how as the consciousness rises, it's like after a rain. There's like all these mushrooms popping up at the same time. We're all talking about this at the same time. I had no idea that Rachelle and Carly were planning that class, and they had been planning it, actually, for more than a year. It just so happened with this beautiful synchronicity that we're all having this conversation. So clearly, this is the healing that we're all longing for, and the prayer is being answered.

Amber: Yeah, I'm going to say one more thing, too, that I've said a number of times on this show, which is that if we are trying to connect with our ancestors, be in ancestral remembrance, we need to be doing things that our ancestors would recognize. And so this deep nourishment with animal

foods, absolutely, like 100% of our ancestors, unless you happen to have a vegan parent, would recognize this.

Katya: There's something else that I recently heard that landed so deeply, it's that the opposite of holding on isn't letting go, it's digestion. And I love that so much. We focus on like, cleansing, you know, and just ridding, shedding, letting go, or purging all of this stuff. And I just think that's such a beautiful way to think about the way we move through the world is to digest.

And our body, our ancient body, brilliant body, knows what to do with bone broth. When we nourish ourselves with, yeah, with sacred animal foods, there is a digestion and a kind of calming to the nervous system and a deep nourishment that happens in a way that our ancestors would have recognized.

Amber: Digesting, metabolizing, integrating, composting, making sense of and utilizing, optimally, what we take in. That simple (*Amber laughs*). Let's do the things we can do to most best support that system.

Katya: I love it. It's so good talking to you, always so yummy. I just love you so much.

Amber: I love you, too, Katya! Thank you for being such a brilliant fire of love and energy and goodness and care and compassion.

Katya: Same time next year (*Katya laughs*)?

Amber: Anything you do, Katya, I'm there.

[Outro]

[1:49:49]

Amber: Okay, another super long info packed interview for you all. Thank you so much for listening to the end.

So, of course, in show notes and anything that's ever mentioned in this podcast that has a link there will be a link. And at the top is going to be the link to access the confessions and also, the free cosmic meal plan for picky eaters masterclass with Katya and Nikki, who you just heard so much about. And of course, Carly Rae is a part of The Confessions. So if you want to learn more about those pelvic tissues, I just think this was so fascinating, and I can't wait, cannot wait to watch her interview inside The Confessions, and you know, lots of other folks that you probably know, and many that you won't know. That's what I loved so much about the Matriarch Collective that was released in 2020 was being introduced to so many new people. And again, it's not medicine lessons, it's medicine stories. Let's drink in one another's life wisdom.

Okay, as teased in the intro, I want to tell you about the other, call it like a prometabolic “life hack” (*Amber laughs*), because it really is, that I hadn't started implementing yet when I recorded the last Episode 87 with Kymber Maulden, but I have since then, and it's made a huge difference. And I just talked to Kymber a minute ago to make sure I'm explaining correctly what I've experienced with this.

So this is a bedtime snack. It's a big thing in the bioenergetic, prometabolic community to eat something, a little something right before bed, if you're in the process of healing your metabolism.

So for me, you know, for decades, I mean, I remember like my mom saying this back in the day, “Don't eat four hours before bed.” So I was doing that for a long, long time. And what had been happening to me recently — I don't know how long it's been — but absolutely, waking up sometime between two and 6 AM. And what had been happening more recently was waking up at five every morning on the dot, in a panic. Not coming out of a weird dream, not related to anything going on in my day-to-day life or the state of the world, but like waking up with cortisol flooding my body at that time. So I now understand that that was because it had been so long since I had eaten last and that my blood sugar was freaking out. It was totally dropping, and I did not have the glycogen stores to release more sugar into my blood.

So glycogen is the name of when sugar is stored in the liver and muscles and people who are really paying attention to their blood sugar balance throughout the day and eating bedtime snacks will have proper glycogen storage. But my body is like not optimized for it because I wasn't giving it enough sugar/carbs for so many years. So what was happening is my blood sugar was crashing at that time of morning, and cortisol was spiking because of that, And I was waking up feeling like shit, and then being, you know, tired, and just feeling terrible all day.

So now what I am doing is a slice of raw cheese. I love raw, but any, any slice of any dairy. So Kymber said that dairy is a great bedtime snack because it has all three macros, plus calcium and magnesium and caseo-morphine, which binds to the opiate receptors in the brain and helps you calm down and feel good. This is why vegans and people say that dairy is like a drug. But it's a good thing. It's good to feel good (*Amber laughs*), you know. Those opiate receptors exist in the brain for a reason. We're not like shooting heroin here. So thank you so much, Kymber, first of all for taking the time to explain this to me so that I can be accurate here in this podcast.

So what I'm doing is a slice of raw cheese with honey on top for the sugar. And then, you know, whole good salt for just some extra minerals and deliciousness. It tastes so good. If you haven't done cheese and honey before it tastes so good. And at first, I wasn't doing enough honey. So I started, like, waking up later and later in the morning, but still waking up feeling like shit. And then finally, I just started doing, like, more honey than I thought was okay (*Amber laughs*). Enough to spread on one slice of cheese still, but like dripping over the sides.

And since I've been doing enough honey, I have been sleeping through the night. It's life changing. It's life changing, right, getting enough sleep is everything so that's been amazing. I've had a number of friends also do this, also texting me telling me, “Holy shit. I just slept through the night for the first time since my daughter was born,” or whatever. So yeah, that's my little prometabolic hack for you.

I will put a link in the show notes to Kymber's Instagram post all about the magic of a bedtime snack. And, you know, I hope that you all find the same healing and, like, sort of mind blowing discoveries

around biology and your body that I have been finding since finding prometabolic. And there's going to be so much, so many more little tips and tricks and recipes and medicine stories like this within the confessions. So, I really hope to see you there, and I love you.

(Exit music. Acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Closing]

[1:55:39]

Thank you for taking these Medicine Stories in. I hope they inspire you to keep walking the mythic path of your own unfolding self. I love sharing information and will always put any relevant links in the show notes. You can find past episodes, my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and a lot more at MythicMedicine.love. We've got reishi, lion's mane, elderberry, mugwort, yarrow, redwood, body oils, an amazing sleep medicine, heart medicine, earth essences, so much more. More than I can list there. MythicMedicine.love.

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" It's fun and lighthearted, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with both the medicine you are in need of and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

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The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her beautiful song "Wild Eyes." Thank you, Mariee.

And thanks to you all. I look forward to next time!