



Reverse Autoimmune Disease Summit

Dr. Keesha Ewers Interviews Michael Roesslein

Dr. Keesha: Welcome back to the Reverse Autoimmune Disease Summit. I'm Dr. Keesha Ewers and I am delighted to bring Michael Roesslein to you as today who is a functional diagnostic nutrition practitioner, a holistic lifestyle coach, and co-founder of the Rebel Health Tribe, which is an online based health and wellness education and empowerment community. He holds a master's degree in exercise science and health promotion, and he spent the last 10 years in the functional health space as an exercise coach, a functional health practitioner as speaker, a film producer, and an educator. And I am going to just let Michael take his story from here because Michael, you have a very compelling story. Why I wanted to have you come on this summit was to talk about how to navigate a diagnosis that has no cure in the western medical paradigm. I've talked about my story a lot. People know it, but that minute that somebody dropped that into your lap and then you're in family or in community with that person, there's a whole set of things that happen and I love how you navigated you and your wife. So, I'm going to have you start that story and we'll talk from there.

Michael: Oh sure. And thanks for the intro and thanks for having me here. This is really fun and it's kind of a new role for me being on this end of an interview on subjects like this; because I hadn't been through something like this before that I could talk about it. I was a practitioner for a while and I worked with a lot of clients, but it's different when it's in your home. And so last year actually about a year and a half ago, my wife had an autoimmune flare. I had reached out to you; one of the first people I talked to; they had misdiagnosed her with rheumatoid arthritis, gave her a little bit of steroids that went away. Oh, good thing that's not a thing. I remember that time your joints all hurt really bad for a week. And now it's gone and it's fine?

Michael: And we didn't really think about it a lot. We didn't really focus on it because it was too scary. Like, if that could happen, that's really scary. So that's not real. That's over there. Let's just do our life over here. And then last year, she got sick again and it got really bad, really fast, and her joints all swelled up and hurt. And you don't realize how many joints you have in your body until they all hurt. There are joints here in your collar bone. There are joints all over feet, hands; and she went from being very fit, power lifting, a nurse, 30 years old, very active; to bedridden pretty much; and in excruciating pain in two weeks. And it was terrifying. And at one point I had to carry her to the emergency room at three in the morning because I woke up to her standing in the room crying at the foot of the bed, like screaming, because she couldn't get back to the bed.

Michael: And that's really, really scary. How I handled it was full blown panic because I hadn't yet done the work that this forced me to do on myself. So, I went full blown panic mode and

stayed up all night for a whole bunch of nights in a row researching everything I possibly could about what I thought was rheumatoid arthritis. I read about 12 books, including yours. I emailed everybody, texted everybody, called everybody. We started throwing everything at it that we could; that I could find or think of. And luckily, I'm so grateful to have the network that I do and the resources that I do that some of what we threw to the wall stuck and her pain started to come down a little bit. Then it was finding who we wanted to, because this wasn't something we could just ignore anymore.

Michael: She did another little course of steroids. It dented the pain. And then she went off the steroids, the pain stayed and came back and got fierce. So now this was a thing and we hadn't had a diagnosis yet. It was still random connective tissue disorder. And then it was how to, where do we go? I know dozens of doctors and practitioners and she didn't want to work with someone as her lead doctor that was a friend of mine. She wanted me to not have a personal involvement in a way. She wanted me to be her husband and not her doctor, which is really, really hard to do. When it's someone you really care about and any practitioners out there, I'm sure you'll understand this, if you have a parent or a kid or a husband or wife or someone in your life that you really care about that gets sick all you want to do is fix it.

Michael: All I wanted to do was fix it. This couldn't be happening to me. This couldn't be happening in my family and my life because we do all these healthy things and I know all the right stuff to do and I can't fix this. So that means I'm worthless completely. And I can't teach anybody else anything. All of that stuff swirled around. And so I found a doctor that was referred to me by a friend that I didn't know personally that we did a phone interview with and it went really well and Mira felt comfortable with her and she wanted to run all the same lab tests that I had wanted to run. So that was a relief and more that I hadn't even heard of. And so, for me, my panic was kind of a little at ease that I trusted this person and her bedside manner was very friendly and very warm and very understanding, which for some people doesn't seem to matter, but for my wife it does.

Michael: We went to Austin, Texas to work with Dr. Alex Carrasco and I brought in some other practitioner friends of mine and they all communicated, and we made a plan. The thing that they kept saying that, you know, we can help this, like this can be reversed, we can do this. And it's hard to believe that when you're in it. And her diagnosis ultimately ended up being Lupus. And her aunt passed away from complications of Lupus and she watched that growing up. She watched her aunt 20 years on prednisone, 20 years on methotrexate and the prednisone started dissolving her bones and the pain and then the painkillers. And then she became addicted to painkillers. And my wife grew up as a girl watching her aunt go from being sick to being in a wheelchair, to being a painkilling addict in a wheelchair.

Michael: And eventually she passed away from a perforated bowel from the opiates and to shield the kids from the fact that their aunt was addicted to drugs. They were told it was the Lupus. So, she grew up, she has Lupus in her head as this boogie monster that killed her aunt. And so that was emotionally the most devastating diagnosis to get. It was like a

death sentence; any progress we had made, and the uplifting of the spirit a little because she was feeling better. We had this doctor, we had this team and it was boom, Lupus. And we were right back to- we're doomed. It took believing that things don't have to go that way. Like that's not the only way. And she's a nurse. She's an RN, she's conventionally trained. She knows the treatments.

Michael: Her rheumatologists were here's your steroids, here's your immunosuppressants. See you in six months. Good luck. There's nothing you can do. And it's not that she didn't believe or trust in the functional medicine side, because she knows; we're married. This is what I've done for a long time. I think it's different when it's your life. Well then conceptually, and she really put a lot of trust in things that she was trained, are not effective. And so that was big for her to do. And slowly we ran every lab test. The doctor, Alex, ran and we identified places to start. We had visible mold in our place. We moved and luckily, we were in a position where we could; we were renting. We didn't own, so we moved. Her cough she'd had since the first flare for eight months, magically went away when we moved and got some air purifiers.

Michael: So that was one symptom that was down. We started doing well, we have a sauna which you can see behind. And that became really useful for her. We found metal toxicity. We found the mold toxicity. She had hormonal cortisol shots. So we talked to Dr. Carrie Jones from Dutch and she, or Precision Analytical I think is the name of the company, but she does the Dutch testing and she said, go outside 20 minutes in the morning, right when you wake up and get the sunlight in her eyes to spike the cortisol to help with her immune clearance of the autoimmune. And so, we started these little incremental actions that we could take to address all the different avenues and all the different triggers that we had found. We started exploring the deeper healing work and she found a hypnotherapist that she really likes that helped her a great deal with like, reclaiming her own power.

Michael: We weren't scared as much anymore. And as the pain started to subside a little, we started believing that this is going to work. Like we can do this. She went on low dose naltrexone, which really was like another bump towards progress. There was a little bit of a rough titration process with that, but once she was on it, the pain was almost gone. She got back in the gym; they had told her; you'll probably won't ever compete again. You can't lift heavy. They told her you probably might want to reconsider your career. You don't know if you could be an ER nurse. Her whole identity was threatened with this thing. It wasn't just the pain it was taking away. We canceled the trip to Hawaii that we had scheduled because I just went through a hellacious period of six months of work.

Michael: You mentioned film producer. That project almost killed me. And this actually started the day after it was over. And so, there was no layup. Like there was no rest. It was straight from that to this. We were like, at least we're going to Hawaii. Nope. She got sick. So, then we canceled that. We canceled another trip. And traveling is something we love to do. So, traveling was in jeopardy. Her career was in jeopardy. Her favorite hobby, pastime, action she loved doing was in jeopardy. Her whole identity was in question plus the pain and the terror. So, I understand now how overwhelming it can

be. I understand what it's like to be the caretaker. I took three months leave of work and literally did everything from when we woke up until we went to sleep. I did all the shopping, the cooking, was managing the supplements, the therapies, taking her to appointments.

Michael: She did cryo-therapy every day for two months almost for the pain. The first day we went I had to basically carry her up the steps and by the end she was driving herself, running up the stairs, going there, coming back, being like, I don't think I need to do this anymore. I won't miss it because it's not fun. Gradually we started pulling back some of the things we were doing. But a lot of the core stuff is going to stay. When that all happened, it was right after this film project that I had put both of us through hell for a long time and it was like, well, at least

Michael: If it's successful we'll make this much money, or we'll be able to do this thing, or it'll be worth it when it's done because this or whatever. And yeah, I made a chunk of money and then I spent it all on this or most of it. And my first reaction was, this is some sort of sick cosmic joke from the universe that I worked so hard to get this thing. Then it was taken away and then my wife is sick. And then all of everything that we had just worked for is in jeopardy and taken away. And why is this happening? And then I eventually realized that was also the first time in my life that I could have afforded to take care of her. And sure, it was one day I got to sit in the glory of the film launch before she got sick and I had accomplished this thing for about 24 hours.

Michael: I think the universe just didn't want me to be comfortable with that. Now I look at it as, well, if I hadn't have done that and gone through that, I wouldn't have been able to take care of her. I wouldn't have had the same connections. The person who referred me to her doctor was Dr. Maya and I met her through working on the film project. So, it all had to happen the way that it did. And I mentioned the healing work. Both of us went through a lot with this whole thing and found different avenues towards that deeper healing work. But we each found our own and we're in much better, much more solid places now than we were before. And so now I'm looking at all these things that happened, kind of had to happen; to course correct us in a way. When you're not listening to the nudges and the signs and the suggestions in your intuition it gets louder until it shuts your life down.

Dr. Keesha: So, you just described- And thank you for sharing that. Your story is not unusual unfortunately. Gosh, I'm 54 years old and when I was diagnosed with RA about the same age as her, I was an ICU nurse, but you know, also an athlete, became very competitive, and I was told the same exact thing. All those years ago, today it hasn't changed. This illness has no cure. Here are your medications come back when you get worse. And oh, by the way, it's genetics, but there's nothing much we can do about it. Right. Because I had a grandfather with RA, so--

Michael: Her whole family has autoimmunity. So yeah, they said the same thing.

Dr. Keesha: My mom does, but you know, I mean, it's crazy. To be able to sit with that inside and go, oh, I'm completely powerless in this situation. And oh, part of what I've learned over my years on this planet is that any control that we think we have over life is just delusion. These kinds of things, like a diagnosis of cancer. I remember when my dad was diagnosed with cancer, I did exactly what you did. I spent several nights burning the midnight oil trying to fix it; find the research. I was immersed in the medical science around chronic lymphocytic leukemia, which by the way, he still has today. And that was back in 2004 and you know, this is the thing, we can't control it. And I think diseases like this, there's this cosmic, you say joke, but there's this cosmic blessing or lesson in it relieving us of the illusion that we have control.

Michael: Things become easier when you accept that though too; because resisting that and thinking you have the control and fighting the things; that's what made me crazy. I tried to forcefully defeat what was happening.

Dr. Keesha: Yeah. And then found out it doesn't work. I remember driving through Australia, we were in the Outback and I kept seeing this bird just come at high speed and ram at trees. And I was like, what is that doing? And we drive a few more miles and see this same kind of bird doing it at another tree, at high speed, long beak. And like I stopped, that was the Outback, so no one's coming. Right? So, we stopped in the middle of the road and we're watching. So, when I got to our destination, I asked a biologist there, we were at an astronomy class and I said, we've just had, we wanted to see what was in the southern hemisphere. And I said, we just saw this bird all day, like kamikaze pilot, right? And he said, oh, that's the Kookaburra. And what they do is they go at high speed and they ram, and they try to hit the same place in the rock of hard cement a termite mounds that go up the size of trees. That's where they build their nest. And sometimes they break their neck. And I remember thinking--

Michael: They break their own necks?

Dr. Keesha: Yeah, they break their own necks ramming.

Michael: And doing that, like what I was doing, and it made me unable to be there; in a way that was actually helpful because--

Dr. Keesha: She set such a good boundary with you is that like, I need you to be my husband.

Michael: It took a little while and some blow ups and some stern talking to before I listened. But yeah, she was. And I didn't understand it at first. I was like, why? Why? No, I could fix this. Let's fix this. Then I had to get out of the way. That's a good analogy. What I learned during all the panic is that we tell ourselves these stories of what could happen.

Michael: Like when your dad was diagnosed and you freaked out, what was about 15 years ago now if someone would've told you then that in 15 years he'd still be here, would you have calmed down a little bit?

Dr. Keesha: Oh, for sure.

Michael: Yeah. Then you wouldn't believe now. Only if I do this will he be, and then like, you know, and it's like what I learned, and I started as frantically as I was trying to learn things about what I thought was RA. I was also trying to figure out ways to like to survive and help my own, because I was diagnosed sort of PTSD. I had anxiety, I had panic attacks. I was waking up in the middle of the night in a panic. I had really severe depression.

Michael: My nervous system was like if something fell on the ground, it would take an hour for my body to calm down. It was so heightened and so freaked out. And the no sleep for long periods of time like is a train wreck for everything. And so, I was a mess. I was easily by far the worst off I've ever been in my life. And it's like, well, I need to be able to take care of her and do this. And now I'm a total mess. I saw several different types of therapists and counselors and people to help me. And most of them, I tend to try to like out intellectualize and then it doesn't work because I control the narrative in the therapy. And then it's like, well that was pointless. I just did that

Michael: And one of them though, one thing I took from it, I worked with someone who does somatic experiencing; Peter Levine's work. It taught me to focus on the present and the physical sensation of the panic. So, when you feel panicked, what is it? And it was my arms and my legs would feel tight, like electric, like this, like tightness and this pain. And she taught me to focus on that and to breathe and to just focus on that. Just focus on the pain, the weird tightness. And luckily as much as we hated, our brain can really only focus on one thing at a time. So, if you're focused on the now in the sensation of your panic and the breathing, you can't think about the 280,000 horrible things that your brain is worried about happening. And the emotions are just physical sensations. That's pretty much what it is.

Michael: And as I would breathe and focus on these things, they would dissolve a little bit. And then I would notice the emotion dissolved a little bit with it, the fear and that I learned to do that. And then one night, I remember the first night that it happened, I woke up at three o'clock just like every night. And then I would wake up and I'd be like, oh, it's only three I can go back to sleep. And then my brain would remember my life, what was going on. It would read like, nope, this is happening. All of this is happening. You need to be awake right now. You need it. And this would happen. And I would lay in bed until like 6:00 AM panicked about being panicked, panicked about being awake. And then at six I would just get up and go do my day. Well this time I did this thing and then I woke up and it was six o'clock.

Michael: I had fallen back asleep and I felt like it was like the greatest achievement I'd ever done in my life. And I felt so refreshed in a way that I was like, oh man. And so, like that one lesson I learned was that the horrible things that we think are going to happen that then totally dominate our entire existence; won't most of them, probably not. And if they did, they probably wouldn't even be as bad as you think. And we create all these stories because that really served us evolutionarily to be able to predict bad things that were

going to happen so that we could avoid them. But we live in a much different world now where there's not a jaguar in the tree. Every time we walk to get an apple, there's no jaguars in the grocery store. I learned that the things that I thought were going to happen.

Dr. Keesha: Have you seen Toy Story 4?

Michael: I haven't even seen Toy Story 2 or 3.

Dr. Keesha: You don't have to, but for me it was really good. I saw it last night and there's a line in it where there's a very fear bound little character that's this fork that's been made into a toy by the little girl at her first day of kindergarten orientation and she names it. And so, it comes to life and its fear-ridden all the time. And at one point it's running and saying- The panic is attacking me! I just remember thinking, that's so perfect!

Michael: It is, but it's the cycle. It's this, it just starts. Yeah. The panic attacks. Like that's why it's called that.

Dr. Keesha: But I love having 'it' attacking you. Right. It's, I'm having a panic attack; the panic is attacking me.

Michael: I was the fork; that was me. Just keep in mind if you're in this situation that these worst-case scenarios that your mind creates; one, it's supposed to do that. So, thank you for doing what it's supposed to do and then let it know that it doesn't need to do that right now and; two, is this presence. Like all these things I thought were super cliché my whole life, I'll read these memes of like breath and be present or be here now all the round off stuff that I had read, I was like, whatever. That was all cliché until my life depended on it. What we realize is that right now everything usually is pretty okay. I would be having a panic about what this and this, we're going to lose this and lose this and this is going to be gone while I was laying in like a super comfy bed in my nice little house with my little family and we had food in the fridge and we had all these things and I started to realize that like right now, in this moment everything is okay and it's hard.

Michael: I mean, this is all easier said than done. These are all things to practice. But those were my two main lessons was that embodiment practice of right now of the emotions in the body, and then the stories that your head tells you don't have to believe them, or you don't have to focus on them. She's doing great now, like three months. The pain was mostly gone at six months. She was back in the gym lifting heavy at 11 months. In May this year, 2019, she competed in a power lifting meet and beat her scores from before she got sick. And you know, this isn't some miracle, it's not, she's not the only one that's reversed one of these conditions or that has been able to live a pretty normal life with this diagnosis.

Michael: I don't even know how many things that you've had that are incurable. In this industry we all know patients and we all know colleagues who work with people and we all, like

most of the people I reached out to, their first response was like, well, first know that this can be treated. Don't believe the rheumatologists that just hands you the pills and tells you to go away. That's the first thing is knowing that this does happen, that this can happen, that there's now all of us working together have this blueprint and it's going to be slightly different for each person, you know, but there's the general foundational stuff; and then there's the tweaking and the modifying, which I'm sure you're going to be talking to people who have very specific niche little things that they're talking about that would be those little tweaks versus the foundational stuff.

Michael: But it is possible to do. It is and you have to believe that. I think the step is step one. And that helps through the panic. If me now it could go to me then and just say, dude, calm down. It's going to be okay. This stuff does work and you know the people who can help and she's willing to do the work and you guys have the means to do it; it'll be okay; that this isn't the end of your life, and you're not hopeless and helpless. Then me probably would have told now me to screw off, but there's a chance that I would've got through to him.

Dr. Keesha: My patients that I do deep immersion trauma where it can retreat settings, you know, oftentimes when I'm working with them we first get them feeling in their body and then understand like what's the messages being told and reframe it, build new neural pathways in the brain. But one of the things I do with them is have them actually create and meet their older and wiser self. Your future self that can come back to you and say that. And it's really remarkable how healing that is. And you know, maybe you would have told them to get bent. To have that relationship, we know with quantum physics now that it's now being said that this is not theoretical anymore, that there are multiverses; that somewhere out there there's a Keesha doing really well and there's one that's probably pretty wicked and there's another one-- We're living in these alternate realities.

Dr. Keesha: And so, it's pretty easy to conceptualize that time is not linear; that we don't have to have it go a to b to c to do. We can meet the person. I started off Solving the Autoimmune Puzzle with my biggest nightmare is meeting the person I was meant to become and having that not meet, right? Not match. And so you know, it's like meeting the person that you're meant to become and having a dialog and reverse engineering is how we accomplish anything is you first have to be able to say what is the reality that I want right now? And then reverse engineer it. So why don't we do that with our ancient self, right? Our older, wiser self. And so, cartoons are like a great place that I go to. So, I was just thinking about Pocahontas and Grandmother Willow, you know, Grandmother Willow is this really great archetype of the krone that is able to tell this, the younger version, you know, wisdom that she's incapable of having in that moment. And that's what disease is actually the call to action to get is that's how you get your wisdom is through this process if you're willing to, and if you're willing to integrate. I think it's a beautiful story that you've unfolded and what has come to pass in your family as a result of this giant catastrophe.

Michael: I love the cartoons too. I think everybody should watch more cartoons. And it's also to appreciate things when they're not super messed up too. We coast through those periods of life I think where there is no catastrophe, where there's nothing cause like something else is going to happen.

Dr. Keesha: Yeah.

Michael: You know, somebody close to you is going to die. Somebody is going to get really sick. You're going to lose a pet. You just lost your dog. And I'm really sorry when I saw that. And those things are going to happen and each time one of those things happen, it's like another slap in the face of like, hey, wake up; you're doing this life. This is part of it. Those things are all going to happen. We can't stop them from happening. This was the quote, worst thing that ever happened in my life and it also changed the course of my life in a really profound way that I'm really grateful for. And I feel like I'm better prepared now for the next thing that happens, but probably fall apart for a minute, but can build practices.

Dr. Keesha: That's the way it's supposed to work. Right? And I love Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey because he laid that out really well. He said, okay, so you get this call to action if you're willing to accept it as that she won't have the skills to manage it. So, you go find a mentor, you learn new skills, but then you have to integrate them. You have to keep practicing and you have to learn them. And we have this weird thing around emotional work where we don't understand that if we're going to sit down and play the piano or learn football, learn any other skill that's physical, how to dance, that you don't just get it like that. We have to practice our emotional skill building too, and you keep practicing, keep practicing. You master it eventually and then you come back and you can teach it to others, but then there's going to be a period of harmony and peace and then you'll get another, right?

Michael: That you won't know how to deal with--

Dr. Keesha: And you won't know how to deal with it. You've got to go find a mentor, learn new skills, practice. And that's called wisdom building. Right? And for some reason our over culture, the mother culture that we live in does not tell that story. When we're young, we don't hear it. And instead we hear about princesses getting married to handsome princes and living in castles in the sky and never having to work again. You know? And I think it does come as a slap in the face for a lot of people who have worked really hard and expect to have a reward. And that's that he expectation they get attached to. One of the things I love about something Buddha said, where he talks about impermanence and he said, all things that live must die. Everything you love, you will lose. I thought, why are we not taught that when we're children, right? Because it's true. So, if the capital T all things that live must die and everything you love, you will lose. And if you can like really to embody that, then you understand that actually life does consist of that so that when you're in the moments that it's not happening, you can be really grounded. It feels good.

Michael: You can go two ways with that, that is the ultimate truth. And you can go one way with it where then you're like, well, what's the point and everything's screwed and all this stuff and whatever. Or you can go like, well, I have these things now and this is awesome, so I'm going to focus on having them, which is awesome. And then when they go away, I'll remember how awesome they were instead of how scared I was to lose them the whole time. I have an older, I have my dog, I've had for almost 13 years, and he saved my life when I got him. It's been a really powerful journey with him. And that's scary. But if I didn't have that, I wouldn't be so scared of losing him. It wouldn't be so emotional.

Michael: It's always a pendulum, because he's awesome and helped me so much, and then it's going to hurt so much when he's gone. And if you're just in the middle all the time, you don't get either one. Like these people are like, oh yeah, my dog died last week, whatever. And I'm like, how are you okay with that? But it's like, because they never really allowed themselves to feel the other way. And I think everything in the whole universe fits that; the pendulum or the Yin Yang or the whatever. There's always give and take.

Dr. Keesha: Know that you're going to love everything. You know that you are love and then you're going to lose it. Then you can actually, instead of attaching to it and having it, like I expect it never to change, never to leave, nothing to happen to it. You can have that ultimate truth and then you can just appreciate the heck out of it consciously. And that includes your health, like we just have this also--

Michael: We just cruise along when we feel fine and expect to always feel fine.

Dr. Keesha: I think in functional medicine we create a false kind of hope in people where if you do this and this and this, this is the outcome that you can hold onto and expect. And then when they don't get it, they get mad, you know? And I'm like, why are you angry about that? This is what we're doing is we're helping your genetics to express themselves differently. But there, you know, it's not just about what you eat, it's not just about the supplements you take. It's not just about the building you live in or what your lifestyle measures are. It's also 50% about what's going on up here. And so, depending on what's happening for you and how you're managing it is going to affect every other part of this. And so as long as you feel victimized, you're actually going to up regulate everything.

Michael: The perception is what triggers the body's response to it. You can have two people, like I used to jump off airplanes for fun. I had a license; I had all my own gear. I jumped for three summers. I think I did like 105 or so.

Dr. Keesha: I did until I had children. And then I was like, I don't think this is responsible.

Michael: It's super fun. And so, for me now, if I'm on an airplane and I have a parachute on and the doors open right there, my body is like, cool, jump out of that door. This will be fun. Someone who's terrified of heights and terrified of flying and doesn't know how to work the parachute, in that same situation, their body would be like, what the hell are you

doing? Get away from the door and then freeze and panic and terror. And it's exactly the same position. And I think that that goes for anything and the more that we do the work that you're talking about and get those skills and do those practices. There are more situations in a scary door where you can be like, okay I got this, this is what's happening right now. And you may not think, oh, this is going to be awesome, but you also aren't in a full panic. There are so many physiological responses to panic and fear and all of that because it thinks you're about to get killed by something.

Dr. Keesha: There was one other interesting component to this that has just been brought up in my head and that is that we have an expectation that we won't get sick. And that really interesting. I was giving a talk down in Austin at Paleo FX last year and I remember I said from stage, I'm really curious about this and I want to hear answers back from you guys. Where did we ever hear and begin to believe that children are not supposed to die before parents?

Michael: Most of human history, like seven tenths of them probably did.

Dr. Keesha: It's just not a thing, right? That there's an expiration date on every human that is in fact in the same and that we're supposed to age and then finally go off into the next world. And that doesn't happen. Excuse me, rare instances. So why do we all expect that for ourselves and the ones we love? And I started really thinking about that. Where did this myth that creates a lot of death anxiety, and then in return, illness anxiety; we feel betrayed when we get an autoimmune disease, betrayed by our bodies, betrayed by society, betrayed by the government, the food industry, God, life, you name it; our genetics. That betrayal only happens if you expected something; like there was an agreement between two parties.

Michael: Yeah. That somebody ripped you off in some way.

Dr. Keesha: Yeah, exactly. No one's ripped us off. And when we get sick, and that's a really interesting concept that I really want to explore on a cultural, conversational level of why is it that we have an expectation that we are immortal. We're not, it's like arrested development.

Michael: The princess stories. It's our culture. It's a lot from our culture. I read a lot of Ram Dass and the first time he went to India, there's a city in India where it's known for burning the dead. He went there and he saw all these lepers and sick people and people dying on the streets. And he was, he said he, I think he was probably in his thirties, because that's about when he started leaving Harvard and going to do those things. And he saw all these people and he was like, man, this place is terrible. Why isn't anyone helping these people? What can I do to help these people? These people are so sick and dying. This is the worst place I've ever been. And he said, the funniest thing happened.

Michael: I went back there 30 years later after he had done his whole life of journey with his Miraj and these different teachers. And he said, when I went back, the place was the same, but it was one of the most beautiful places I'd ever seen because this is where

everybody went to die, and they had accepted what was going on in the culture. It was me who was scared. It was me who was uncomfortable. It was me who was afraid. It was me who thought that what the hell is going on here? People should help these. Like we should clean all this stuff. Like, why are they, and then I was the one that was out of place. I was the one that was out of step; and I saw that when I went and there he said, I saw Americans, younger Americans, walking around with the same look that I had.

Dr. Keesha: Horrified.

Michael: Yeah. And he goes, and I didn't even know what to say to them, so I just walked off. Our culture's perception of death and illness and sickness and I saw that you recently went through like a death and dying training. That's so cool. I want to talk to you about that another time for sure. Cause that's fascinating to me. He also says that his strongest spiritual work or practice is being with people when they die. And it's his favorite thing. It's like his favorite thing to do.

Dr. Keesha: Mine too. All my years in hospice were the most amazing; and ICU too, when I would always volunteer for the people that had to be taken off the vents, and life support was being turned off; to work with the families because it's like that's when everything's authentic. You no longer are trying to create a mask or persona or people to view you through. You just show up. And so, it's amazing. I call them Velveteen Rabbit conversations. I believe autoimmune diseases are the opportunity to get there, because autoimmune means I'm attacking me. You can actually take this as a death practice. Instead of fighting, fighting, fighting for my life what if we could say, oh, I'm actually attacking me. I'm killing myself. Let's work with that energy too. And be consciously aware of it, and then we can consciously live then the whole response cycle, much more parasympathetic than a fight or flight. You don't have to have the panic. I also love Ram Dass.

Michael: We could go off on that for forever too, but I don't know why he keeps coming. He's one of my favorites, but I don't usually bring him up in interviews in this context, but it just seems relevant. It's culturally something we avoid. We're not supposed to get sick and especially kids. And there are periods of history here

Dr. Keesha: [Inaudible] speak after he'd had his stroke.

Michael: He now views his stroke as a gift. He says that he believes his Maharajah gave it to him. They communicate and meditations and whatever. And he said it was a gift. It taught me how to accept and care. It taught me how to allow others to care for me; and being helpless because his stroke was really severe. He requires full care. Now it's been, I don't know, 20 years, 25. I mean he's got to be 90, close to 90 now. He said it taught him, he taught me to close my mouth. I couldn't speak. And it taught me to allow others to care for me. And now I choose my words much more carefully because it's harder to speak. And so, I have more time because my body can't put out words quickly. He said, so I don't say as much dumb stuff. That it was a gift and that it's not a gift you would have ever asked for.

- Dr. Keesha: Same with autoimmune disease. I'm sure you and Mira would never have asked for this gift--
- Michael: I would have done everything to prevent it from happening. I hope that this provided some sort of perspective for--
- Dr. Keesha: I'd like to just recap a little bit, listening to Michael that all of you that are listening a team is really important. You know, that you've put your team together that's going to support not only whoever has the diagnosis, but also the caregivers, a caregiver or caregivers that there is that support for everybody. I think that having that due diligence around that, making sure you get your rest. When I was in the ICU, the first thing I used to say to a caregiver that was doing vigils, sitting with a patient was when's the last time you showered? When's the last time you ate? When's the last time you went to the bathroom? What's the last time you slept? And if they actually had over eight hours on any of them, I would say, go, you're not allowed in this room anymore until you go get some rest. Otherwise you're no good to anyone, you know. And they would start to cry and say, no, no. And then they would go, oh yeah. Oh yeah, I can feel that. So, I appreciate you talking about how it broke you down to keep that kind of schedule. So, I just want to kind of reiterate that for our listeners.
- Michael: Yeah, it did. It took me a little while to get to the scheduled part. It was chaos for a little. I didn't have somebody walking in the room telling me to go to sleep, and you can't show up and help somebody if you're a mess yourself. Like energetically or physically or anything. I remember once I like started to fall asleep in the parking lot at the grocery store and I was like, what are you doing? How are you going to make it through this day, much less be there for someone who really needs your support in a whole lot of ways. And it's like the airplane, put the thing on your face before the kids, because you can't be a caretaker or support if you're struggling or if you get to make yourself sick. Luckily, I have an incredibly resilient body that doesn't make any sense as to, I haven't developed some sort of disease up until this point, but if I wasn't as resilient as I am, I would've got sick too.
- Michael: Then it's like, oh, well now we're in big trouble. So, take care of yourselves and just have patience with it. Like, you're not going to get better in a day. And when Dr. Alex said, six months, this'll be like a six-month program or recovery like six months. When she said that, like it was so deflating, it was like, oh my God, six months is so long. But that was 13 months ago, and it feels like it all just happened. Time goes really quick and it's just the little steps at a time. And the little things, you can control the little steps at a time and every little bit helps and then you can compound on it. As you're able to do more, you can do more and not trying to push, like you said, people with emotional work, like they want to like, I don't know, I, I can't meditate.
- Michael: And it's like, how many times have you tried? Well, like two. And my brain just goes really? And it's like, yeah, about that. Maybe let's try that. If you did, if you ever played basketball- Did you play in the NBA? No. And it's like, well, how come? Why couldn't you play in the NBA? You played basketball before; be patient learning new skills and new

things and new ways to be with yourself. If you screw up one day or whatever, or view yourself as screwing up a, just do it the next day. Beating yourself up and going through that spiral of like, I suck, I can't do this; that will perpetuate itself too. So, baby steps, don't get discouraged. Stay now versus the scary stories and scary future. Pay attention to your body and how your body feels over your thinking. I didn't know the difference between thoughts and emotions my whole life. I always lumped that all as to one thing and they're very different and you can stop one when you pay attention to the other.

Dr. Keesha: Very good. So, do you have any final words that you want to leave with people? How they can connect? We have all that information here on the summit website too.

Michael: Not really. I mean, Rebel Health Tribe is professionally where I'm at right now with that. We are building a new, so it'd be the first time we ever told anybody about it, but we are building a new platform; we'll call it a resource center or hub for all things deeper healing from mental, emotional, spiritual, subconscious trauma, all of that, which I'm sure they will see plenty of you there and that's being built, but that won't be now, I'm looking at the date. Probably March or April of 2020 is when that would actually exist because it's a monster of a thing and takes a long time to put together. But that will be coming at some point in the future. That's kind of the work I'm doing now. But for now, Rebel Health Tribe is where I'm at. We have some pretty good auto-immune resources there too; some of which feature yourself and probably I would guess some of the people that are on this. That's where you would find me. We have a Facebook group too, that's pretty active and fun. Reach out. I'd be happy to chat or share any of my resources that I've come across that have been helpful for me.

Dr. Keesha: Thanks Michael. Until next time, everyone.