



Essential Alchemy

The Ancient Art of Healing Naturally

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Jodi: Hi, I'm Jodi Cohen, your host and I'm very excited to be joined by one of my favorite people, Dr. Greg Eckel. He has spent the last 20 plus years developing and refining his unique approach to chronic neurological conditions. In addition to his experience in clinical practice using a combination of naturopathic and Chinese medicine, he has a deep personal connection with chronic neurological disease since his wife, Sariah, passed of CJD, a condition with no known cure. She was the love of his life.

He took a deep dive into research and uncovered regenerative medicine and the development of a brain regenerative program. In loving memory of his wife, he has continued to help others with neurodegenerative diseases, improve their quality of life and find natural solutions. Dr. Eckel is also a highly respected international lecturer, author, and expert in the integrative care for neuro degeneration.

He is the co-founder and owner of Nature Cures Clinic in Portland, Oregon. And is also appointed by the governor of Oregon, wow, and has served as Board President of the Oregon Board of Naturopathic Examiners. He has been a featured expert on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox television stations, and I'm so thrilled to have you here. Welcome, Greg.

Dr. Eckel: Thanks for having me.

Jodi: So I ask everyone, how do you define resilience?

Dr. Eckel: Resilience, I feel like you've got to put flexibility in the definition of resilience. So it's the ability to advance forward, progress yourself, in light of whatever life puts in front of you.

Jodi: Brilliant, that's really lovely. And it's funny, because so many people think of resilience as really worst case situations, like what happened with your wife or with my son, but I feel like it's even the everyday struggles. You wake up in the morning and you should exercise but you want to hit snooze. You know you should order the salad, but whatever else sounds more appealing. So, I know you have a lot of experience on this. Can you talk a little bit about how you deal with things when challenges come your way, both yourself and with your clients?

Dr. Eckel: There's a concept called equanimity. And I always I write a goal for myself on a daily basis of that may I flow water around any obstacle that arises. Because we know obstacles are going to arise in our life. And it's just what do you do with it? Like it could upset you, it could derail you, it could take you off of your path.

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience
with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Dr. Eckel: Or you could be the Aikido master. Aikido, if you're familiar with that, at all, is basically the concept of getting out of the way, behind, and pushing. So for instance, there's a small Japanese Aikido master and kind of the 240 pound American gorilla in his dojo. And the master says, "Hey, I want you to come at me with all of your force," and the guy says, "Oh, Master, I can't do that. I'm going to squash you."

He said, "Look, either that or you get out. You're going to leave or you're going to do as I say." So this 240 pound huge guy is coming at a kind of small, five foot four Japanese Aikido master. Running with all of his might and all of a sudden you see the master just kind of step out of the way, put his foot out, and actually continue the momentum of the big guy. And it's this huge, "BAM!" and big set guy flopping on the mat. And you think, "Wow, how did that happen?" and he said, "No, I got out of the way and pushed."

You don't meet that pressure. You can't go head to head with some of these things that come up in our lives because you'll get squashed. If he tried to brace for the big guy coming at him he would have been hammered and smashed. But the wise way is get out of the way and push. And so I always invoke Aikido. Now, I've never practiced Aikido other than energetically. I've not been in the dojo or the mat but I'm fascinated by the concept.

And I do a lot of energy work and regulation of Qi or energy, but it is on this equanimity, this ability to flow like water around whatever obstacles that arise. And I also sometimes will put in there, "May I have serendipity and creativity in creating a solution that's win, win, win for all involved." And it's by these words... these words are very powerful and potent of what we put out there. And so it's important for us to realize, like yeah, what we're thinking in there actually does matter.

What you're dreaming of, that does matter. And so if you don't like what the thoughts are or what you're dreaming of... because that dream becomes a reality. I mean, how do we create anything in our lives? Is, we actually have to dream it into reality. And so we've got to raise our own vibration and our own frequency to create at a level that we want to create. If we're getting stuff that we don't like, it's just learning to say, "Yeah, I'm not doing that correctly, let me change my path."

To bring this into a more personal sphere, you mentioned my wife, Sariah, that I lost three years ago to an incurable illness. And what I have discovered is my, not superpower, but my skill is actually being a trusted advisor for folks on that path. Talk about feeling impotent, as being a healer and provider, with your wife having a rapidly progressing dementia with no known cure, and not being able to "save" her. It's the worst feeling in the world.

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience
with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Dr. Eckel: It's humbling and devastating, all in the same category. The path that we went through, went from this vibrant, six foot one, dreadlocked woman, powerhouse of a soul on the planet to withered away in 18 months. It was an incredible journey and heartbreaking. We had five kids between us and as you mentioned, she was the love of my life. I actually thought she was put here by aliens because she was kind of the perfect partner for me on all fronts.

Like, I'd never spoken to another being on the planet like her. I was like, "How did you get into my heart at that level? I didn't even know you could get in there." And so here's this woman, and we had blended our families and created a medical practice together. We had basically moved into a new house and there was an orange plate that was missing from the move. And it was kind of the first symptoms that I knew something was up.

Sariah just could not drop this orange plate. Like, "What happened to the orange plate?" We had this colorful Fiestaware® and then it kind of kind of became the joke with the kids of like, "Yeah, what happened to the orange plate?" She just couldn't let it go and that was kind of the first signs of, "Hey, there's something going on." So when I looked back, I was like, "Oh, that damn orange plate."

But then you fast forward a couple months, and then it started becoming more and more, like my office manager, Chelsea, said, "Hey, Doc, Sariah just left the building." I'm like, "What are you talking about, she left the building?" "Well, she just walked out of the building in her white coat." She ran the gynecology practice here at Nature Cures, and it's like, "What?" And so I was like, "Well follow her. See where she goes."

Then that started happening more frequently and it got to the point of, "Okay, we've got to clear the deck. We're going on vacation. I want you to just clear the schedule. I don't know what's going on. Let's try to figure it out." Like, maybe on the move, it was mold in the new house or maybe it was perimenopause, or hormone change that was creating this memory loss, this really acute memory loss. We just didn't know what was happening.

And I'm running the practice, and then I'm caring for our patients. And then we've got the kids at home. And I just hit this kind of overwhelmed spot of, "Wow, I've got to actually ask for help," and I was not comfortable asking for help. It was such a huge... I was, "Wow." I uncovered this story from 10, I wrote a story when I was 10 years old and said, "I can do it on my own. I'm self-sufficient." It happened when my parents divorced. So, it was like, "Oh, my gosh."

Dr. Eckel: It was the most uncomfortable thing of, "Wow, I have to accept I'm not going to make it through alone. I'm sinking, can't breathe, overwhelmed," etc. And I remember it was, "Oh, this is a big maneuver. I've got to get into acceptance of, no, this is actually happening. And I've got to kind of out myself of like, I'm not going to make it" community, I don't even know who my community was.

And thankfully, I was pleasantly surprised. I actually did a GoFundMe page because we weren't going to make it. It was half the practice revenue disappeared. And I'm trying to find solutions of some really potential ominous differential diagnosis for a rapidly progressing dementia, which CreutzfeldtJakob disease is on that list, autoimmune encephalitis. So really, some incurable neurodegenerative states. And I remember I put out my story, and we got an in pouring of support from complete strangers. I mean, it's just so surprising to see who shows up for you when you really need it.

Jodi: Yes, who shows up and who doesn't? That's fascinating.

Dr. Eckel: Actually, it brings me a little bit to tears of just, wow, the love that is out there but you have to ask. Well, that really opened that up for me. So thank you.

Jodi: No, it's very hard for me to ask for help too, almost impossible. We can land on that a little bit. Like, why is it so hard for us to accept that?

Dr. Eckel: Yeah, it's like we somehow got programmed, like, "Well, it's defeat if you can't do it on your own," or this rugged individualism in the United States. In such an odd way, this process has really opened me up. I kind of say, it really cracked me open as a human being again. Like, wow, it's been profound loss and grief, it has reinstated my faith in the oneness of like, this is a cruel story and it's a story of redemption.

I have such an up leveling of my vibration and my energy, and my drive to help support people in very similar situations. And traversing that, making those paths of like, I had to kind of bushwhack through the wilderness. And it doesn't need to be that, we can actually support each other before we get to the wilderness. And maybe create some paths to make it easier, to lessen the blow because going through any diagnosis, in particular, those that have no known cure, it's daunting and it's depressing.

And so that aspect of, I didn't want my suffering to be for naught. So that aspect of being open, vulnerable, and willing to listen and just witness these aspects of resilience. I have no idea where it came to me, but I feel like I've navigated the process with grace.

Dr. Eckel: It's not always been pretty. But it's our human dilemma, and it's beautiful and tragic, and loving. And it has all of these adjectives that we can put on it. And it's mine, it's my story, and it's my path, but I'm open to sharing it.

I'm really grateful that you've got me on your Resilience Summit and we can kind of unpack some of those things. And in particular, in the neuro degeneration and the brain health front, for the pieces that I bring to it, and kind of what I've put the flag into the earth on. Of, I'm taking a stand for folks because there isn't a lot of support out there around these things.

Jodi: Well, I mean, I feel the same way, bushwhacking my way through it. Like that's actually the whole point of this summit, is I very much trialed and errored it every single day. And when I found something that worked, it was almost like I clung to it for dear life. When I realized something wasn't working, I cut it immediately. And so if you can kind of share, what helped you through this and what helps you to this day?

Dr. Eckel: So, in that scenario, I realized, "Ooh, if I go down, we are really in just deep, deep, dark waters."

Jodi: That's how I felt too because my daughter only had me.

Dr. Eckel: So it's like, "Okay, well, wow, I've got to grow up here." Kind of that moment of, "I've got to ask for help. I've got to put it out there. I've got to see what comes in." And in that acceptance of that, I don't know why it was such a big hurdle to ask for help.

Jodi: I think our self-worth is kind of tethered to this idea that we're self-sufficient.

Dr. Eckel: Right, which is so false, unless you're maybe homesteading. We can see that in the last year, in particular, of how interconnected everything is. And in that oneness principle, it's like, "Well, we're just pretending to be separate in this reality." And ultimately, it is, if you look at the whole entity of the universe as one, because it did maybe start from nothing into all of these 10,000 things in the Chinese medicine or in kind of the philosophies there.

So once you get through that hurdle of whatever that is, and everybody has their own story behind that as well, it was like, okay, a burden had been lifted, and I quadrupled down on my mindset. Like we were talking beforehand, this is a dangerous neighborhood to go into by yourself, especially if you're not being kind. And so many people, we all have this negative self-talk or self-criticism, or worst critic ever, is up in there. And I don't know where that voice comes from or the voices.

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience
with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Dr. Eckel: However, I do know is I thank them and I say, "Okay, but we're going to do this." So I really got into Qigong. Really surrounding myself with very supportive, uplifting beings without limiting beliefs, really working on my own limiting beliefs of, "It can't or won't, or shouldn't. I'm not worthy," whatever the story is of those negativities. And there can be multiples. I dug deep and it's, "I'm not turning back."

So it's been four years, and my practices keep getting better and better, because I know I've got to create a strong platform to show up in the world in a very powerful way for people because people are bushwhacking by themselves in the wilderness, trying to make it through and it doesn't need to be that.

Jodi: Can you talk more about Qigong for the listeners? It's like, "I've heard of that but I don't really know what it is. I don't know what it does."

Dr. Eckel: Qi is Q-I or C-H-I but we spell it as Qi, like energy. So that's energy. And gong is work. So if you've seen the pictures of folks in China out in the park, they're doing their Tai Chi, that's a variety of energy work. And so there's sitting, there's movement, there's walking, different forms of that. So there can be kind of like karate or judo, or aikido. These things can be characterized as energy work, because you're building energy and moving energy around you.

And so this, I call it shaky, shaky and I think it is the gift that I wanted to give folks is I've got my cloud hands, which is just movement of the hands and a universe stance. And then also, I did a Superbrain Yoga, because I the movement. When you're stuck in an energetic spot, for me, I'm a very physical being. And so I really just get up, move, and I'll move locations. I'll shake.

Basically, kind of just shake your arms and shake your legs, shake your shoulders. So just moving, that's literally, you're moving your energy, and you're getting out of a stagnate or stuck spot. That can change your energetic state. And you actually might be surprised at maybe the inspiration or intuitive hits, or the creativity that you get by just getting out of stagnation. That's a great practice. I do that every morning. I do it throughout my day. I do it before I go to bed.

It is just a component, it's a reset, it's a clearing the slate. It helps me get out of my mind as well. And different people use different things there, you can do mantras, people will 'aum' or say different three letter syllables to change their resonance. Or they'll listen to music, a lot of people intuitively just do it by, "I'm going to put on some good tunes and get my mood up." Or whatever those things are to shift your energetic state.

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience
with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Dr. Eckel: But the Qigong is one of the things that I've studied it as a student in Chinese medicine. I went to, into Chengdu province and then up into Tibet, we were doing like eight hours of Qigong a day. And the Jin Jang school, it's the muscle tendon changing school of Qigong. So I was really honored to learn a really amazing lineage there.

Jodi: No, that's amazing. It's funny, I definitely get up and move throughout the day, but I have a new puppy and just watching animals, they shake to reset. That's how they shift from sympathetic to parasympathetic, they just release it. Can you talk a little bit more? Because I know a lot of people, they the idea of meditation, but they struggle with the implementation of meditation, but movement they can do. So walk us through a little bit more about what that's actually doing in the body, how it gets us out of the mind.

Dr. Eckel: Well, our bodies are amazing. They are receptor sites and we don't really learn this growing up or in medical school. But the more that we can kind of get our apparatus in order, you'll get more and more information. I like this component Dr. Barry Morguelan has taught me, is these three statements of aware, accurate, and alert. The Triple A status of being. And you've got to clear the cobwebs out of the head.

So, if you're fatigued or you have brain fog, maybe you have an autoimmune condition, maybe you have a level of toxicity, you've got to take care of that platform first, but there can be some simple movement that you do. So what happens is our brain, our brainstem, and spinal cord are all floating in a solution, in our cerebral spinal fluid. So that apparatus is just floating in there. And so to move your body, how do we know where our hands are?

When you move your eyeballs around, that you're moving cranial nerves. So actually, it's like, where does the movement come from, and what's behind that movement? Ultimately, I would say, that's the true you. And that can get very esoteric very quickly. But the movement, because our bodies are meant to move, it feeds more information back into our brains and creates neuronal changes. So we're restructuring our brain, as we move.

My Qigong teacher, actually would treat stroke patients and those that were debilitated with spinal cord injuries, and just give them visualizations of the movement. And research shows this, they show folks that visualize the movement versus do the movement, versus not doing either of those things. Those that do the movement have the best... like, shooting basketballs, they have the best percentages. But you can also think about the buzzer beater, the shooting and visualizing you winning the game, and that is creating the same neuronal pathways as if you were actually physically shooting the ball.

Jodi: I do that all the time. In fact, I sometimes pre-pave my day, where I think about how I want it to flow.

Dr. Eckel: Yes, love it. Yes. And even if you write that down, it's even a little bit more because you're kinesthetically then moving it, and putting it in another region of your brain. I do it before meetings, I do it before interviews like this. I kind of do a quick shake and then say, "Okay, may the listeners and viewers get exactly what they need to out of this conversation and may the right words come to mind," and I share that with folks.

Jodi: Is that why journaling and writing by hand is better than typing on the computer?

Dr. Eckel: Well, for a certain generation, I think so, yeah, because we all kind of learn by tracing the letters. So it just puts it in a different region of your brain. Kind of similar with you and the essential oils, I used to study for my board exams with different essential oils. To put the thought, the class in different areas of my brain with different olfactory remembrances.

Jodi: Olfactory filing cabinet.

Dr. Eckel: Yes, I love it. Thyme and lavender, and rosemary. It's like, they were all on board in my brain. So that's the movement component of what it does. So it really does help us with our place in space. Our occipital region of our brains is our place in space. So it's proprioception of how we carry our body. So if you have pain, obviously attend to that. Don't push through pain. But we want to get your body back into full functioning so that as the information comes in, you can utilize it more. There's so much energy that is out here and you can harness that in your body, and then build it up. Then actually, your cup can runneth over and share with others.

Jodi: That's amazing. So aware, accurate, alert, is that like a different system or is it just that's the goal?

Dr. Eckel: That's just kind of a goal writing procedure of asking for those qualities in your day.

Jodi: Got it. That's awesome. And how complicated does it need to be? Like, do people just need to get up and move?

Dr. Eckel: Yeah, it could be just totally simple. I call it shaky, shaky, you can just stand up and shake. Like, up on the balls of your feet, just a little bit down. So just like that. And it can be just simple. It can be like doing the Hokey Pokey. You can even have fun with it. If you smile, you get bonus points.

Jodi: And my knowledge of Qigong is limited, but I remember there's a combination of pulling energy up from the earth and then pulling energy down from heaven. Can you kind of talk about that?

Dr. Eckel: So, there's this concept of the macrocosm and the microcosm, and this is from the ancient textbooks in China and Chinese medicine. And it's a universal concept of, you are in the universe; the universe is in you. Then I've even shortened that of, you are the universe; the universe is you. And what does that mean? It means acknowledging your connection. Like, we come from the stars, you can project right now, we can with our minds, think about the edge of the universe.

And if you can't do that, I would say you should try because if you picture yourself going up, up, up, up into the stratosphere, then you break through the stratosphere. Now we're in space, and there's a bunch of stars around, and then maybe we're passing the moon. We can do that with our creative minds. But that's how expansive we are, we can also think, okay, through the bottom of your foot, there's a point, if this was my foot, right at the ball of your foot, it's called bubbling spring.

Kidney one, right at the bottom and that's a revival point in Chinese medicine. But that's where you look at scooping the earth energy, Gaia energy, whatever type of energy you would to scoop into that point. Well, in that fashion, we can think, "Okay, let's go three feet below our feet. Let's go six feet below our feet. Now let's go down into the core of the Earth, where it's molten lava, and magma, just this energy source. We don't really think about that the core of the Earth is moving. It's a fluid dynamic, like, really hot core, right?"

We see sometimes here in the northwest, other areas of the world where there's volcanic activity, that comes from the center of the earth up. And so we can, in our practices, put ourselves in the universe, and then imagine the universe in us. And that connection, it kind of again, it's to help you, one, get out of just the confines of this small apparatus, the brain, and really tie into the expansiveness of what our minds are truly capable of. And that pulling the energy from the heavens, the stars, the universe, and from the earth up and bringing it into the body.

One way of doing that is you can breathe up from the earth, into your belly and then as you breathe out, right in the central core, breathe out up over the top of your head. And then you can kind of imagine a toric field there. As you're breathing in, and then out, you can go back and forth, up and down. Or you can bring it up from the earth, out through your head, and around your body, up through the earth.

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience
with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Dr. Eckel: So it kind of creates a little toric field around your body and it starts running that energy. And even just doing it two or three times, I don't know about you or you guys watching but just doing that, those two breaths that I did, I'm like, "Oh, I have a little more energy. I have a little bit more tingling here in my head and I've got a little bit more tingling in my body."

Jodi: And I shook a little bit. I always call shaking, discharging. Like, I feel it's either releasing stagnation or letting it go. But I love how this is coming full circle because we're kind of... you started by talking about getting out of our own way and getting into flow, and opening up our energy, puts us into flow so that things are easier.

Dr. Eckel: Yeah. And we can also invite that in. If you are feeling overwhelmed or the obstacles in life are getting too large, you can ask for support. You can even journal about it, write a goal; that those people that are meant to show up, show up in a bigger than expected fashion for you and maybe be surprised at what happens there.

Jodi: No, I love that. Are there any other kind of low hanging fruit, bushwhacking techniques that people can really benefit from right now?

Dr. Eckel: I think it is important, so just really invest in the mind and the mindset. You've got to reach for the energy, it just doesn't come to you. So you have to ask for it. Whether that's support or more energy, or clarity on what your next steps are, perhaps it's just writing on, bit by bit of like, "Maybe I can have an idea of creativity that will help get me out of this situation, or advance me quicker and faster, and even better than I ever dreamt of achieving my goals."

And so I really think we have not been taught how powerful we really and truly are, and we can make our dreams into reality. In fact, everything around us was made by somebody. And so that was somebody's dream, and that's how it comes to fruition. So I think the low hanging fruit is just realizing, maybe the Netflix binge isn't the thing to do next. Maybe it's getting outside and going for a walk or looking at that flower.

I love it, we've talked about it before, of going out and smelling the roses, right? I mean, that rose essence for healing post-traumatic stress disorder, there's some inherent wisdom in that. And one of the things Sariah was so... rose was her essence. Anytime we saw roses, we were out smelling roses, always paying attention to roses, she wore rose essence as her kind of smell. And so I'm always fond... I live in the rose city, here in Portland.

And so use your senses, use your body, it's really here to help us, and tune into it. Don't escape. Sometimes that's okay. I say, if you want to wallow in it, you have every right to wallow in it or do whatever. If you want to eat the bag of Doritos or Oreos, have at it.

Season 2, Episode 23: Shifting Energy States to Support Resilience
with Greg Eckel, ND, LAc

Dr. Eckel: Though, just think is that truly getting you to where you need to go? And it's a fine line in there. Be kind to yourself and go easy, there's not a right way or a wrong way to do this.

It's life, it's your life. You just realize that you have the decisions. You get to choose how you want it to go. And it doesn't matter what life brings out in front of you, you have the choice. And if you don't feel you have a choice, then you've got to get out, start talking to folks that can help you realize that you do.

Jodi: No, this was such a powerful presentation on how to surrender, how to move energy, how to ask for help. Is there anything we didn't touch on that you think might be useful to add?

Dr. Eckel: I think just one, I think the thing that comes to mind is that just know you are love and loved, and you don't have to do anything. It's not conditional, it's unconditional. And the thing is though, you just have to reach for it. It's there and you just have to invite it in.

Jodi: Thank you so much. Can you please share where people can learn more about you and your approach to brain regeneration?

Dr. Eckel: Sure, on my website is the best spot, its naturecuresclinic.com.

Jodi: Wonderful. Thank you so much for your brilliance and your time.

Dr. Eckel: Oh, thank you, Jodi, for having me on.