

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave Asprey:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. The reason I'm in Oman is that I'm presenting at an event for a group called the Young President's Organization of which I'm a member, which is a group of global entrepreneurs. And this event is specifically around consciousness and about having conscious business leaders. And I met a fascinating, fascinating guy here and decided, you know what, I am going to interview him. Because it wasn't a planned interview, but it was one of those things that just the universe lined up for me.

His name is Abdul Hayy Holdijk and he's a lecturer from American University in Cairo and a practicing Sufi and an expert in alternative and functional medicine. Very unusual human being. As you're going to hear on the show, you're going to love this episode. Abdul, welcome to the show.

Abdul Hayy Holdijk:

Thank you for inviting me.

Dave:

All right. Tell me about the course you taught at American University because it's fascinating and it's not the kind of course that I've heard about anywhere else.

Abdul:

I noticed that in freshmen students that came to the university who are largely Egyptian and who come from a very traditional conformist kind of setting, and they come to the university and they don't know how to handle the changes that they're going to be going through. Because they're going to be going to a Western, secular educational institution. And on that basis, I developed a course, an interdisciplinary course, which is of course a buzzword among academia. And so, I developed the course called Who Am I? And I tried to look at it from a neuro-biological point of view, from a psychological point of view, from a sociological point of view, from a social-conformity point of view. I had a section on death typologies. And the course as I established it maybe now 12 years ago, 10 years ago, is still being taught, although I've now retired from the university.

And now I teach similar courses outside the university to older students. And then I developed another course, which was also along the same lines, for seniors at the university who I found had problems adjusting to Egyptian society after having been educated in this Western secular educational system. And so I called it Integral Living. But both work on the same premises, is that you need to know who you are and to link that to the tradition from which you come. Much of Western education as we notice in Western society, was that you threw out the baby with the bath water. We, Europeans, were very anti-religious-

Dave:

Right.

Abdul:

... because we found that religion was a disaster when it came to social change or politics and things like that. And so I wanted to show that you could integrate what was the best from the Islamic tradition with the modern education and integrating these together.

Dave:

You were born in Holland, you're not Egyptian, as a child as I understand, you've lived around the world.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

Were you born into an Islamic family? Is this-

Abdul:

No, my-

Dave:

Okay, tell me about that. That's fascinating.

Abdul:

My mother was Lutheran, she was German. And so I went to, when my father was in the U.S., they'd sent me to these Protestant churches. And when I came back to Germany, they tried to get me confirmed, the confirmation, but I got bored. And so I didn't complete the process.

Dave:

You'd a problem with confirmation bias? Sorry.

Abdul:

Probably. But since I've been about 15 or 16, I've been very interested in Far Eastern Traditions and like I say, Europeans are allergic to God. And so I'm of the '60s, '70s generation. And so we were interested in Zen Buddhism, we were interested in Hinduism, Vedanta and things like that. And very early on I was reading Suzuki and a variety of other writers. And I went to university in the U.S. and when I graduated, I came back to Munich where my family was based and I started getting interested in more esoteric subjects.

And I did my M.A. in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies because my girlfriend was studying philosophy at Oxford. When I finished the M.A. I got fed up with academia. I didn't like it, and I managed an esoteric bookshop in Munich for two years. The reason was that it had 20,000 books on all kinds of religions and esoteric subjects and that fascinated me.

And I began to realize after reading a lot that to have any kind of spiritual progress in almost all the traditions, you need some kind of a guide because your ego is not a good guide. And so, I looked for teachers as many of us did during that period, and I couldn't find anybody, they were all New Age gurus who were claiming something. And one thing I had learned was that generally to be on the safe side, a teacher should come from a tradition.

Dave:

Yes.

Abdul:

And they shouldn't charge money for their spiritual instruction.

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Abdul:

So those were the two conditions. And so, then I was in Munich and this man showed up and he was gray-haired and wore white robes. And he was a German who'd been living in Northern Sri Lanka for many years, for 40 years. And I liked him. And at that time I was driving taxi at night and ambulance during the day, just to keep myself alive because I'd worked at the bookstore for free. And I met this German man and I said to him, "Can I come and visit you in Sri Lanka?" And he said, "Yeah, sure." And so I didn't have any money at the time. And about a week later, a man left 20,000 German marks in my taxi.

Dave:

Wow.

Abdul:

So I took it to the police and the police called me in three days and they said, "You have a 15% finder's fee." With that money, I flew to Mumbai, went overland down to Southern India, flew to Sri Lanka and spent nine months in an ashram with this guy wearing the usual white robes and doing 40 buckets a day from the well.

But he told me right from the beginning, he said, "I'm not your teacher. We can be friends." And we spent a lot of time together. He spoke nine languages, was very educated and very spiritual type of guy. And then he said to me, "I never learned Arabic. Maybe you'll find somebody in the middle East."

Dave:

Wow.

Abdul:

So I said, "Oh, I don't know." It just so happened that my best friend had moved to Beirut. So I went back to Germany and I got bored with Germany after having spent nine months in an ashram. And my best friend was in Beirut. So I traveled overland. And you must remember that in 1978, when I arrived in Beirut, the civil war was fully on. And at that point I had been for years looking for someone, I gave up. I said, "Look, if you're going to arrange this, you better arrange it from your side because I'm fed up looking."

Within a week, I get this telex, because at that time we had telexes, it said, "Go to Damascus to this place and see this person."

Dave:

Who sent that to you?

Abdul:

The guy who was my partner in the esoteric bookshop. Because we had agreed that if we heard about a real spiritual teacher, we would tell each other. Because we had seen so many false ones basically.

Dave:

Wow.

Abdul:

And so I took this telex, I got in the taxi from Beirut to Damascus, and these are international taxis. When you arrive in Beirut, you have to go from the international taxi stand to the local one. So I stopped the first taxi that came by and of course I didn't speak any Arabic. So I just showed him the sheet. I said, I want to go here. Now, later on I found that nobody in Damascus knows where this is, right? And he said, "Get in." So I got in and he drove me straight there. He turned out to be a disciple of the man I was going to see.

Dave:

Wow.

Abdul:

So when I entered the mosque, the sheikh, my master, he looked at me and he said, "I've been waiting for you." And he was one of the few Sufi sheikhs who spoke English. So he had a couple of disciples sitting around and I felt like I had entered another century. But I immediately, I sensed... I felt at home. And that's how I knew.

Dave:

That's a profound story. Now explain the different flavors of Islam. I've always been interested in Sufism, but what is the difference between that lineage and all of the others? Give our listeners and me more of an education than I have.

Abdul:

Almost all what we would call the mystical traditions are embedded in an Orthodox tradition. And that has a reason, because the Orthodox tradition, according to one of the great mystics of Islam, [Sedi Mahadina Bin Arabi 00:09:32], he said that the religion is like a shell, like a Walnut. It's rigid, it's inflexible, but it protects what's inside. And the inside is the mystical tradition. It's what gives meaning and flavor and nourishment. Okay? And if you had the inside without the shell, it would just simply flow away. It would not survive.

Dave:

That's very powerful. I like that.

Abdul:

Yeah. And so from my experiences that the tradition and the practices of the tradition have an inner meaning, not everybody's interested in it. So the outer shell is sufficient for them. And there's always

been an antagonism between those who are attached to the shell and those who see the inner meaning, even in the Islamic tradition. And even the inner tradition has different flavors.

So there are many Sufi paths and they express themselves or their attachment to God or their attempt to melt into the divine in different ways. The most famous in the West is the whirling dervishes. That was a technique. There are others who demonstrated their devotion to God by sticking swords through their bodies and not bleeding.

Dave:

We have North American traditions that are similar. Yeah.

Abdul:

Yes. In my tradition, the expression is silence. You wouldn't think it when I'm talking so much but that's the... Yeah, we do a silent and-

Dave:

Maybe the rest of the show.

Abdul:

That's a good one. The traditions are embedded in the society. It's unfortunate, and that's part of my problem with sort of New Age stuff, is that you've taken... One of the first things I read about Zen Buddhism that appealed to me was Burn the Sutras. It's only later that I understood, you go to have sutras to burn, right? And so the tradition are the sutras and yes, the inner tradition does burn that rigidity, but it doesn't burn it completely. Because the tradition provides the way, kind of resistance to your ego. And the ego is persistent.

Dave:

very much so.

Abdul:

Right? So, Otto Rank the famous psychoanalyst, he said, "Your ego is an armor." Right? It's a defensive structure. It has no other purpose than to defend you.

Dave:

Yeah. Keeps you alive.

Abdul:

It keeps you alive. And the more the environment is threatening, the thicker your armor. So a lot of the process of spiritual work is to make the armor very thin. You can't really ever totally get rid of it.

Dave:

Agreed.

Abdul:

Right? And so the second question is, who's inside the armor? So Wilber and his people, they say, it's growing up and waking up.

Dave:

This is Ken Wilber, for people listening and want to Google it or look in the show notes.

Abdul:

Yeah. So the growing up is to thin the armor, to do those things, to recognize where the ego, where you're stuck. Now you can only see the ego if it's offered resistance. So fasting for example, although it has health benefits, it also makes your ego appear.

Dave:

It sure does, right?

Abdul:

And so then you know, "I'm hooked there." And spiritual teachers will recognize where a person is hooked. So if, for example, you don't have any problem fasting because you've got practice, et cetera, your problem is somewhere else. It's maybe anger, for example. So he will assign you the particular task that will make your ego appear, right? So when I first met my teacher, very early on, he said, within the first week or so, he looked at me and he said, "Abdul Hayy never gets angry."

And I initially understood that as a kind of compliment. Because I'm a calm kind of guy, I don't want to get angry, I don't want conflict and stuff like that. And then I realized after I got married, that I constantly got angry. That I had suppressed it to an extent that I wasn't recognizing that it was there.

Dave:

It became invisible to you.

Abdul:

It became invisible. Yeah. And so we find for example, in prayer for example, the mind is distracted. So you're supposed to focus, but you won't notice that you're not focused until you enter the state of trying to focus.

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Abdul:

So there are a lot of these little things in kind of Sufi training, the ego... I mean there's one story for example of, in the old days, everybody wore turbans. It was the sort of the de rigueur dress for a Sufi. And the sheikh would take the disciple and take off his turban and tell him, "Walk through the market." And as he walked through the market, his thoughts would arise. "What are they thinking of me? I'm not dressed properly, who, I..." And so again, the resistance to change in the environment would make the ego appear and then you have a chance to do something. As long as it's invisible, can't do anything. And it's a bit like union shadow work and a variety of things that I do in some of these self-development things in the courses.

Dave:

That's really powerful. I'm not sure I understand the difference though between Sufism and the whirling dervishes, which are sort of the stereotypical Western thing and say a Shiite or Sunni or any of the other forms of Islam that I may be less aware of.

Abdul:

In terms of their external practice you wouldn't notice.

Dave:

Okay, so externally-

Abdul:

No.

Dave:

... they've... so it's all internal. Okay.

Abdul:

Yeah, and to some extent, during some periods of Islamic history, these people that were practicing Sufism became quite famous. They occupied high positions in the religious hierarchy, et cetera, and a lot of times they were regarded as innovators, people who were not really true believers and things like that.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

But in terms of their external practice, it would be the orthodoxy of whatever they were practicing on the external level because there was no real difference. Because eventually there's no difference between the shell and the nut.

Dave:

That makes sense. It's sort of like, I don't know how many wars we've had over whether Jesus is the actual son of God or they're one in the same, you can have all sorts of things, but they kind of look like Christians to me.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

But the nuance is there. So...

Abdul:

Yeah.

Dave:

Okay. I get it. Listeners probably don't even know this, but I was one class away from a minor in religious studies-

Abdul:

Oh.

Dave:

... in my undergrad because I'm interested in all this stuff. I always have been. And I never took the other class because it seemed like too much work. But I like that. So, you wouldn't know if someone was a Sufi versus another type of-

Abdul:

If somebody calls himself a Sufi, run the other way.

Dave:

Okay. So, what, am I using the words wrong? So,

Abdul:

No, you can call somebody, but a Sufi would never say that about himself. Because the position of a Sufi is a very high station. It means somebody who has achieved that which... union with God.

Dave:

It's like calling yourself an exalted-

Abdul:

[crosstalk 00:16:43]. I mean, especially the Sufi groups are very careful that you don't attribute anything to yourself. Here we're talking about pride, right?

Dave:

Yeah, pride and ego, right?

Abdul:

Yeah. So we're very careful because we say, there's a very famous saying is that [foreign language 00:16:58], [foreign language 00:17:00] means to associate something with God. This is the biggest sin.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

So that you associate something other than the divine with something else. And the basic instrument for that is your ego. And they say that associating something else with God is so subtle that it's like an ant on a rock in the middle of the night. It's so difficult to detect because it slips into everything.

Dave:

And by slipping into everything, it somehow removes-

Abdul:

Because we say that your connection to the divine, the only obstacle is you. And so as long as you are there, you're not connecting.

Dave:

This is why personal development work is such a challenge because it has inherent conflicts that if you're only in a rational mind doesn't work. And when you dissolve the rational mind, there's something left after that.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

So you've explained how this became your path. Literally, you downloaded it and the universe walked you straight in there, for lack of a better word.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

How common do you think that is for people?

Abdul:

Not very.

Dave:

Okay. Why you?

Abdul:

I don't know. And it's a very big... I mean it's one of the essential questions in religion in general, why is there guidance? Why is there not guidance? And I don't think it's an answerable question. And that's why when you talk about gratitude, we always say... I mean we have to be grateful that we met a master, that we had the opportunity to work on ourselves. No matter how far we got with it or how much we think we got with it. But that's an essential gratitude.

Dave:

You've taught for decades.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

Are you a master?

Abdul:

No, I would never consider myself a master.

Dave:

Would your master considered himself a master?

Abdul:

No.

Dave:

Okay. So at what point are you at the level of attainment of your non-master master?

Abdul:

Exactly. So this is a question we always get, "What level are you at?" I said, this is not a historical or scientific exercise.

Dave:

[crosstalk 00:19:06], right.

Abdul:

No. There's this one cartoon of Buddhist nuns sitting around. And one of them goes, "Eat my dust ladies, first to enlightenment." That's not how it works.

Dave:

I was joking around with my kids and I came up with my favorite sort of equivalent of that. And I said to my son, I said, "Alan, my ego is smaller than yours." Similar kind of thing, or a yoga competition which they actually have, you can't have a yoga competition because that's not what it's about.

Abdul:

One of the interesting things I teach, I don't know if you know about it, is a typology that I find actually very useful is the Enneagram.

Dave:

Oh, the single best categorization scheme. So talk about the Enneagram.

Abdul:

Well, the Enneagram, I just talked at an international Enneagram conference in Cairo. I'm one of the founders of the branch in Cairo.

Dave:

Beautiful. Well, define what it is. A lot of listeners may not know about it.

Abdul:

The Enneagram is a typology of human behavior, which is not too simple and not too complex.

Dave:

Well-put.

Abdul:

Because if you ask somebody who's in the business world and you say, "What's your disk?" They do these tests or, "Your MBTI." And they'll say, "Well, maybe-"

Dave:

Myers-Briggs.

Abdul:

"I am a this," but they can't remember. It's too complicated, right?

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Abdul:

The Enneagram is simple enough that people can sort of remember the nine types and there are some subtypes. And it's a very practical system. Now, I was fortunate that I studied with some of the people who founded the Enneagram-

Dave:

Wow.

Abdul:

... Russ Hudson and Riso, but then I found a teacher who separated the sort of spirituality of the Enneagram from its practicality. And I'm a pragmatist. I won't do anything that doesn't work. And even in Sufism, we're not going to believe anything unless you actually sense it or you've seen it or it's worked for you. Yes?

Dave:

That is so good.

Abdul:

And in the Enneagram, I keep telling people this in my courses, I say, "The only time I understood my wife is when I studied the Enneagram, because the pattern was clear to me. I knew her well."

Dave:

And you're still married? Or...

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

Just checking.

Abdul:

And I find it a very good method for understanding ego behavior. So even when you were saying, for example, achievement in yoga or enlightenment first, this is a typical behavior of a certain Enneagram-type, right? Because it's the external success, which is the driving force behind the person. And once you understand it, you can really understand behavior, even in terms of religious belief. Why you believe certain things. You get New Agers, "Everything is love." I said, "I'm sorry, but God created love as an opposite to hate." So-

Dave:

Everything not love [crosstalk 00:22:08].

Abdul:

... it's not everything love, right? So you got to kind of understand how that operates, and I find this method a very sort of quick and dirty method for figuring out where you're kind of hung up. It's not you. And one of the things I tried to teach people, because I do typologies in homeopathy for example. I say you have a skeletal system, so maybe the Enneagrams describes your skeletal system. Homeopathy might describe your circulatory system. So it's you, but it's not you.

Dave:

It's an aspect of you.

Abdul:

It's an aspect of you.

Dave:

The reason I've been a fan of the Enneagram for a very long time is that it's the only system like it that I've found that describes your ego behaviors when you're in your best state and as you start to decline. So if you want an early warning system when you're going off the rails, and it will be invisible when you go off the rails. Your friends might tell you, but you won't listen to them because you're going off the rails. So this is very quantitative and just tell you right there, "This is what's going on. You will do this, and you will do this." And it is shockingly accurate.

Abdul:

It's shockingly accurate, yes.

Dave:

So I love it that you've incorporated that, but now you've mentioned homeopathy.

Abdul:

Yeah.

Dave:

Now we all know that homeopathy is for witch doctors-

Abdul:

It's woo-woo.

Dave:

... who are basically... There's no molecules left.

Abdul:

That's right.

Dave:

Therefore you're just giving people water and stealing their money.

Abdul:

That's right. Exactly.

Dave:

Tell me where I'm wrong.

Abdul:

And that's why 400 million people use it worldwide. Again, I told you I'm a pragmatist, right? I have a Western secular education and I'm not going to use something that doesn't work. So the reason many of us start something like this is that from my German background, we use natural medicine.

Dave:

Right.

Abdul:

My mother would never go to the doctor unless you were dying. There were natural ways to treat you. And so when I got children, I wanted to treat them naturally. And I was living in Egypt where there's a real dearth, a lack of traditional medicine, and modern medicine has almost completely replaced traditional medicine.

Dave:

Which is sad, because-

Abdul:

Very sad.

Dave:

... some of the very early aspects of medicine came out of Egypt-

Abdul:

Of Egypt.

Dave:

... right?

Abdul:

Yes. And so what I did was, I started reading and we had a friend who was a qigong practitioner. We started practicing qigong and my daughter had a fever and he came in, he held his hands around her head and her fever went down. And so we understood-

Dave:

That doesn't work because it can't work.

Abdul:

That's right.

Dave:

By the way that is the scientific religion that has infected a lot of a lot of people. Okay.

Abdul:

Yeah, Yes. And so the homeopathy was because I wanted to treat the children and I read a book by George Vithoulkas who was one of the great revivers of homeopathy. And we started using it. We started using it for burns, we started using it for cuts, we started using it for all kinds of things, and I arranged for a charity. And again this was sort of the synchronicity of the universe brought me somebody who was running a homeopathic charity and wanted to find some people to teach in the Middle East, and I happened to be there. And so I gathered a group of 20 people and they sent homeopaths every two or three months and they stayed in our house and they taught us homeopathy.

Dave:

And you've studied this for 20 years now?

Abdul:

I've been practicing and studying for 20 years.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

And I've seen... I mean I've treated about 5,000 patients and I've seen cases of people who have been chronically ill from acute problems. There was a one girl who had been hit over the head with an iron

bar because she got between two brothers while they were arguing and for two years she was on heavy painkillers, Prozac, personality changes, et cetera. And we gave her homeopathic remedy and it just went away. So after you see these kinds of results, and it's not a question of... Modern medicine didn't know how aspirin worked for 100 years, right?

Dave:

But somehow it did work.

Abdul:

Did that prevent anybody from using it? No. So this is basically how... And I teach, especially mothers are very interested in it. I teach large groups of people. I've pretty much founded the homeopathic movement in Egypt.

Dave:

That is amazing. I will admit, coming from a family of engineers, that homeopathy when I was young was absolutely not credible and I became much more open-minded just like, "Why the Western stuff didn't work for me," and it wasn't until I saw a guy, his name was Tim Guilford and he had a stroke recently, but he was a Johns Hopkins surgeon. Okay. Surgeons are a different kind of doctor, and by the way, there's a lot of surgeons and other doctors listening to the show. So you all know what I'm talking about.

Your egos might be bigger than the average doctor, no offense, and you're good. You're also very highly paid and you trained yourself like crazy. And what Tim said was, "Dave, I'm an ENT surgeon and my patients don't get better. So I would have the same people come back two years after I cleaned out their sinuses and it would come back. So I got really annoyed and I started digging and I had to go outside my practice." And eventually he ran a clinic that did all kinds of cool functional alternative stuff, an early proponent of glutathione, but he also did homeopathy.

And I remember he gave me some drops. I'm like, "Really?," and he shook him up himself and all that, like, "Okay." but this is a guy who said, I will do what works-

Abdul:

Exactly.

Dave:

... and he gave up a surgery practice-

Abdul:

Exactly.

Dave:

... to do it. It wasn't for the money, it was for the results. And that was for me, the thing that made me say, "All right, there's something here." But to this day, most of the time when I take homeopathic drops for acute stuff, I don't feel like it does anything for weird interpersonal stuff. I had crazy results from almost of the more mystical, spiritual, emotional domain. Someone makes some things for me, someone who's learned and knows what they're doing, and then you're saying, "Wow, how did this just happen?" So what is going on after your 20 years? Do we know?

Abdul:

No. Part of what I'm going to be talking about tomorrow is that-

Dave:

Tomorrow at this event?

Abdul:

At this event, is that people are... I'm an academic, so I like to define my terms.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

So people are very sloppy with the words spirits, soul, emotional body and [inaudible 00:28:37], so I [foreign language 00:28:38] from my energetic practice and my holistic practice in my Sufism and [inaudible 00:28:44], I've set up this model and you'll see tomorrow on the on the slides what one of my Enneagram teachers taught me. "All models are false, but some may be useful," George Box.

Dave:

Well-said.

Abdul:

Right? And so I don't care how sophisticated your model is, it's false because it cannot encompass all of reality.

Dave:

Well, it's a model.

Abdul:

It's a model.

Dave:

Unless you have a life-size map of the country, in which case it's not useful.

Abdul:

Exactly.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

And so the model here is that the energy body, and this is traditional for almost all alternative medicine is a regulator. It regulates the emotional, mental, and physical body. So whenever there's a trauma to

any part of the body, whether it's mental, emotional, or physical, the energy body is the mediator. It decides on the basis of what it thinks is the best solution. This is what we call the self-healing capacity of a human being. They have fantastic self-healing capacity. The energy body has that capacity, but it also has the capacity to put symptoms where it will do least damage to the system.

Dave:

Okay. Yep.

Abdul:

Because it's trying to regain a balance. So if for example, you get a concussion or something, it will decide whether it's just going to give you headaches or it's going to give you depression. And in homeopathy, we have a hierarchy in terms of the seriousness of the symptoms. It's going to try and put it in the least damaging place, but it can get stuck there. And once it's stuck, what you really want to do is just unstuck it. And you can use Chinese medicine, Tibetan medicine, whatever it is to get the system unstuck and it will then do the work to unstuck itself.

Dave:

Because it's designed to regulate itself.

Abdul:

Because it's designed to regulate itself. So the remedies or the medicines which contain nothing, are a kind of energetic push to the system. And like in Germany for example, you can buy homeopathic remedies over the counter, and currently there's a kind of pushback from modern medicine against homeopathy in particular. But you can find, because that's part of what I do, You can find primary care clinics in Calcutta that treat 1.2 million people per year and they do satisfaction surveys on the results of homeopathy versus... And they get amazing results.

And it's not a perfect system. Nobody's said it was, it might not work for you, it might work for somebody else. But when you've seen it work, then you realize that all it needs is a little bit of a push and it starts regulating.

Dave:

And it works better than placebo in many of the studies I've seen.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

And then they're also the skeptic studies who saying, look, it doesn't work like that. And one thing I've learned after 20 plus-years of working with various people in functional, integrative anti-aging medicine and all that, is that there's three variables. Anytime you're dealing with this, there's the patient, there's the condition and then there's... Well, we'll call it four things. I said three, but there's the patient, the condition, there's the healing-

Abdul:

The practitioner.

Dave:

... modality-

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

... and then the practitioner. And how important is the practitioner in homeopathy versus other types of medicine?

Abdul:

In all medicine the practitioner plays a huge role.

Dave:

Thank you. Dips.

Abdul:

Okay. It doesn't matter what it is. And for people who say, "Well, it's placebo," I said, "Yes, exactly." I've been to medical conferences where I've been asked to speak about homeopathy and the drug company tells me, "43% is placebo and 52% is the drug." I said, "Well, why aren't you using the placebo?" Right?

Dave:

It's a lot more affordable [crosstalk 00:32:32]

Abdul:

It's a lot safer, right?

Dave:

Right.

Abdul:

So yes, homeopathy consciously, the fact that you would have to sit for an hour and a half and about all aspects of your life is a healing situation and that's placebo, right?

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Abdul:

Because again, we're stimulating the self-healing capacity of the body. So if I can use the placebo, why not?

Dave:

It would seem to be the ethical, lowest friction result. Okay. You can do that. But homeopathy, at least in enough studies I've seen, does outperform that.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

Is that because of the homeopath who's doing the work with the patient?

Abdul:

No-

Dave:

No.

Abdul:

... because we treat animals. There's homeopathic veterinarians in the European Union and you can see videos on how they treat impossible [crosstalk 00:33:18].

Dave:

That's kind of hard to argue with.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

Because animals somehow aren't very susceptible to placebo.

Abdul:

Now they're susceptible to patterns of behavior, but in these cases they don't know that they're getting it. There was an initial study once on mastitis in cows, and it's one of the big problems because you have to give antibiotics. And the European Union is trying to reduce the use of antibiotics in animals. About 80% of antibiotics are used in animals. And so, they just put it in the water of the cows and they reduce the mastitis in the herd by 80% and so, how are you going to argue with that. And we use it on babies and we use it on... I mean, there's lots of stories. I mean, I have lots of stories obviously, but they're called anecdotal.

Dave:

They're called-

Abdul:

... but the cumulative evidence is-

Dave:

... clinical observations.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

And this is one of the forms of evidence that I find most interesting. And one of the things that is oftentimes discounted because you'd have the drug companies tell you only double blind placebo-controlled clinical trials matter. And that flies in the face of science.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

The frontline part of the scientific method was, observe.

Abdul:

Observe.

Dave:

Right? And then hypothesize and test.

Abdul:

And reproduce.

Dave:

But when you have doctors doing this in their clinics with patients and saying, "When I do this, it works. I do this, it doesn't work," it's very useful information-

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

... and it's something that... it drives me nuts when I see that rejected. And so you're saying, we've seen this. So if you had a sinus infection.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

What would you do?

Abdul:

I would use a combination. I'm usually kind of synergistic approach, but you have to remember there's an Arab saying, which says, "The door of the carpenter is always crooked," which means he never treats himself very well.

Dave:

The cobbler has no shoes basically.

Abdul:

Yes, exactly.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

Yeah. So I usually don't use homeopathy because I reserve it for when I have something serious. So I use propolis, I use Buteyko method, breathing methods, I increase my overall immune system, because I regard colds, sinus infections, flus, as practice runs for the immune system. And one of the things we've noticed in alternative practices is if somebody doesn't get acute disease over long periods of time, it's a bad sign, unless they're extremely healthy, but that's not usually the people we see, or they have a chronic problem which is suppressing their acute immune system.

Dave:

That's an interesting perspective and not one that I've heard before, which is that you want to get sick once a year just to keep the immune system going.

Abdul:

Not that you want to get sick, but it's a sign that the immune system is working. So one of the things we've noticed for example, is that in children who are immunocompromised in the sense that they've had a lot of antibiotics, any kind of hormonal intervention like cortisone or whatever, they don't produce high fevers. So they get 38, 38.5.

And in healthy systems, we feel that the high fever is the thing that helps the system to recover. And if they can't produce high fevers, we feel that their immune system is not really up to scratch. And so what happens is that if you give homeopathic remedies, oftentimes they'll get a high fever because you're stimulating the immune response. And if you understand how to deal with it and you don't see it as a threat, then you can very quickly recover the immune response to the person that way.

Dave:

What does that mean for fever-reducing medications?

Abdul:

Generally homeopaths and alternative medic people don't like fever-reducing. There is a certain mentality in medicine, modern medicine, which is that if there's a possibility of a negative effect, even if it's only 1% or 2%, I give the whole population the drug so as not to be sued or to be-

Dave:

It's ridiculous.

Abdul:

Yes. So my wife, for example, who delivered in Egypt, right after she delivered, they came in with these pills and she said, "What is it?" And they said, "Antibiotics." I said, "But why?" He says, "Well, in case you get postnatal fever." And I said-

Dave:

Worst thing you could do.

Abdul:

Exactly. So we said, "No, we're not taking it," right? So it's the same idea with fever. And some children may get convulsions from high fever, but they're the minority and you would know right away that this is a child that is susceptible. So you would give a fever suppressive. In that case, I'm not illogical. But in most cases, I would say 90% of the cases the high fever should be supported. And in homeopathy, what we find is it goes up and then it rapidly goes down because you've pushed the system to where it wants to go.

Dave:

And certainly a lot of viruses and bacteria can't function-

Abdul:

Can't be treated with homeopathy, yes.

Dave:

Yeah. Well, no, they can't function if you have a high fever.

Abdul:

With antibiotics. Yes.

Dave:

Yes. And there are only a few people who are going to say, "Oh, you have a broken bone and a snake bite, here have some homeopathic drops." That goes almost without saying, but on the fever front, it's an interesting perspective. In California, kids under a certain age who have relatively mild fever, you're supposed to by law, take them into the emergency room and urgent care thing. And I'm like, "That is not a high enough number to merit that," but it's that avoidance of risk that actually seems to increase stress.

Abdul:

But that's America. I come from Holland. My daughter has two... We have two grandchildren, right? You cannot take a child with fever into the pediatrician unless they've had the fever for three days.

Dave:

That is so different. You hear that, friends in America. I live in Canada, so I'm in a neutral third party. It's like the Switzerland of North America. There's only two countries there. But anyhow, that makes me happy. So it can be different than the system that we're used to.

Abdul:

Yeah, I imagine if it isn't different, you will find that the health of the overall population declines and you begin to see that there are consequences because one of the things is you cannot fight nature. Nature will always be more powerful. We found this out with antibiotics. I mean, basically the adaptation mechanisms of bacteria, et cetera. How are you going to defeat that?

Dave:

You're going to make it worse.

Abdul:

You're going to make it worse.

Dave:

One of the things that has me most excited is what you mentioned with animal agriculture, because businesses by their nature like to save money. I mean who would have thought. So if they can find something that works, they will do it. And it doesn't mean that it's always in our interest, they can make animals fat on less food by giving them hormones, which they do regularly. But if they can find something that isn't supposed to work, that actually works, they'll be the very first adopters.

Abdul:

Yes, and that's why I say if you use homeopathy, you have to be a pragmatist. It has to work. Why would we run around the world trying to deceive people? It doesn't make sense. There are very intelligent people who are practicing this medical craft and they're not charlatans. It wouldn't go with their conscience. They're people that are actually trying to help others, and so I find it very, very strange that people can't accept that.

Dave:

I look at it as really pragmatic and saying, "Look, try it, worst comes to worst, You might have some little sugar pills or some little drops that might do nothing. That's your risk, right? Oh, and of course, whatever the cost of them is." Funny enough, it's less expensive than most pharmaceuticals.

Abdul:

Yes, in America and in any case.

Dave:

Fair point. Pharmaceuticals are a little cheaper where you live.

Abdul:

Yeah.

Dave:

Well, speaking about Cairo, Cairo's not exactly a place with low levels of pollution. What do you do about pollution?

Abdul:

I take high levels of supplements.

Dave:

What, that's not very homeopathic of you.

Abdul:

Well it is actually-

Dave:

I'm kidding. What supplements do you take?

Abdul:

One of the very first things when I was looking for vitamins was that I got a hold of... I was in contact with some people in the U.S. and I asked a guy called Pizorno, I don't know if you know him.

Dave:

He's been on the show, he's a friend.

Abdul:

Yeah? Yeah, and so I said, "Who do you recommend?" And he said, "Well, one of the people I recommend is the Life Extension people."

Dave:

I've known them for many years starting with [crosstalk 00:41:39].

Abdul:

Yeah and I kind of trusted them, and so I generally use their supplements. I know there are other companies out there and everything, but I've been very happy with them and I take their vitamins.

Dave:

Okay, so you use vitamins from a company that's been around for 25 years doing nonprofit work? Excellent. I actually used some of their formulas too. I make a lot of my own as well, but yeah, it's a trusted company. Okay. So you get those important to Cairo and you take high levels of vitamins. Give me like your top three or four that you think are going to help you in a polluted environment.

Abdul:

I generally use their multivitamin.

Dave:

Use their multivitamin, okay.

Abdul:

Their Life Extension mix, and they have it like you take eight per day.

Dave:

That's pretty heavy duty.

Abdul:

It's pretty heavy duty. It's got pretty much everything. And one of the things I like about Life Extension is they do the research, and I think they're the only company that's ever taken the FDA to court and won twice. So they have some high powered people there. So I think they do their research and they actually have a lot of plant extracts. They don't just do supplements.

Dave:

I use a lot of plant extracts.

Abdul:

Yeah. Because I teach homeopathy, I've kind of branched out into some side things. One of the things is I use plant extracts. So for example, for treating, high blood pressure or people with cardiac issues, I give Crataegus.

Dave:

Crataegus, I don't know that one.

Abdul:

Hawthorn.

Dave:

Oh, Hawthorn, I know Hawthorn. Okay.

Abdul:

Yeah. So there are a few plants that I use that I... because again, I'm kind of using a synergistic approach because if I feel that... You have to remember that people come to me when they have a pathology. I'm not treating healthy people. But if I want to maintain somebody's health, I do recommend certain kinds of plant extract. Like ginkgo for example.

Dave:

Yeah.

Abdul:

Berberis is a very good one.

Dave:

Oh yeah. I love berberis.

Abdul:

Goldenseal, which is limited because they had some problems with that. But I usually order my herbs from England, from the herbal apothecary.

Dave:

There definitely are some herbs that come from China that aren't tested and there's a purity issues.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

But now the science has come out just in the last five years is, "Oh, your gut bacteria metabolize these," so I take dozens of plant extracts. I use some of them, the formulas that I make for Bulletproof and other ones aren't in there or if they're not approved somewhere or whatever else. So I do take 100-plus supplements a day and I'm completely happy to do it because I travel like crazy. I sleep in hotels and I do all sorts of bad things-

Abdul:

Exactly.

Dave:

... that I wouldn't do if I was a caveman.

Abdul:

Yes.

Dave:

Okay. What do you do for jet lag?

Abdul:

For jet lag, we have a couple of homeopathic formulas and actually there's an Australian guy who made a fortune selling something, No Jet Lag.

Dave:

Oh, the homeopathic jet lag stuff.

Abdul:

Yeah.

Dave:

Does it work for you?

Abdul:

Not always, no.

Dave:

Yeah, I never got results [inaudible 00:44:29], but I did test it.

Abdul:

It also, because if you fly a lot, that certain directions, the jet lag is easier to take than in other directions.

Dave:

Flying west is better than flying east, yeah.

Abdul:

Yes. And so, yeah we use arnica, for example.

Dave:

It's an anti-inflammatory, good one.

Abdul:

Yes, and well the idea for me is that it's not natural to fly at 30,000 feet above the earth's surface and your energy body doesn't like it. And so when you arrive, your energy body is out of sync with your physical body. It kind of has to take time to sink itself and anything you can do to sync it is good.

Dave:

There's an old story from some of the first explorers in Tibet and they traveled really fast and then their guides sat down. They could see the destination they were going to through. The guides sat down and said, "No, we're waiting for a day." And the explorer people lead, "What are you talking about? We're going to go down there." And they said, "No, we've traveled too fast. We have to wait for our soul's energy body, whatever it is for that part of us to catch up."

And when I've been in phases of my life where I'm spending more of my energy on meditative realms than CEO realms, I've felt that when you fly. You can actually feel the stress or the stretching or the energy body trying to keep up. Not that I necessarily knew what to do about it. Now I think I have more, more skills there, but this is the stuff that people don't really talk about. But something weird about it. With that stress for you, I mean, do you have like a chant or is there a magic trick?

Abdul:

No, the thing is that I'm aware of these kinds of things because of my teachers. The first teacher I had, the German, he visited me in Germany and I had this old VW that we drove and the Autobahn, there's no speed limit.

Dave:

Right.

Abdul:

And so there's a minimum speed limit, 60 kilometers. And so he didn't allow me to go faster than 60 kilometers because he said it was inhuman.

Dave:

Wow.

Abdul:

And we also had an architect. My wife studied with a very famous vernacular architect in Egypt, Hassan Fathy, he builds mud brick domes and things like that. And he said it's unnatural to build higher than three floors because you lose contact with the earth.

Dave:

Wow so the whole earth thing movement, I've been an early voice talking about the electrical flow and how that's important. So an example of that.

Abdul:

Yeah.

Dave:

Okay.

Abdul:

So I mean we work with that. So when, when we fly, I usually take a lot of Vitamin C. I take a lot of supplements and I take sometimes, melatonin to adjust. Yeah.

Dave:

Talk to me about Spiral Dynamics, which is part of what you've incorporated into your teachings.

Abdul:

Yes, Spiral Dynamics is interesting because it kind of maps out evolutionary developments in value systems in cultures. So it allows you to map out the predominant culture system and values that you may be living in. Now what's interesting about that is that as a person who has lived in a highly conformist culture, and at the same time teaching in an environment where you're taught to be an individualist, which is the predominant Western paradigm, and then you have the sort of cutting edge, at least now sort of cutting edge of the Western paradigm is the Green Movement.

And they map out the value systems in these. And one of the things that I used it for was for the Egyptian Revolution. And when the Egyptian Revolution happened, many of my students who wanted to protest the sort of social practices and political movement, et cetera, they went down into Tahrir, they protested. And then I said to them, "Listen, after this revolution, we're going to get a backlash."

Dave:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Abdul:

"Because you represent a small sliver of the social values of the society. And this society wants to recoup its traditional values, and these are Islamic values. So you're going to find political parties that are going to appeal to Islamic values in the same way that in Europe we had Christian democratic parties, because people want to feel secure in their value system. They don't want the system overturned and a totally new value system to appear." And it's one of the reasons why I think fundamentalism has arisen in many of these societies because it's a kind of retraction to the familiar values that they hold and doesn't really have a lot of tolerance, because the values are this skin that I was talking about, the outer forms.

And so it's very problematic. And many of the students that graduate from the American university are conflicted because they have one kind of value system and then they have to go home and live in another value system. So marriages used to be arranged. So now you're educated in a system where you're an individual and you're free to choose your mate out of romantic love, which is of course Hollywood values. But that's a problem, right?

And then you have a green meme kind of values where there are no hierarchies, where everybody is equal, where there is no better and no worse, which is another kind of value system, right? And they map this out. So it's great for conflict resolution and it explains a lot of political problems because when the Americans invaded Iraq for the first time to reestablish democracy, well that's a value system.

Dave:

Right.

Abdul:

And you can't do that in a society that's split along ethnic and religious lines. So what happened is everybody votes Shia or Sunni, because they don't understand democracy, it's not in their value system. It takes 50 to 100 years for a society to evolve into a new value system.

Dave:

Do you think democracy is in the U.S. value system today?

Abdul:

No, not really. I mean, I studied American history at an American university and they have these four-year reports and the kind of backroom lobbying that goes on in the United States tells me that in presidential elections, there's no such thing as a democracy.

Dave:

It's pretty bad. And also now, even if people's votes are counted fairly, which the evidence would say they're not, but even if they are counted, it seems like the vast majority of people vote on lines that are not that different from the Shia versus Sunni. "Like you're one or the other and you will vote for your people." The tribalism there has destroyed democracy the way it was designed.

Abdul:

I don't know, I show a movie called the Automatic Brain, which was done by a German television audience, and they have these brain researchers. And they can predict the outcome of an election just on the basis of how the person looks.

Dave:

I totally believe that.

Abdul:

70% of the... Because they did this in studies where they would just show the picture and people will vote on the basis of how someone looks. They don't want to know about-

Dave:

Being tall helps a lot to win an election. It's amazing. And now I'll be really rude about it, being White helps a lot too. Right? And even if you're any other race, even if you're very well spoken and you're more qualified, there's an unconscious bias that's just wired in, at least in the US. Out in another country where people look a different way, it might be the opposite, right? So we have all that and is there an answer in Sufism or in your training for that?

Abdul:

I mean, generally what we say is the only way to improve the world is to improve yourself.

Dave:

I very much share that value. Well, this has been a fascinating discussion across a bunch of areas I didn't even know we'd go, but when I met you at this event and I heard just the incredible diverse things you've worked on and the fact that you have a college level course, the Who Am I, kind of perspective, I said, "All right, we've got to talk on the show."

Abdul:

Thanks for inviting me.

Dave:

So Abdul, thank you for being here. Is there a place people can go to find more about your work, a website or social media or something like that?

Abdul:

I don't do social media.

Dave:

I was guessing you didn't. I was to ask but...

Abdul:

And I do face-to-face but not Facebook.

Dave:

All right. I've heard of that, face-to-face. It's like faxing, right?

Abdul:

Yeah. And again, that's part of my traditional teaching, the way you really get something is that you connect with somebody. And that connection can be maintained through time and space. But the whole principle of a transmission line, and it's almost in all the religious traditions-

Dave:

It is.

Abdul:

... it's because you kind of plug in.

Dave:

Yeah.

Abdul:

And it's that connection. So I usually operate in obscurity. But you can check out, I have a small website, H2RC2.com.

Dave:

H2RC2.com.

Abdul:

Yeah. It's Holistic and Homeopathic Resource Center and Consulting. And I put it down to a scientific formula H2RC2.com.

Dave:

I was so sure there's going to be a Star Wars joke in there somewhere.

Abdul:

No.

Dave:

Abdul, thank you for being Bulletproof Radio.

Abdul:

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Dave:

If you like today's episode, you know what to do. Go out there and try homeopathy. Now I just pissed off 20 percent of you when I said that. And here's the deal. I could be wrong, you could be wrong, but your risk is very low. And if you get some results, hey, that's cool. And if it pisses you off so much that you need to unsubscribe for the show, I will still love you. It's okay. On that note, have a beautiful day.