

Narrator 00:00

From Curtco Media.

Jill de Jong 00:004

Life Done Better. This podcast is produced for all the unicorns who strive to create a life on their own terms, don't take life too seriously and are on a mission to make a positive impact in this world. In this show, we're getting real about daily struggles and obstacles and how to best navigate through difficult times and challenges in life. So you can make better decisions for yourself and feel healthy, confident and aligned. Feel less alone and more connected. We're in this together. From my heart to yours. Welcome to Life Done Better. Today's guest is Tara Mackey. Tara Mackey is a singer speaker and the number one best-selling author of *Cured by Nature* and *Wild Habits*. She founded the organic skincare company genetics. Tara, who has a background in psychology and Genetics left a coveted position at Weill Cornell Medical College in 2011, to travel to California to explore natural healing, yoga and meditation. That same year she began utilizing holistic techniques to heal her chronic illnesses going cold turkey off of 14 daily medications and healing herself naturally. She has been on a conscious quest to move humanity in a more sustainable, healthy, and holistic direction ever since. Now, Tara has been recognized with numerous awards and nomination for activism and entrepreneurship by giants like Oprah Magazine's, Women's Health, ABC, even the United States Senate and many more. She resides in San Diego, California and that's where she's calling in from today. Hi, Tara, welcome to the show.

Tara Mackey 01:59

Hi, Jill, thank you so much for having me.

Jill de Jong 02:02

It's such a pleasure to finally talk to you because we are part of an Instagram group called Instagram Rockstars. So I've been following you, I've been supporting you. And you've do the same for me. And it's so wonderful to see that you are so honest about where you are in life and really, truthfully share in all the ups and downs that life brings. And I wanted to start with a dream that came true for you recently. You released an album, right? It was a lifelong dream of yours to to write and release an album?

Tara Mackey 02:33

Oh, it absolutely was. I wanted to do that. Probably since I was six or seven because I knew people made music. I think I realized they wanted to be one of those people that made music that other people could listen to.

Jill de Jong 02:46

And do you play an instrument? Or did you want to use your voice mainly?

Tara Mackey 02:50

I play a little bit of piano, but I write all my own music. And this new album is what I call conscious pop. So it's pop music, but the lyrics are very consciously done. And they're focused on self-empowerment.

Jill de Jong 03:04

Oh, I like that. So what message did you need to give birth to?

Tara Mackey 03:07

Honestly, my largest message is that our greatest wealth is on the inside. And I have a song called Bugatti and the lyrics are, 'I don't need no Bugatti none of these things define me.' And I think the whole album kind of wraps up that message of focus on yourself focus on the important things. True wealth is on the inside. And love is really the greatest conqueror of all,

Jill de Jong 03:32

That is a beautiful message indeed. And how do you live that message yourself daily? Like how do you integrate that in your own life, I just, some examples that you can give like where you were and where you are now and how it's different.

Tara Mackey 03:44

So I've been on a self-empowerment journey, I would say for the last almost 10 years, like mentioned in 2011, I off of 14 pharmaceutical drugs, cold turkey, I lived in New York at the time. And that one decision really prompted a lot of wonderful changes in my life and allowed me to become the person I am today who's allowed to do so many other wonderful things with my life. I started my blog, my blog led to my first book deal, which led to my first book, which led to my second book, which led to my ability to have this organic skincare company that I now have and make the music that I do. And it all started with this one decision to to get healthy to really get healthy. Because I was taking all these drugs, they all had my name on them, they were all prescribed to me, I never went out of my way to get any of them. It was just I got put on drugs and my first drug at 12 years old. And then it just seemed like that cause side effects and then then a doctor would prescribe drugs for the side effects. And it was this unhealthy cycle to the point where I was 24 years old on 14 different medications and had never been more unhealthy in my whole life. And so I realized that I needed to cut a lot of toxic things out of my life or I wasn't going to be here to enjoy the rest of my life.

Jill de Jong 05:00

It's a big realization that you had at a very early in young age 24. And so when did you decide that you weren't any longer let it hold you back. What made you decide to say you know what I'm going to drive to LA, I only have \$300 in my pocket. I've never been in LA, and I'm going to heal myself.

Tara Mackey 05:20

I lost my best friend to suicide, January of 2011. And in March of 2011, I tried to take my own life. And when that didn't work, I realized that suicidal people are not depressed, suicidal people are hopeless, they're hopeless, that the next moment is not going to feel any different than the moment that they're currently experiencing. And I realized that I didn't just want to live a life. When my suicide attempt didn't work, I realized that I wanted to live a life that I was really proud of. And I wanted to live a life that gave people hope, that gave me hope. That everything that I had been through in my life was not for nothing. Because if I died in this moment, all of that was for nothing. And I've accomplished so much since that moment, and thinking about the fact that at 24 years old, I thought my life was over. And it hadn't even

begun. It literally had not even begun. I hardly ever talk in a positive way about anything that happened in my life, or anything I accomplished before the age of 25 years old.

Jill de Jong 06:27

But the wonderful thing is that somehow, you found something inside of you that decided that you know what, I have nothing to lose, I am going to give it another try. And, man, it feels good to be alive, right?

Tara Mackey 06:41

Yes. And once I started earnestly trying the universe started earnestly helping me. I mean, synchronicities and things happened in my life that just were unexplainable other than it was Source's way of saying you're on the right path. Like you asked me how I, I moved to LA Well, I met somebody, probably a week and a half after I came off of my medication. And the reason I came off of my drugs, I want to point out number one, I'm not saying coming off of your drugs is the answer at all. This is just my story and my journey, and I was very overmedicated. I was like 105 pounds on 14 different drugs. And so I just try to tell people that Walgreens alone in 2018 sold enough drugs for every man, woman and child in this country to be on three drugs. At the same time.

Jill de Jong 07:27

I remember you saying that there's a number that's almost a billion, nine hundred million prescription drugs in 2018, only at Walgreens.

Tara Mackey 07:37

Only at Walgreens.

Jill de Jong 07:38

And I think it's a really powerful message that you took charge of your health. And there's so many things you've done differently for so many reasons, right? And it has worked for you because even seven years later, you're off any prescription, you've never touched the prescription drug again.

Tara Mackey 07:53

Not one. And when I came off my drugs, my intention was not to stay off my drugs, it was not this grand plan of I'm going to come off my drugs, I'm going to be drug free. No, it was I'm going to come off my drugs, because I'm on 14, which is way too many. And I'm going to see what I need and what I don't need. And what miraculously happened in the interim is that I found natural solutions for all of the things I was taking drugs for and the natural solutions worked. And the drugs had not worked. And it was driving me insane that the drugs were not working because I was like, well, something must really be wrong with me if I can take an opiate, and I'm still in pain, something must really be wrong with me if I can take an anti-anxiety medication every single day of my life, and I'm more anxious than when I started. So when I found solutions that actually worked, and they were natural, and they were healthy for you, and they were side effect free. How can you ever go back to something that doesn't work?

Jill de Jong 08:49

Totally, and you felt the obligation to really share this with everyone, you started your blog, if this could help me, it can help so many others. I'm also a big proponent for everything natural, preferably organic,

and natural remedies are powerful, they really do work. And I would love for you to share some healthy life hacks if you have a few that you swear by that you use daily, and that really continue to help you feel more balanced and carefree and focused on all the work that you're doing.

Tara Mackey 09:20

Absolutely. I would love to, as you mentioned, I have a science background, right. And what I also want to mention is that I've seen experts and doctors in their fields that were experts. I worked at Cornell and I called the best doctors at Cornell about the things I was going through that was one of the few perks of working there. And none of the doctors had ever told me that natural remedies were a solution because they're not taught to it's not part of the medical education system in the United States to teach about diet and nutrition and herbal remedies and supplements. They don't learn it. So I want to tell people that like you can be seeing the best experts in the world but they're not necessarily getting to the root of your problem. So I just want to put that out there too that, you know, I was excited about these things because I felt like I, I had tried everything. And it turns out I hadn't tried everything. So I'm like, what, what even is in will Lamictal? What's in Valium? And what's in these drugs that I'm taking that are supposed to be and how are they doing what they're supposed to be doing for my brain and my body?

Jill de Jong 10:25

Yeah, they affect or gut health too, right? Medication can really damage the intestinal tract and can kill off good bacteria. And they're really needed for gut health. And also gut is referred to as a second brain of our body. And if the gut is out of balance it's hijacking the operation system.

Tara Mackey 10:39

Absolutely. And like, why are they blue? When why? Why are they colored a certain way? And like, what am I actually putting in my body? Like once I stopped eating things with food coloring in them and stuff, I started wondering why they're taking these pills that are red and blue, and whatever all the time what's in these things? So I started researching it. And I realized that GABA is an essential neurotransmitter that your brain needs to process information, processor moods, help you calm down and help you get excited that regulates everything else that determines your moods. And when I looked into Lamictal, when lithium and mood stabilizers I had taken, they actually decreased the amount that GABA is allowed to work in your brain. So it was like, well, how are they regulating your moods if it's decreasing your GABA? So GABA is one of the first things that I started taking for mood regulation that actually I felt really, really worked

Jill de Jong 11:38

Great. And this is a supplement, right? This is a supplement you can take daily, because I know it's also in some food.

Tara Mackey 11:44

Yes, it's in some food it's found naturally and everything, every living thing, and it's

Jill de Jong 11:48

And it's spelled as G-A-B-A right? Just so the listeners can kind of take a mental note.

Tara Mackey 11:53

Yeah, GABA. It's a shortened acronym for a much longer scientific word. But it's found in every living thing and your body needs it to regulate your brain function, regulate your moods. Once I started taking that daily, I really saw an incredible improvement in my moods. I replaced valium with an herb called valerian, which is an anti-anxiety herb that you can get in supplement form or a tincture form or you can you know, grow a little valerian plant and cut the roots off and make a tea.

Jill de Jong 12:25

Exactly. It's wonderful for for night times before you go to bed, right?

Tara Mackey 12:29

It's amazing for insomnia, amazing for anxiety, amazing for mood regulation and the nervous system and just allowing you to process more information in a very overstimulated world. I would say skullcap replaced everything that I used to take for pain.

Jill de Jong 12:48

Skullcap? I have never heard of that before and I'm really interested in looking into that more.

Tara Mackey 12:53

English villagers named after their helmet that they used to call skullcap because when they were in tremendous amount of pain during war, they would use the herb. They felt they protect them in the same way that their armor did.

Jill de Jong 13:05

Wow, I'm really really intrigued this one thing. It's pretty deep. And you have shared this on Instagram before, um, not too long ago. And I would love to read it just to give listeners a bit more of an insight what it was like for you to grow up or to be around a mom that was not functioning and was high or drunk most of the time. Can I share this one piece that you wrote an Instagram

Tara Mackey 13:29

Please share.

Jill de Jong 13:31

So here's the truth that you shared. 'I tucked myself into my clean, comfortable bed last night and softly started crying. I grew up living in an attic with my mom. We shared a bed. The set on the bed was ancient and the comforter, the mattress and the pillows were pockmarked with cigarette burns. A new one appeared pretty much every day. Because every day my mom would get into bed with a gallon of vodka, drugs and a cigarette and pass out while it was still lit. Last night I ran my fingers along my warm clean sheets. I breathed them in and thought about how many times I walked into our bedroom as a kid and took a lit cigarette out of my mom's hand while she was unconscious, or doused water on burning sheets. I thought about how so much of my life was spent having to be right. Because if I wasn't right, we were dead.' So that's part of what you shared on Instagram. And I was just like, wow,

this is really insane that you were in those circumstances at that age and having to make these decisions consciously to stay alive.

Tara Mackey 14:36

Yeah, yeah. They, experts say that being the child of a drug addict and an alcoholic is akin mentally to being a soldier at war because you are constantly in fight or flight and you're constantly waiting for the other shoe to drop and for something to blow up in your face.

Jill de Jong 14:54

Yeah.

Tara Mackey 14:55

And I feel that I can see that I went to Alateen meetings at as a kid and I spoke to other people who were in similar situations and situations that were a lot more difficult than mine where both parents were using and it was consistent. Yeah, it's not easy. But it really does make me appreciate everything that I have now. And I still have a really hard time not being right.

Jill de Jong 15:19

Well, you mean with being right, its not just like, right as in your opinion of the things you want to do, but right as in doing the right thing. That's why you're an activist, you really want to help others to make better decisions for themselves to anyone who wants to hear and you have over a million followers. And so you have a huge tribe that wants to hear from you, and that I'm sure is, is lifted and elevated by your energy and how you lead.

Tara Mackey 15:44

Thank you. I appreciate that. Yeah, I'm very inspired. I mean, a lot of the give back work that I do is directly related to what I went through as a child, you know, my grandparents getting custody of me and my husband and I go down to Mexico and we volunteer at orphanages, we just went on Saturday. And it's just so fulfilling to me to be in a position where not only do I understand what somebody is going through, but the fact that we can donate and give back and also be an example to the kids of you don't have to repeat your parents pattern, you can form a new paradigm, you can break the cycle, you can be different than what you've seen. I think that's been such an amazing thing to be able to do with my life and to be in a position to be able to do it now. Because for so long, I felt like I had nothing to give, I felt like the giving was going to take something away from me. And really what I've learned is that it just enriches every single thing that I do. And the more that I give, the more that I get. And I know that sounds so trite, but it's so so so true. And it's more true every single time that I focus on something that's not myself, I'm rewarded, so much more than if I was just sitting around doing everything for me.

Jill de Jong 16:56

It's the most beautiful reward to see someone else smile or lifted from a difficult situation or in any way you can help. And you do this so beautifully. Going into orphanages, right?

Tara Mackey 17:08

The reason that we go down to Mexico is because well, we're really close here in San Diego, the border is 47 minutes away from us. But also the Mexican government does not aid these kids in any way. So at least here we have the safety net of social services, foster care, food stamps, Mexico doesn't have any of that. The government can come in and shut down any orphanage they want, but they don't have to give a single solitary penny to any of these orphanages. So they're all privately funded. So to me, it's just important to give where we're most needed. And I feel like right now, even understanding the Mexican culture, like they just don't really adopt. So these orphanages fill up and hardly any kids get adopted from there. And so the more awareness we can bring to the situation, the better off the kids are,

Jill de Jong 17:59

Have they formed a community? Can you describe the atmosphere, when you walk into a place like that?

Tara Mackey 18:04

Well, the kids are wonderful, you know, they're, they're well taken care of, and they're wonderful. But you have to understand that with an orphanage with like, 95 kids, they really only have two to four people on staff at a time. And so the kids become each other's family, and they take care of each other a lot. Not only a lot of them are siblings, but also a lot of them have been separated from their siblings. And some of them still get to see their parents. Many of them haven't seen their parents in a long time. Some of their parents will visit, or some of their parents will tell them, you know, they're trying to get clean to come take them home, and then they never see them again, like it's varied, but the kids are wonderful. Like, I will be honest with you. I did not think I liked kids until I started going down to Mexico and hanging out with the kids at Rancho de Los Ninos and the kids at the other orphanages we've been able to visit because they're so resilient and they don't like, cry. We've never I've never seen them cry. I've spent like hours with babies down there that like, don't cry. It's almost hard to even think about going down there and adopting one or two of them because they do form a family unit within the orphanage. And it's hard to think about

Jill de Jong 19:12

Separating them.

Tara Mackey 19:13

Letting them do that for a few years and separating them exactly. So it's just heartbreaking kind of all around. Like the orphanage we went to on Saturday. They have a baby there. She's just turned a year, the day before we went and I I asked somebody, hey, did you go celebrate her birthday? And they were kind of like, oops, no, and they just started saying happy birthday to her. And you have to think that like, yes, it's wonderful that she has somewhere to be but like, there's really only one there's 15 Kids, there's one mother figure they're the older girls are really and even the younger girls are taking care of her most of the time kind of passing around. She never cried once, which is wonderful. They're very adaptable because they're just used to being in different people's arms all the time. And having kind of this big family unit, which is great, but she's likely she is likely probably going to get adopted, I was talking to somebody there and there's like a waitlist of 20 people for her already, which is wonderful. But to think about being a 15 year old girl at that orphanage who sees the baby come in bonds with the

baby for a year and then watches the baby get adopted, and you're still not getting adopted. And you've been at that orphanage, since you were a kid, I just breaks my heart, I just want to take all of them home. Home every time I go.

Jill de Jong 20:28

Let's take a quick break. And we'll be right back.

[Ad Break] 20:36

20:58

And we're back. Now you're doing so many wonderful things and tell me like what are you most proud of the highlight of your career? Let's start with career and then you can say what you're proud of personally.

Tara Mackey 21:10

Honestly, I'm most proud of finding a way to combine it all. Because for so long, like I literally just came out with music for the first time in like five years. Most people who read my books, follow me on Instagram and everything, before I came out with my album last year, I nobody really knew I did music, or they read about it as in my book that I like did it when I was a kid, whatever. But I don't think anybody realized that I still actively was writing music every single day. I just wasn't recording everything. And I talked to branding agents and managers and PR and so many people about like, oh my god, how am I going to combine all this stuff together? Like are people going to stop following me? Are people going to like not be interested? And I'm really proud of the fact that I intentionally went into this, like, no, I'm going to write an album, that's me. And if it's me, and if it's on message, and if it's, you know, all the things that I believe in, then it should be technically on brand. And it should make sense. And it should all be able to flow together. And this year, I've been able to literally do it all like I've gone to events where I've opened the event with my music, and then I've spoken and then I've signed my books, and I've been able to talk about my skincare and the reason that that whole business started and that business is able to fund like, everything else I've been doing. And it's been the design. I'm proud of following my heart. I'm proud of the fact that I was able to do all of this stuff.

Jill de Jong 22:38

Girl, I'm proud of you, too. Thank you so much for sharing that you guys, it's so important to celebrate yourself. And um, yeah, you're badass, you're good at what you're doing. And now it all ties in, even though it may at first not have made sense to you. It now all makes sense, right?

Tara Mackey 22:53

And now I can't picture not doing it. Like I'm like, how did I speak and not tell people that I make music and I can sing it really well in front of them. And I can get them up out of their seats and motivate them with these songs and people coming up to me at signings. And when I speak and saying like, Oh, you know, you've made it possible for me to know that I can do everything. And I've put music on the back burner because I thought it like needed to be its own thing. But I can see how I can incorporate it into my career now. And I'm like, how did I ever not do this? Like how did nobody know a year ago that I did

this, because I'm just so happy I can hand that hope over to somewhere else. Like what you can do it whatever you want to do, I promise you.

Jill de Jong 23:36

It just shows again that the more you become yourself and truly yourself, like whatever you think suits you best and what makes your heart sing is what benefits others too, simultaneously. And that's the giving and receiving right there. Because you're giving but you're getting so much great feedback. And people are singing along with your songs and they're enjoying your beauty products. And yet, like so you're doing so many wonderful things. And how do you divide your time and energy? Like, what does your day look like a typical day? Or maybe you don't have a real typical day. But let's say what would it look like kind of how do you divide your time and energy between all your endeavors?

Tara Mackey 24:15

Every day is a little different. And it really just depends on what I'm working on. Like, there's days where I have to focus completely on my skincare company, Genetics, there's days where I have blocked off to go to LA and write three or four songs for an eight song album. There's days where I just like I just read all day.

Jill de Jong 24:33

You continue to educate yourself.

Tara Mackey 24:35

Yeah, you have to stay educated and especially if you're gonna write books, I want to bring as much validation and science and updated information to the table as possible. So I'm constantly reading and educating myself. I mean, I left school like 10 years ago, but I never stopped learning. I personally love it. So every day is just filled with something kind of new and different and that's what I love. I mean my last nine to five job was working in the lab. analyzing asbestos samples, which is great, somebody needs to do that. It was killing my soul because there was no variety. And I was just sitting in doors like doing nothing. So it's just really nice to be able to kind of pick and choose. Every project I'm working on has a deadline. So it really just depends on, you know what the schedule is what we need to be doing today. Yeah, what's priority today? You know, it's not always what I want to be doing. It's what I have to be doing. But luckily, everything that I do with my life is something I enjoy, so it never really feels like work to be honest with you. Well, you

Jill de Jong 25:33

Well you definitely sent like got it figured out for yourself and you know, you, the high energy that we can feel in your voice is really contagious. It's a pleasure talking to you. And I'm so glad we got to connect and really dive in, you know, some of the things that you're doing and I'd love to ask you a couple of fun little things about like your preference, and starting at do you prefer coffee or tea?

Tara Mackey 25:55

I love this, Jill. Tea. I don't drink any caffeine at all. So tea, decaf tea, or caffeine-free.

Jill de Jong 26:02

Okay, perfect. Cats or dogs.

Tara Mackey 26:05

Dogs, I have two pitties. They're so cute.

Jill de Jong 26:08

Late nights or early mornings.

26:11

Early mornings when I can but I always end up doing late nights.

Jill de Jong 26:16

Netflix or a movie theater?

Tara Mackey 26:18

Netflix.

Jill de Jong 26:19

Last but not least, introvert, extrovert?

Tara Mackey 26:22

Introvert.

Jill de Jong 26:24

Wonderful. I'm so glad you got to share and be on the podcast. Thank you so much for your time, Tara. I so appreciate you. Looking forward to hearing more about how we can help with the orphanage we're gonna also include some of that in the show notes and how do people stay in touch with you?

Tara Mackey 26:43

Oh, they can follow me on @TaraAMackey on Instagram, they can go to the [organiclifeblog.com](https://www.organiclifeblog.com) and follow along.

Jill de Jong 26:52

Wonderful. Again, thank you so much. You are an inspiration. Keep doing what you're doing. keep shining.

Tara Mackey 26:58

Thanks, Jill. I appreciate you so much.

Jill de Jong 27:00

My pleasure. Thank you, Tara. Hey, it's Jill. The one thing we cannot find more of is time. Time is precious. And I am so grateful that you chose to spend time listening to my podcasts. There's a lot more I'd like to share with you. So don't forget to subscribe to Life Done Better on your favorite podcast app and stay in touch. If you have a question or a topic you want to hear discuss on the show. shoot

me a message on Twitter @\_LifeDoneBetter. We all deal with a lot in our lives and it's freeing to talk about it openly. From my heart to yours. Thanks for listening.

Narrator 27:55

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