

[MUSIC PLAYING]

(SINGING) What it is. Give me this all night long. Thought I hear something in the air. Got a feeling I don't care.

**ANNOUNCER:** All right. It's Wednesday. And for the past several Wednesdays, host Cathy Wurzer has been talking to Dr. Joi Lewis about daily practices that keep you mentally present and healthy. And look, you don't need me to tell you that there have been so many tragedies recently. So this is a good time to focus on ways to take care of yourself and your community.

Dr. Joi is a community healer, speaker, and founder of Joi Unlimited and the Healing Justice Foundation. She is also the author of the book *Healing: The Act of Radical Self-Care*. Today, Cathy and Dr. Joi are talking about what to do when life makes you want to stay in bed with the covers over your head.

**CATHY** Dr. Joi, welcome back to the program.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Thanks so much, Cathy. Glad to be here.

**CATHY** Oh, I got out of bed this morning. And obviously, you did, too.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** I did, although it was questionable. But I did get up. [LAUGHS]

**CATHY** Good, I'm glad to hear that. In the intro, I mentioned your book. And I would like to read a passage where you wrote about going numb. And you wrote, "It's easy to appear awake but still be dead inside. We may drink, veg out on social media or Netflix, smoke, work too much, have a lot of sex, shop, use street or prescription drugs, or use food--" which is my drug of choice. And I think you could probably add gaming or social media surfing to the list, too. Tell us about the urge to just check out.

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah. I mean, I feel it, and I'm sure many other folks feel it. I guess what I want to just start with this is that, it can-- it's kind of tricky. It can appear to just be some kind of individual vice or something like that. But it likely is a trauma response. And so I think it's important that we make sure that we're connecting it to that.

And there may be a term that folks have heard of, epigenetics, and it can cause changes in our chromosomes and the way that we respond. And it just-- it can make it more difficult for us to deal with stress and prevent illness and trauma and stuff like that. So I don't want people to just think, oh, I just have bad habits. But it actually is likely a trauma response.

**CATHY** How do you know when it's a trauma response versus something like self-care, right? I mean, how many of us like to just get a glass of wine. You go maybe binge a little Netflix, and you just kind of just take yourself out of the world for a little bit. Where is the breakdown line there?

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah, that's such a good question. One of the ways to know is when we're doing something in excess. You kind of know when it's like, OK, I'm just doing this over and over and over again, and I'm not really being conscious or mindful. But it's like, to make a decision, we want to have these practices of self-care to sort of know in advance, OK, you know, life is going to be stressful. Life is going to happen. And here are some of the things that I use to help me sort of show up for myself and show up for other folks.

It's an intentional kind of way of living instead of just being scattered and like, OK, I feel like so exhausted at the end of the day, and this is what I'm going to do. And you can kind of feel it in your body when you are really worked up and not necessarily being mindful. Hopefully, we have some time-- there's a practice that I like for people to be conscious about how you can kind of plan for these things.

**CATHY WURZER:** OK. Because I was going to ask-- you also wrote in the book, "I have been aware of my own struggles with going numb and checking out when faced with the cruelty of this world. I needed a process, a tool, a solution to help me show up and get present, stay connected, and reach for my humanity and yours." You want to just give us an idea of what you use?

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah. So for me, the tool that I found really is around radical self-care. But oftentimes, when we hear self-care, it's sometimes framed in a way where it's about an opportunity to just escape or to find a way out of toxic stress and trauma and all that. And sometimes, self-care can also encourage isolation.

But radical self-care is a bit different. It really is about finding stillness and returning to present moment again and again. And it's sort of a way in instead of a way out. So the tool that I found, really, it was radical self-care, and I created a whole process around it, the Orange Method of radical self-care. So it really is to help us to really be present.

**CATHY WURZER:** What is the Orange or Orange? What does it stand for? What would that be?

**JOI LEWIS:** Yeah, so the Orange Method of radical self-care has four practices, the first one being a meditation to help us get grounded, the second one being mindfulness to help us get present and emotional liberation to help us get free and conscious movement to help us get unstuck. And the reason-- yes, anybody who knows me, they know I love Orange. But beyond that, Orange is a chakra color for-- it's in our lower abdomen, and it's where transformation happens. So yeah.

And these practices, as I said, I didn't create them. They've been around for thousands of years. I can't say like, I created meditation. But what I do do in this method is to try to remind folks that these things are available to us, right? And I'm just-- I'm on a mission to just say, hey, life is hard. All of the hard things that have been happening kind of nonstop, but particularly over these last couple of weeks, stuff with the Supreme Court, people being-- all these shootings, all this stuff, it's like, I want people to have practices and tools that are available to them that are really integrated into their lives.

**CATHY WURZER:** I understand what you're saying. Thank you for that. Say, can we end with a meditation practice? Because we haven't done that, the two of us, for a little bit here.

**JOI LEWIS:** Yes.

**CATHY WURZER:** So can you just pick something that you like?

**JOI LEWIS:** Yes, as we've been talking, it's like, OK, all of these tough things are happening and things are going on. So I like to set things up where I'm not just dependent on some kind of emergency response. So the practice that we're going to do today is building your energy bank.

Now, what I need you to do is either grab a sheet of paper or just simply-- I love doing this. Just take your phone and just open the note section of your phone. And at the top, put energy bank. And then you're going to write the word deposit and put one, two, three. And then under that, you're going to put withdrawal. So just sort of think about this as like, you're building your own bank account, but it's an energy bank account.

So on number one, here's what I'd like for you to do. Write down the names of-- the first names of three people that, when you spend time with them, you feel amazing, awesome, and brilliant. Now don't worry, Cathy. I'm not going to have you like-- you're not going to have to tell me what you wrote down. So this is just for you, OK?

**CATHY** OK, good.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Now, listen, I don't want anybody on the list that you feel obligated to put down. This is your list. Be selfish. You got that?

**CATHY** Mm-hmm.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** OK. Number two, I want you to write down three activities that, when you do them, they make you feel amazing, awesome, and brilliant. Same rule-- you cannot put down things that you feel obligated. All right. Now, don't worry about if you're not getting through all of this because you can go back and you can do it in a longer way. But for now, this is fine.

OK, number three-- write down your favorite song. But here's the caveat. I want you to write down a song that is your jam that makes you move, that makes you want to get up and dance, that song.

**CATHY** Mm-hmm.

**WURZER:**

**CATHY** OK, are-- you're like, it's easy. I might ask you about that one. OK.

**WURZER:**

**CATHY** [LAUGHS]

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** OK. Now we're at the withdrawals. I want you to write down three people that, when you spend time with them, you feel drained, agitated, and exhausted. I promise, I'm not going to ask you to tell me those names, OK? but just write down those three--

**CATHY** But wouldn't it be fun to call them out on the air? No, just kidding. [LAUGHS] Just kidding-- kidding, kidding, kidding.

**JOI LEWIS:** [LAUGHS] No, I'm not going to ask. OK. OK. But here's the thing. This is the trick about this list. I don't want you to put anybody on your list that it's optional that you spend time with them. I also want you to know that a withdrawal is not a negative thing. If you go to the bank, and you need to get new tires or something, and they're going to cost you \$500, if you got \$3,000 in a bank, that's not-- that's fine. You just withdraw the \$500.

But the problem is if you need to withdraw \$400 and you got \$100 in there. Now we're in trouble because then you're writing bad checks. And what I want you to know is that, even with our energy, we often are out here writing bad checks because we don't have enough deposits. Make sense?

**CATHY** Mm-hmm.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** So number two, I want you to write down three activities that, when you spend time doing them, you feel drained, agitated, or exhausted, OK? And again, I don't want this to be optional, because let me free you real quick. If it's optional, don't do it, OK? And you can say, Dr. Joi said I don't have to do that anymore. Yeah, stop doing it, because it's optional.

And now, the last one is, I want you to write down three sounds that, when you hear them, they make you feel drained, agitated, or exhausted. Maybe it's your alarm clock. Maybe it's when your phone rings. And these are not optional things, but there are some options you have, right?

So I know we're moving quickly, but you should have your energy bank all worked out, right? Here's the thing. If you, on a consistent basis, spend some time putting those deposits in, when withdrawals happen-- because withdrawals are going to happen, y'all, probably every day-- you have enough stored up in your energy bank that it's OK.

And it also is-- like, if you're not sure, like, why am I feeling so exhausted? I got a good night's sleep last night. I ate well, but, gosh, I feel so exhausted. You can now pull out this list that you have and be like, have I spent enough time in these deposits? We just don't want to be out here writing bad checks. Is that fair?

**CATHY** That is absolutely fair. Yes, exactly. That is so fantastic. Thank you.

**WURZER:**

**JOI LEWIS:** Yes. You're so welcome.

**ANNOUNCER:** I like that-- an energy bank. That was host Cathy Wurzer talking with Dr. Joi Lewis. Dr. Joi is a community healer, speaker, and founder of Joi Unlimited and the Healing Justice Foundation and author of the book *Healing: The Act of Radical Self-Care*. Now, this was an edited version of their conversation. You can find their extended discussion on our website at [nprnews.org](http://nprnews.org) in the Minnesota Now section.