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Now, it's really important to say that's not 100 percent. My book is not an argument against chemical antidepressants. And when it comes to chemical antidepressants, I really have only two things to say:

One is, they can't continue to be the only thing on the menu, because for most people, they're not working. That's no disrespect to anyone for whom it is working, but they are a small minority.

Secondly, the story we're told about these antidepressants is not true. That depression is caused by a chemical imbalance and therefore you need to fix the chemical imbalance – that claim, it astonished me, there is no scientific evidence for that.

Professor Andrew Skoll at Princeton University says it is "deeply misleading and unscientific" to claim that depression is caused by low serotonin. Dr. David Healy, who is the main British expert on this, said to me, you can't even say that theory has been discredited because there was never a time when it was credited. There was never a time when more than half the people in the field believed it – that was basically a claim put about by the drug company PRs.

Emily Green: *I was hoping that you could talk a little bit about what you discovered about all of the research – those peer-reviewed studies – that serves as evidence that chemical antidepressants work. What did you learn?*

J.H.: We all know that when you take selfies, you take 29 pictures and you look like you've got a double chin or something, and you throw away those 29, and then the 30th one where you look good, you use that as your Tinder profile picture.

Basically a very similar thing has happened with the research in antidepressants. What happened is the drug companies only published the results where they looked good.

For example, there was one study where they studied over 250 people, and they only published the results of 27 of them – who happened to be the 27 for whom the antidepressants worked. So, we've ended up with a very distorted scientific picture.

What happens when you look at the real evidence, this was discovered by professor Irving Kirsch, is that while there are some people who get some relief from these drugs, they are a small minority of the people who are using the drugs.

We've been told that depression is just something that happens in our heads. It's a malfunction in our skull, in our brain, and what I learned was actually that's not true. Not entirely, but overwhelmingly, depression is a response to the way we're living today.

That forces us to think about antidepressants in a very different way. One person that really helped me to understand this was a psychiatrist called Dr. Derek Summerfield.

He was in Cambodia in the early part of this century, when they were first

introduced to chemical antidepressants, in Cambodia. He was explaining it to the doctors there, because they didn't know what they were. And the doctors said, "Oh, we don't need antidepressants. We've already got antidepressants." And Derek said, "What do you mean?" So they told him a story.

There was a farmer who worked in the rice fields, and one day he stood on a landmine and got his leg blown off. After that, they gave him an artificial limb and he went back to work in the rice fields, but it was really painful to work in water when you've got an artificial limb. He was obviously in the same place where he'd gotten blown up – he was traumatized, he just cried all day and didn't want to get out of bed. He was obviously depressed.

The doctors said, "Well, we gave him an antidepressant." Derek said, "What do you mean?" They said, "We went and sat with him, we listened to why he was sad, we saw that it made sense, and so we figured if we bought him a cow and he became a dairy farmer, he wouldn't be in the fields all the day, he wouldn't be so upset, so we bought him a cow, and within a few weeks he stopped crying all the time, and now he's fine." They said to Derek, "So you see, doctor, that cow was an antidepressant."

Now if you've been raised with the way that we've been taught to think about depression, which is that it's just a chemical malfunction in

your brain, now that sounds like a joke, right? But when you understand this deeper way of thinking about depression, that it's actually a response to things happening in our lives, it makes perfect sense. The vast majority, if not all, of depressed people are depressed for perfectly understandable reasons – there are things happening to them that are making them depressed and anxious. And the core of the solution is not to try and muffle the symptoms, but to actually deal with why they feel so bad in the first place, by helping them to change their lives.

E.G.: *As you went through the phase of your research where you were looking at the nine common causes of depression, was there anything that you found particularly surprising?*

J.H.: There was this really interesting study by Gallup about people's attitudes toward their work, and what it found was 13 percent love our work; we enjoy it and look forward to it. And 63 percent of people are what they called "sleepwalking through work." They neither like it nor hate it. And 24 percent of people hate their work – hate it, dread it, fear it.

It's kind of incredible: 87 percent of people don't like the thing they're doing most of the time, and you're almost twice as likely to hate your work as love your work.

And so I began to wonder: Could there be some connection between this and depression? And it turns out there is a lot of evidence for this.

An Australian social scientist called



A sign on Portland's Burnside Bridge is part of a suicide prevention effort. Suicide is the leading cause of death among Oregonians ages 10 to 24. According to a WalletHub study published last year, Portland has one of the highest rates of depression in the nation.

Michael Marmot, who did the kind of definitive research on this – what he found is the less control you have over your work, the more likely you are to become depressed. Human beings have an innate need to feel that what they're doing has meaning and purpose. And if you're just controlled all the time, so you don't have any autonomy, you can't invest what you're doing with meaning, and you will feel like shit. And this has been shown very clearly.

Now, to go back to the story about the cow, again, that opens up a very different way of thinking about antidepressants. That means that if someone is in a controlled workplace, they're not depressed because something has gone wrong inside their brain; they're depressed because something's gone wrong in the world, and the way the world works.

I went to Baltimore to see an experiment in a different way of doing this, and there was this woman called Meredith Mitchell who used to go to bed every Sunday night just feeling sick with anxiety. She dreaded the week ahead. She worked in an office job. It wasn't the worst office job in the world, but she just couldn't believe that this was going to be the next 40 years of her life.

Her husband, Josh, had worked in bike stores in Baltimore since he was a teenager, and that's very controlled work, and it's very insecure work. One day Josh and his colleague thought, "What does our boss actually do all day while we fix all the

bikes?"

Meredith and her husband, Josh, quit their jobs.

They decided to set up their own bike store, but they didn't want to run it in the old way. What they did was run it as a democratic cooperative. They made all the decisions for the company together; they shared out the good tasks and the bad tasks; they shared all the profits. They had collective control.

What was interesting to me about Baltimore Bicycle Works was how quickly their depression and anxiety had gone away. It's not like they quit their jobs fixing bikes and went to teach surfing in the Florida Keys. They fixed bikes before, and they fix bikes now. What changed was the aspect of work that makes people depressed, which is the lack of control.

E.G.: *We all know people who have not suffered a major trauma, who have a nice house, who have a loving family, they seem to have it all – but they have depression. How do you explain that?*

J.H.: If you read a lot of the feminist books from the '60s, there's a really common thing that they say, which is: Women would go to their doctor, they'd say to their doctor, "There is something wrong with my nerves because I've got everything a woman could possibly want. I've got a nice husband who doesn't beat me, I've got a car, I've got two children, and yet I feel terrible." And doctors would say, "Oh, you're right," and give them Valium or whatever.

Now, if we could go back in time and talk to those women, we'd say, "You've got everything a woman could possibly want, by the standards of the culture, but the standards of the culture are just wrong. You actually need much more than this culture is offering you. You need purpose, and you need to feel you have autonomy and meaning, and you need equality."

I think that's similar to what's happening now. There are plenty of people who have everything you could possibly want but are still depressed. But they have everything you could possibly want by the standards of the culture, which has mistaken what human beings really need.

For thousands of years, philosophers have said, "If you think life is about getting money and status and showing off, you're not going to be very happy." But weirdly, no one had actually scientifically investigated this until this guy, Tim Kasser at Illinois State University, and basically what he shows is that there are two ways we can motivate ourselves as human beings.

If you play the piano in the morning just because you love playing the piano and it gives you joy, that's an intrinsic motivation – you're doing it not because you want to get something out of it, but just because you love the act itself.

If you play the piano in a dive bar that you hate, to pay the rent, or to impress a man to have sex with you or to please your parents, that's an extrinsic reason for doing it. You're not doing it because you love it, you're doing it to get something out of it.

It turns out, the more you are driven by extrinsic motives, the more likely you are to become depressed and anxious, the more you will feel your life is inauthentic.

We have a culture which is constantly

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