

Vis Medicatrix Naturae - The Healing Power of Nature

Author - Doc Rob

While the excitement of the emerging industry is palpable, for many years there have been controversies, debates and countless conundrums surrounding Cannabis. The history of this plant is tainted with misinformation campaigns and racial undertones. We were told for decades that it is a gateway drug, dangerous and highly addictive, and that it possesses no known medical benefit. We now know that there are numerous health benefits, that it appears to be far safer and less addictive than alcohol, and it is now even being used to help people get off harmful opioid-based drugs, many of which have been legal and wreaking havoc in our communities at unprecedented levels.

Even something as basic as what to call it, ie: Cannabis, Hemp, Marijuana, Pot, Ganja, Weed, Grass, Herb, Bud, Mary Jane, etc. or comparing and choosing different ways to consume it, ie: smoking, eating, vaping, ingesting orally, applying topically, or even insertion rectally, can make your head spin. The modern cannabis industry is taking shape with legalization slowly spreading nationally and across the globe. With exponential growth not seen since the tech boom of the 1980's, it is becoming more and more likely that cannabis will have an impact on your life, personally, professionally, or both.

How do you feel or react to a friend or family member who may be dealing with an illness, and expresses interest in trying medical marijuana as a treatment option. What if you or a loved one becomes a patient and wants to go on vacation or business trip, will you be able to take your cannabis medication with you? Will you educate your children about the safe and responsible use of cannabis, similar to conversations about alcohol and safe sex? Maybe you own a company in a state that has legalized cannabis for medical or adult use, and you are now forced to reevaluate your HR policies, your approach to drug testing and the impact on employee health insurance coverage. A legal industrial hemp industry looks to disrupt many long standing and inefficient industries, those currently leaving large carbon footprints and destroying our planet. While working to reduce the amount of petroleum based plastics, chemicals, pesticides, and other man-made compounds negatively impacting our environment, we will see cannabis derivatives integrated or replacing everyday items from clothing to car parts, building materials to bio-fuels. Where Cannabis has been legalized, the industry has already had a noticeable effect on housing, employment, tax revenue and much more. The positive impact has far outweighed the negative, but there's no denying growing pains still exist.

As the walls of prohibition start to crumble around the world, It is both imperative and feasible to get a better understanding of cannabis, whether you personally use it or not. The scientific community is working to clarify misconceptions. The political landscape is shifting towards greater acceptance. Market research suggests that Cannabis will have nearly a \$150 Billion dollar market value by 2025. With big money on the table, the risk of history repeating itself looms and it becomes imperative to become more acquainted with the subject.

Recognizing that my relationship and experiences with this plant are surely different from yours, and nearly everyone else's for that matter, we encounter our first conundrum. Good experiences or bad, long time user or exploring for the first time, we all have our own viewpoint. Your perception and acceptance of Cannabis may be skewed by where and when you grew up, your environment and education level, or personal experience such as whether or not you "experimented" in college.

Fortunate for me, I grew up in the beautiful Catskill mountains of New York, a few miles from the historic Woodstock Festival of '69. My perception of a plant called Marijuana resonated with things like peace and love, great music, and community more than with anything negative or harmful. I had the opportunity to grow up interacting with Nature. I climbed trees, went swimming and fished in the lakes, played Little League and loved skiing in the winter. Like many, we had a vegetable garden in the Spring/Summer and Grandma's cherry tomatoes were always something to look forward to. We shopped locally as much as possible and I remember going to the farmer's market, excited to see all the different things they had. I believe this connection with Nature planted the seed which helped shape the life and career I have now.

While my childhood experiences provided stable roots, my education and career focus has allowed me to branch out and truly appreciate Cannabis, as well as many other gifts from Nature. As someone who has studied a great deal about this amazing but complicated plant, and with respect to Mother Nature, this book was assembled so that in addition to my own, I've invited others to share their experiences and perspectives as part of an evolving conversation.

In all honesty, I struggled a bit on the scope of content I wanted to contribute in this book. There are so many aspects of this subject requiring discussion and debate, including but not limited to its role in healthcare, legal matters, banking and financial implications, and perhaps even how many times you should use puns in a chapter of a book. Hehe, I finally came to realize that the best thing to do is share from my own journey and experiences. You may not be familiar with who I am, or why I find it so important to contribute to the conversation, so the following is meant to provide a little context to my personal perspective and considerations, both positive and negative, while addressing some of the key aspects of Cannabis. Based on my experience and education, I feel qualified to share, and hope you agree.

B.S. in Human Biology

It all started in college. Yes, I am one of those who experimented with Cannabis while away at school. I found it helped with my pain, sleep, stress management and even improved my ability to focus. My studies in school were centered around Biology and Anthropology. My interests had always been to work in the healthcare industry, but after volunteering in a local area hospital pharmacy, I quickly became disenfranchised with the plethora of pills being pushed on the patients. (Say that five times fast). Learning about traditional cultures, their diets and rituals, a common theme presented. They all had a profound respect for Nature. Very often their lives depended on it. They also relied on a strong community and a commitment to survival using whatever Nature provided. The practical use of herbs in healing, in the diet, and for spiritual practice can be found in societies dating back thousands of years. This most definitely included the use of Cannabis.

Naturopathic Doctor

My experience as a Doctor of Naturopathic has helped provide insight on how the various cannabis compounds and delivery systems may effect the body. When using Cannabis to address a health condition or to promote overall well being, it is important to properly dose and consider any interactions with other medications, supplements, or herbs. Though the overall safety is impressive, even with children, it is still recommended to work with a health professional, especially when looking to integrate Cannabis into a treatment protocol for a complex or chronic disease. Naturopathic Doctors believe in the healing power of Nature (*Vis Medicatrix Naturae*), as well as the body's own ability to heal itself. We also look to identify the underlying cause of disease and treat the whole person (*Tolle Causam*).

My career path has been intentionally less focused on individual patient care and more so directed towards health education and innovation. *Docere*, or “Doctor as Teacher” is another key principle of being a Naturopathic Physician. With an obvious comfort when on stage or in front of an audience, and a tendency to be naturally loquacious, it has become one of the principles I hold most dear. As a professor, podcast host, and spokesperson for industry leading brands in the Natural Products & Foods Industry, I’ve had the opportunity and privilege to educate, engage, and entertain on a variety of subjects. I’ve enjoyed a “behind the scenes” look working with some amazing companies, witnessing the the ups and downs, benefits and challenges, and inevitable growing pains an emerging and disruptive industry goes through. Most people had never heard of probiotics or thought to try an acai bowl with chia seeds a few years ago, but that’s no longer the case today. With increased education, scientific research, and improving quality control in cultivation and manufacturing, Cannabis compounds and derivatives will too find their place in doctor’s offices, pharmacies, supermarkets, restaurants and health food stores. If they haven’t already, theres a good chance they will soon end up in your own home as well.

I’ve seen first hand the way cannabis relieves pain, assists digestion and GI function, helps with sleep, and supports an individual’s Endocannabinoid system, improving overall well being. Cannabis can effectively treat disease, both acute and chronic, and at the same time will play a role in disease prevention, helping optimize a person’s health and vitality. Lifestyle and dietary changes also need to be considered. At least when you exercise, you will soon be able to use a form of Cannabis to assist with inflammation, pain, and aid in recovery too.

An article I once wrote referred to Cannabis as a “gateway” herb. My hope is that as result of the attention this one plant is getting, for all its proven health benefits, a door to greater acceptance of herbal medicine and plant-based healing will open. It is important to recognize, in the effort to both prevent and treat disease, that there are many safe and effective natural remedies and plant based/herbal options available. From Asia to the Amazon, many of these have been used for centuries, having proven efficacy and scientific standards. In fact, organizations such as the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA) help promote quality standards and serve as a voice for herbal products and consumer safety. AHPA’s Cannabis committee, which I am proud member of, is just one example of the many organizations working to further legitimize Cannabis as a safe, herbal option. Be assured, there’s a global community of scientists, researchers, medical professionals and industry experts who are focused on identifying the pros and cons of Cannabis. I’m honored and proud to play an active role in reintroducing this plant back to the world.

Natural Foods Chef

As a trained chef, I consider Cannabis more as an herb or vegetable, a plant based superfood in fact, similar to kale, almonds, and cacao. Herbs like Rosemary and Sage, while today commonly used in cooking to infuse flavor, were traditionally valued for the ability to impart a physical effect to the person consuming it, or to the food itself. We drink herbal teas like Chamomile, Valerian root and Lavender to reduce anxiety and aid sleep. We know that chocolate contains magnesium and our body often craves it when deficient. There is an art to cooking, and in addition to the esthetic appeal, I am truly impressed when ingredient choices are made with nutritional considerations, offering both flavor and functionality.

I hope you can appreciate that a chef is an artist, carefully blending a palate of ingredients to create smells and flavors, intending to stimulate an experience of some kind. Some are best served raw, others require a cooking method of some type. The properties, including nutritional benefits, often change as we manipulate something from its Nature-given form. This

transformation can be positive, as seen when making nutrients more bioavailable through fermentation, but can also prove negative like when heating certain oils at too high a temperature.

We are continually exploring more ways to use Cannabis as a food, infusing extracts into snacks, beverages, and entrees. Many are familiar with popular edibles in the form of brownies, cookies, gummies, and chocolates. The emerging industry now offers a much wider assortment of consumables, products ranging from sparkling herbal tonics to infused ice cream and pizza. A true spectrum of options tantalize the tastebuds, from gourmet cuisine to traditional comfort food. We also see the potential for fresh leaves in salads, blending Cannabis/Hemp in to smoothies, juicing it like wheatgrass shots, and more. Did you know that when you eat Cannabis raw, even though there is a form of THC in it (THC-A), you can't and won't get "high"?

The US already imports a significant amount of hemp protein powders, hemp seed oils, and hemp fiber for use in food and supplements. Though there remains some confusion as to what parts of the plant are being used and the difference between Marijuana and Hemp, the nutritional benefits are well established. With its ability to grow in a variety of climates and conditions, hemp is a much needed option for the future of our food supply. As stated earlier, Cannabis/ Hemp products have been used for thousands of years in cultures all over the globe. With the passage of the 2018 Farm Bill, the dream of many to see hemp legal and growing throughout the United States again will soon become realized.

While my undergraduate studies focused on traditional diets, cultures, and natural remedies, my culinary school training took that knowledge to the next level, helping me see the potential of using food as medicine first hand. I find it amazing and inspiring to watch the culinary community work to infuse Cannabis into food products, exploring how this plant and others can be better incorporated into our daily lifestyles. **Please keep in mind, that whether consuming socially, medically, or for nutritional purposes, it is important to always consume responsibly.*

Consultant for Dietary Supplements and Natural, Functional Foods

With this increase interest in the plant, around the world there are numerous clinical studies and research efforts working towards a better understanding of Cannabis and the over 500 compounds found within. With both excitement and trepidation, I anticipate some big developments and challenges as demand continues to grow. Will the CBD market become saturated? How will technology and innovation impact the quality and price of Cannabis products? How do you determine what strain or cannabis product is best for you? Which brands will survive and thrive in this rapidly changing market?

I've already mentioned a bit of my over fifteen years of experience working with dietary supplements and natural, healthy foods. There is great potential for cannabis-based products to be used effectively as dietary supplements, infused in food & beverages, cosmeceuticals, and more. Science has already begun to confirm that the whole plant, as Nature designed it, seems to work better than when isolating individual components. That doesn't mean there aren't scenarios where an individual needs to use or incorporate an isolated compound. We also see that some people benefit from lower doses while others require higher potencies, yet the full understanding of why is still yet to be determined. Some people prefer to abstain from products that produce a euphoric, psychoactive effect or "high", while others such as those facing terminal illness, welcome the levity and find comfort in the experience.

Conscious Consumer Advocate

Whether aware of it or not, anything you put in or on your body is a choice you make. It is your responsibility to do research, become more educated, and to find what works best for you. There are, and always will be, those individuals and companies who are just looking to make money on the current trends, taking advantage of desperate or uninformed people. While this is inevitable, there are also many people with real health issues who rely on this plant and need consistent access to safe, quality products and qualified health practitioners to support and advise them. Fortunately an increase in the number of health professionals and conscious consumers alike are becoming more educated, helping to hold cannabis growers and manufacturers to a high standard. Testing of materials, ingredients and finished products are important. Thankfully, Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and other standards have already been established by the dietary supplement and food industries and are being utilized by Cannabis companies more each day.

There's a huge industry exploding on the scene, creating jobs, revenue, consumer products, and more. We see a wide range of professionals from various industries, applying their skills and getting involved in the Cannabis Industry. Big alcohol has entered the game along with Big Tobacco and Big Pharma. The end to prohibition no longer seems unattainable and the "Green Rush", as it is often referred to, is upon us.

By sharing the content above I hope that I have provided some insight and spurred your interest to continue forward. Addressing Cannabis and its reintroduction into modern society, as this book attempts to do, is a conundrum in itself. It is likely that in doing so, we actually raise more questions than we are able to provide concrete answers. The chapters which follow are written by a select group of contributors, intended to help cover a wide range of content. It should soon become obvious that there are numerous perspectives and nuances to consider, and that while this chapter has come to an end, this is just the beginning of the conversation.