

# THE Restore Sessions

Episode 2

## ENLIGHTENMENT NOW

Debrief Summary

### Experts



Dr. Susan Matt

Professor of History,  
Weber State University



Dr. Dimitrios Liokaftos

Sociologist and  
specialist in human  
enhancement,  
Wellcome Trust



Dr. Will Siu

Psychiatrist and advisor  
to Bexson Biomedical  
and People Science

# Why are people dropping out to tune back in?

# 73%

of Americans are more conscious of needing self-care in 2020, and 69% plan to do more self-care in 2021

Good News Network, 2020

*People are re-evaluating how they're achieving their 'ideal self', and assessing if their goals are aligned with their happiness. For many, that means taking a more forgiving approach to fitness, appearance, and optimisation.*

## Expert panel:

### **What does today's wellness culture reveal about individuals' approach for self-actualisation?**

Even if the approach is more forgiving or open, these pursuits come from a place of 'not feeling settled'. And both the wellness and pharmaceutical industries play a significant role in perpetuating a mindset of discontent or restlessness — in turn encouraging people to always see themselves as works-in-progress.

*Dr. Will Siu*

Many are skeptical of the idea that mindfulness alone will solve inequality and hardship. But today, we continue to put many burdens on 'the self' rather than looking at systemic or structural issues that limit freedom and opportunity. As counterculture becomes "over-the-counter" culture, wellness is still very much becoming about tailoring 'the self' to market conditions.

*Dr. Susan Matt*

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## Why is there fresh respect for new age attitudes?

1 in 10

adults in the UK say they are microdosing, a 43% rise since the start of the pandemic

Lifesearch, 2020

*Once 'alternative' or 'fringe' therapies are finding newfound respect, thanks to trust in science-backed studies, growing interest in decolonised and indigenous practices, and demand for personalised healthcare.*

### Expert panel:

#### **What social and behavioural factors are driving increased interest in alternative therapies?**

Since the rise of mass production, people have been seeking out *differentiation* as a status signifier — which is a powerful driver of the wellness industry. Today, we're seeing that manifest in extremes: from highly personalised health routines to how people are seeking out individualised cures to psychological maladies.

*Dr. Susan Matt*

Much of this behaviour is driven by extrinsic, rather than authentic or internal, goal-setting. These perceived values — including differentiation — are often misaligned with individuals' true values, which in turn leads to discontent. Brands often represent these perceived or extrinsic values, but [there's an opportunity to better] help individuals access their true values.

*Dr. Will Siu*



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# Why are people prioritising hard science?

In 2021, the importance of increasing science literacy has risen by

# 43

points

Ede1man, 2021

*From political 'truth decay' to a pandemic era marked by mixed signals — people need clarity. More people are prioritising fact-checked content and science-backed products – creating an opportunity to build loyalty through trust.*

## Expert panel:

### **How is trust established or eroded in communities?**

The Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam argues that face-to-face connections are important for building trust. Neighbourhoods, leisure clubs, and other associations form a social glue between people who might not otherwise meet. This has been in decline since the 1960s, but the COVID-19 era continues to exacerbate these trends and erode trust between different groups and communities.

*Dr. Susan Matt*

### **How is increasing scientific literacy helping people feel more in control?**

In a wider socio-political framework, we're seeing more competing ideas of health and expertise. We have a lot more scientific data in our hands, but access to influence is also much easier. There's an increased willingness of individuals to go to trusted peer reviewed therapies, so they can control and personalise their health solutions. But at the same time, there's the question of *how* scientific knowledge is being interpreted and used by individuals and groups. It's not a linear evolution, by any means.

*Dr. Dimitrios Liokaftos*

**See you on September 1st for Episode 3: Extreme City**

**CANVAS8**