

Patricia: Hello, beautiful souls and welcome to this week's podcast episode. Today I'm speaking with Stephanie Austin M.A., an astrological counselor, teacher, and writer, specializing in life purpose, career, and relationship since 1986. Her background includes a Master's degree in Consciousness Studies, a Bachelor's in Psychology, and extensive explorations in holistic health, eco-psychology, meditation, and inner work. An adjunct professor at John F. Kennedy University for 15 years, Stephanie has written for the Mountain Astrologer magazine since 1990. She is also the author of two e-books, *EcoAstrology: Finding Our Way Home* and *Life After Twinkies: A Holistic Guide to Dietary Change*. Her *EcoAstrology Update* newsletter, covering current astrological alignments and how to work with them, is available via email subscription at her website ecoastrology.com.

Well, Stephanie, thank you very much for joining me today. I've been looking forward to speaking with you, especially at the beginning of this new year, because you're looking ahead at some of the energies that we've got to work with during this year. And before we really dive into all of that. I would love it if you could share with our listeners, what it is about astrology that draws you to it. What do you love about it?

Stephanie: Several things. I love how it describes two different kinds of time. We often forget that our calendar, the very way that we mark time, is based on astrological astronomical cycles. The year is based of course on our earth's journey around the sun; the moon determines our monthly cycles. And the daily cycle is determined by the Earth's rotation. So astrology speaks to quantitative time. But it also speaks to cycles, which is more of a qualitative kind of time. There's a beautiful quote in the Bible: "To everything there is a season. There's a time for planting, a time for reaping." And astrology, especially the 12 stages of the zodiac, describe an archetypal progression that can be used on all levels, from the physical level of planting a seed and through its flowering, fruiting, and returning to the earth stages, to the evolution of consciousness. So for me, astrology reminds us that everything is connected, everything has its time as part of a larger progression. And it has also given me more compassion, and helped me understand there are many ways of looking at things, many different stages of development, and that they're all, from a higher point of view, equal. There's no one sign better than another. There's no one stage better than another. It's simply part of a cycle. So it's helped me to be more compassionate with myself and others, and to make sense of things that wouldn't otherwise make sense.

Patricia: Yes, and first of all, I want to go more deeply into this understanding of time and the cyclical nature. Because, of course, in our western world, we do tend to think of time as linear. But I think it is helpful for us to understand that these cycles come and go. And I think for us globally, now that we're in this time of extreme change and tumult, I think it's helpful to remember that we go through cycles of this sort of disruption periodically that help open us to new understandings. One of the things that you just mentioned about astrology, helping us really understand that all things are connected and interconnected. Of course, that's that's really the consciousness that we're coming into right, this unitive consciousness of this awareness that everything is connected. Astrology helps us understand the energies that are present for us to work with and cooperate with. I think sometimes people have the misunderstanding that it's sort of prescriptive.

Stephanie: It's a language of energy and cycles. It's a tool, and like any tool, can be used skillfully or with great harm. I didn't study astrology for many years, because I'd only been exposed to what I saw on the Sunday paper, the Sun Sign columns, which were very predictive and very disempowering, and unhelpful. I call it Astroracism now. So it wasn't until I was in graduate school and met a woman who was very spiritual, very intelligent, and an astrologer. And I couldn't reconcile those things. I thought, well, if she's into it, well there must be something I don't know about it. And so I asked her to do my chart, and I was blown away at how she validated my soul, from what she could see from that piece of paper. I was dumbstruck at how she could identify things that no one else had confirmed in my life. And it was tremendously healing and inspiring. I couldn't put the books about after that.

Patricia: So a whole new world of understanding just open up to you.

Stephanie: It did!

Patricia: As you look at where we are... so you and I are recording this conversation on January 6, which of course now has become associated with the anniversary of the insurrection last year. And I think a lot of people, you know, are really wondering, where are we? So as you look at where we are from the maps that you use, and the lenses that you use as an astrologer, what are you seeing globally, in terms of the energies that are present for us, to either work with and cooperate with or resist?

Stephanie: One rule of thumb that I found very useful is the farther a planet is from the sun, the longer its orbit, and the deeper the process of change it symbolizes. So these are energies that are constantly moving, generating sacred geometry, if you will, different matrices of energy. And it is particularly the outer planets, Jupiter, Saturn, I include Chiron as well, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto still is important. And beyond. The orbits of those bodies reflect major cycles in history. There's a wonderful book by Richard Tarnas, called *Cosmos and Psyche*, where he maps out the last 2000 years of history, coinciding with astrological cycles and their themes. So we notice these patterns. Astrology is essentially all about the cycles and patterns. And whenever certain planets come together, certain themes seem to arise in collective consciousness. And these are spirals; we never go through the same thing. Each year is different, right? We have, of course, January 6 every year. But we're a little older and wiser, hopefully every year. And so we're spiraling rather than hopefully not just recycling around and around. So the outer planet transits indicate these more major cycles.

And one, actually several, that we're still in the wake of, in 2020, we had a very rare alignment of Jupiter, Saturn and Pluto in Capricorn. And that is a confluence that only happens once every 735 years. So a very long cycle. The last time was in the late 13th century, which was the beginning of mechanized time, the beginning of our modern banking system, and the beginning of global trade. Marco Polo was just coming back from his travels to China, bringing back great inventions that were unknown in the West. Church clocks were just beginning to be installed, so that we no longer had to rely on the Sun and Moon to set dates to meet people. We could now point to the clock, so the beginning of our disconnect with nature, and then the beginning of trade between East and West. And so that conjunction, as it cycles back in 2020, indicates those kinds of themes, how are we doing in those areas, in terms of our relationship to the earth, to time and space, our relationship to money and materialism, and our relationship to

the global community and trade.

And then in 2021, just last year, we had an alignment between Saturn and Uranus, the two rulers of the Aquarian Age. We hear a lot about the Age of Aquarius from a variety of sources. That is based on the procession of the equinoxes, which is a 26,000 year cycle, and approximately every 2000 plus years, we move into a different age. What is called the Age of Aquarius would be the age of true equality, fraternity, and brotherhood, the theme of the French Revolution, and many revolutions around that time. It's the 11th stage in the zodiac. And so it's pretty far down the road, the twelfth stage being unitive consciousness. If we haven't mastered the previous stages, then we get into trouble with the 11 stage. Just like a plant, if it hasn't been able to develop a good root system, a strong stem structure, if it hasn't had the right nutrients, then it's not going to fruit and flower very well, right? It may not even flower at all. So astrology is very metaphoric in that way. By the eleventh stage, hopefully, we've mastered a sense of individuality. We've grounded ourselves in terms of a healthy relationship to our body and the earth, you know, and so on. But if not, then we don't do group consciousness very well. Ideally, it's about recognizing our common humanity, that we're all in this together, that we're all equal, regardless of whether we're black or white, or green, whatever our religious background or political leanings, any of the divisions that we can create, to separate us, but to honor the diversity of all of us, to recognize our unity in that diversity, to appreciate, the individual gifts of each person, but then also to recognize that we need to collaborate rather than compete, that we're here to make progress, to resolve inequities and inequalities, to be humanitarian, as well as human beings.

If we haven't mastered Capricorn, the sign that deals with our relationship to power and authority, our relationship to responsibility, and what we consider as success in life, our goals, our objectives, our standards for what will be a good life. If we haven't navigated that, if we haven't developed an internalized sense of authority, where we don't need to be told, what to do, where we know what's right in our hearts, and we don't not do something because we're going to be punished for it. Like we don't harm others, because we know we're connected. We don't harm the Earth, because we feel our connection with that. But if we don't have that, then we look outside of ourselves for approval, for permission, for validation. We give our power away, essentially. And so if we haven't in the 10th stage of Capricorn developed a healthy sense of self respect, self reliance, integrity, a good sense of responsibility — not over or under, you know, not blaming others, not giving our power away, not looking for a savior or rescuer, but also not being a martyr not taking on more than our share: knowing what is our job, what is ours to do, and what is not.

So ultimately, coming to the stage where we're conscious creators. We are conscious of the choices that we're making, and the consequences of those choices. Capricorn relates to the planet Saturn. Every sign in astrology has a planet that closely corresponds with it. If you look at the mythology, you already know a lot of astrology. Saturn, the Reaper, is an ancient archetypal agricultural figure. As we sow, we reap, a very ancient maxim. A very simple but profound teaching that, if we plant tomato seeds, we can't expect rose bushes. So what we put our energy into, what we set our intentions for, what we spend our time and energy on, we of course reap consequences. And to become aware of long term consequences, not just immediate ones, is also part of Capricorn. For seven generations. Native American Native tribes have been much more conscious of stewarding the earth for those to come, for many generations after us. Capricorn is the third earth sign. In astrology, there are three earth signs, three water, three air and three fire signs. The first one in the sequence is personal. The second is interpersonal, and

the third is transpersonal or collective. So Capricorn, being the third earth sign, is about collective responsibilities, collective power, collective resources.

Patricia: As you speak of this Stephanie, I'm just really appreciating how we each have a role to play in this planetary moment in terms of doing our own inner work, and really coming to understand our own authority and our own power to be co creators.

Stephanie: Absolutely, yes, each one of us makes a difference by the choices we make, by the level of awareness we hold. Absolutely.

Patricia: And then, of course, also each of this, all of these energies get filtered through our own charts, because we each have our own personal life lessons.

Stephanie: Yes, we have our own Dharma, our own destiny, our own life purpose. Our charts are like a roadmap for our highest potential. Each sign in that chart, each each planet represents a different aspect of consciousness. And each one has its skillful expression, and its shadow side. And of course, many things shape us — our inheritance, our genetics, our education, our cultural background, religious upbringing, and so on. So there are many factors that go into shaping how that's expressed. And each person is a unique individual. That's another factor. That's a paradox. Astrology reminds us that even though these cycles repeat, they're never exactly the same. Our entire solar system is rotating around the center of the Milky Way galaxy, so we are constantly moving through new sectors of space, even though these patterns repeat. There's something unique about each moment in time, and for each person who's born at that moment.

Patricia: I receive your newsletter, and I also received your yearly forecast, and I want to make sure that people know about that as well. One of the things that you mentioned was about the United States, and that countries also have their sort of natal charts, and that the United States is in a moment of Pluto return. Can you talk about that?

Stephanie: Yes, just as individuals have charts, countries have charts. And so if we use the July 4 1776 date, in Philadelphia, as the founding of this country, Pluto was at a certain point in the sky, at 27 degrees of Capricorn. And this year, and depending on some other calculations for the next several years, that is cycling around again. So there's a reiteration of those themes, and the opportunity to go to the next level. Again, it's a spiral, looking at how far we've come since 1776; where we are in the process that planet symbolizes, and where we can go next. Pluto, in essence, is very much about the shadow, about evolutionary edges. If we think of it as a metaphor, mythologically, he's the god of the Underworld, right? So where we are often abducted by life, taken like Persephone, into the Underworld, through a loss of some kind, of severe illness, the death of a loved one, you know, things that we normally would never choose to do, but are initiations and transformative experiences where we, if we do the work, emerge more empowered, more conscious, more whole, and more able to be of true service in the world. So any Pluto transit is often a difficult passage, but an incredibly fruitful one, if we are able to go all the way through and not get stuck in the underworld, stuck in the shadow, in the unconscious. In the US chart, Pluto is in a section called the second house that deals with values, resources, money. In a country's chart, that section deals with finances, the stock

exchange, the economic systems and so on, but primarily values. What do we value? What do we ground on? What how do we value ourselves? So it's about self esteem as well self worth, and what we value in terms of how we spend our time and energy. What we spend our dollars on speaks to our values, and our time and energy as well. So this Pluto return, essentially, in my understanding, is looking at what are the fundamental values of this country? And how do our institutions reflect those values? How are we using the structures and the forms that we have available to us to conserve our resources. Do use them wisely, for the benefit of those coming after us hopefully? Or are we doing the shadow side of Capricorn, which is materialistic, self absorbed, the misuse of power in all its different forms —corruption, manipulation, tyranny, intimidation, and so on. So it's a time of really taking stock, and hopefully coming back to the high road of Capricorn and Pluto.

Patricia: Yes. And that conversation about what are the values that just seems so core to what we're experiencing in our society right now — What will be the values that that guide us forward? And you also mentioned that Pluto has to do with the shadow?

Stephanie: Yes, of course, this country has a huge shadow.

Patricia: Yes. And I think that that's what we're experiencing now, this revealing of of the shadow. And the question then is, how do we work with that?

Stephanie: This country's shadow has many levels. We were founded on genocide, the extermination of the indigenous population, and then the enslavement of people brought from Africa, the legacy of white supremacy and patriarchy, the environmental devastation, corporate domination, and so on, and the illusion of materialism. So all that is encoded in that second house Pluto. So how we deal with the shadow? How do we make the unconscious conscious? there has to be at a certain point a choice to face the dark, to not deny, or turn away or pretend that it's not there. There are many ways to do that on a psychological and spiritual level. But essentially, it all comes down, I think, to that first choice of coming out of denial and recognizing. When something is in the dark, we can't change it. It's only by becoming aware that we have choice, that we can make a different choice. So the gift of Pluto is that yes, it does bring things up into consciousness, it seems to reveal, expose things that have been flying below the radar for centuries, in this case for for many, many years. So by stopping, taking a deep breath, and the willingness to look into the dark to see what's really there. I use the metaphor of on a personal level of going down into the basement of our houses or into the closets or garages, and unpacking boxes that we've forgotten we've even had maybe. And as we unpack those stored materials, we find some treasures we might have forgotten, but a lot of junk and things that we need to release, throw away, or pass on. So it's unpacking what's been stored in the unconscious that is required of all of us, and looking at these difficult issues that are still unhealed in our collective shadow in this country.

Patricia: Yes, and there is, I think, you know, I see both impulses playing out right now with the willingness to look at that, and then also the forceful denial or refusal to look at it. And that's where, for me, it comes back to what you said earlier about how each of us has a role to play in that we can claim our own authority, and to do our own work, and not to allow ourselves to

become disempowered, thinking that oh, well, not everybody is on board with this, therefore, it's a lost cause. But to really do our own work and step up to the plate in that way.

Stephanie: Absolutely. Yes, the gift of Capricorn, the 10th sign is sovereignty, recognizing that we are in charge of our choices and our lives. We cannot always change our circumstances, but we can change our responses. I like to use the example of Viktor Frankl, who suffered the atrocities of being in a concentration camp for three years during World War II, and came through that with tremendous wisdom and spiritual growth from that experience, rather than being crushed by it. That even in those extreme circumstances, where there was very little choice, you could still choose to be kind, you could still choose to retain your humanity, no matter what the outer circumstances were. So yes, no matter how hard it seems, we can always choose how we respond. And that is what is being called forth right now for all of us. How do we respond to this? How do we hold our center, our humanity, our awareness in a way that is kind rather than conforming to the the shadow side of Capricorn?

Patricia: Yes, our freedom to respond, and what meaning we make, our search for meaning.

Stephanie: Exactly.

Patricia: What meaning are we giving to these times? What meaning are we giving to the circumstances of our own lives. That can make such a difference. I think that comes back to what you were saying before about moving out of the victim mentality or the martyr mentality. And to really, as you say, claim our sovereignty to, know that we can respond to life in our own way. And we don't have to follow the script, and especially that shadow script, right?

Stephanie: Yes.

Patricia: So as you look at this, at this year ahead, and I want to let people know, first of all, just to make sure that everybody knows this, that you send out reports, both on the new moon and the full moon. And you have a yearly forecast of what's ahead. I received that myself, it's a two hour teaching that you give with six handouts of what's coming in terms of the movements of the planets, and so forth. It's a fabulous resource. I just want to make sure that people know that, and they can find that on your website, sign up for that at ecoastrology.com.

And as you look ahead, at the energies that are going to be with us in 2022, what advice would you have for us about how we might move forward and be a positive influence in a very turbulent time?

Stephanie: Well, one of the things that I think is going to be very supportive this year, in particular, is that we have a planet that is picking up the spiritual energy so to speak. Jupiter is the planet that goes with meaning, purpose, how we frame things, our perspective on life, our sense of understanding, and so on. Jupiter moved into Pisces just a few days ago, and will be there until May, then it dips into the next sign of Aries, goes back into Pisces a little later this year, for a few more months, so back and forth. But while in Pisces, 12th sign in the zodiac, it's in the sign that calls us to unitive consciousness, reminding us that we're all interconnected and part of a much larger whole. It joins another planet already in Pisces. Neptune has been in Pisces since 2011 and will be there until 2026. Neptune has a longer cycle, a 168 year cycle, while

Jupiter is only 12 years, so much quicker. Jupiter spends about a year in a sign; Neptune spends 14 years in one sign. So it picks up the wind so to speak, a tailwind for going into this more compassionate terrain.

Like every sign and planet, there's a shadow side to that as well. The downside or shadow side of Pisces and Neptune would be to lose ourselves inappropriately, rather than to merge with, with God or Spirit, the Tao, whatever you want to call that higher power. We get lost in addictions or codependency or what I call looking for God in all the wrong places. If we haven't developed a healthy sense of identity, then we can't transcend that. Then we just simply lose ourselves in whatever seems to be easiest and most available. So we feel spacey, less grounded, more confused, but if we take the time to develop that center through yoga, meditation, any kind of practice that grounds us in a deeper reality, nature of course is always in unitive consciousness, unless it's been fractured by human development. Being grounded in those practices and environments helps us to remember and come back to that center place that is eternal and connected and knows the truth.

Jupiter will be in Pisces until May 13 and then goes into Aries until the end of July and then later goes back into Pisces, October 27 until December 20. So that gives additional support for discovering a spiritual understanding and meaning, recognizing the power of the heart and the power of love. So meditation, nature, the any of the arts when they're done with that intention, dreamwork, divination tools like astrology, the Tarot, mythology, studies like animism, interspecies communication, intuition development, any of the energy healing practices, entheogens — there are many ways to go into this more unitive state. And depending on our individual charts, our conditioning, and the availability in our lives, we can do it in any number of ways. It's always been important, but I think really imperative these days to have some kind of quiet time daily; if not a formal meditation practice, then some time out where we turn off our devices, and go listen to the birds, or go for a walk on the beach, or do something where we turn inward and and remove ourselves from all the pressures of modern technological life, to reconnect with that deeper truth.

Patricia: Yes, it's so helpful to know that we have this support this coming year for these sorts of things. And that we've got these energies and this support as we cultivate that unitive consciousness in ourselves. One of the other things that I found really interesting in your yearly forecast was you talked a little bit about space weather. Could you just say a word about that?

Stephanie: Yes, that is something that is beyond astrology. Just like we have weather on the earth, we have space weather that comes in from our sun and beyond, from quasars and pulsars, the center of the galaxy, there are transmissions of highly ionized particles called plasma that are constantly bombarding the Earth's magnetosphere. Normally, our atmosphere screens out most of those. But the Earth's magnetic field has been weakening, and so more of those rays are coming in. And the percentage of those rays that penetrate the earth's field also are determined by solar activity. The more sunspots there are, the more solar flares and what are called coronal mass ejections, solar burps if you will, those are huge flashes of light, which encode information.

We don't often think of light as information, but it is. It encodes a variety of wavelengths. A few years ago I would have rolled my eyes at this, but it makes sense to me now that light that we see from our sun and from other stellar sources and beyond, are also facilitating the evolution of consciousness. They have been shown to affect our DNA, our

nervous system, our pineal gland, and our consciousness. So when we have solar flares, in particular, I often feel immediately a little bit off. Sometimes it's I'm extremely tired all of a sudden, and then I'll check the spaceweather.com website and find that there was just a solar flare. That can be quite disorienting, because they are in essence recalibrating our nervous system and our inner consciousness; our wiring is being upgraded. And we're coming into what's called a solar maximum. The sun has an 11 year cycle, a sunspot cycle, where it goes from very few sunspots to often 100 or more. And the more active it is, the more burps, the more solar flares happen, and the more times we are getting these upgrades. That will occur in the late 2024 to 2025. I mentioned in one of my updates that there have been studies corresponding pandemics with solar flare activity too. So these things definitely affect human consciousness, and also correspond with major historical events. There have been studies looking at events for the last 200 years, and 80%, I believe, corresponded with major events, global happenings that were significant. So we're being affected by not only the planets in our solar system, but of course, our sun, and beyond our sun as well.

Patricia: It really boggles the mind, really, to start to take in the scope of how you know all of these influences that we are part of and receiving and participating in. I think we often as human beings can get locked in this idea that we're living our own little separate lives, which is so far from the truth. I just really appreciate how you articulate all of these influences that are with us and supporting us really. I want to also say I've mentioned your new moon and full moon reports. One of the things I also really appreciate about your work is all of the other resources you bring in to help contextualize what we are going through. It's just a wealth of wisdom. So I really appreciate all the work that you put into that every month, twice a month.

Stephanie: Thank you. Yes my intention is that it be useful. Information is helpful, but if you can't apply it, if we can't use it, it's not really worth it. We are at such a pivotal time in history. It's all hands on deck, so to speak. I think we're at the tipping point, if not just beyond the tipping point. I think more people have chosen and are continuing to choose to move forward, although it looks dicey, and certainly we have a lot of work left to do. So, yes, it's helpful to have resources and ways to work with these energies, because they are in our lives. It's not abstract at all. It's actual energy. One of the other reasons I got into astrology was I would feel these shifts, and I would look around and feel that something just changed, but I couldn't pinpoint it. When I began watching these cycles, I found that I could tell when the moon changed signs, a quarter of a million miles away. I was that sensitive. But I used to think I was crazy, because I couldn't find a language for it. And so we're all feeling this, we're all responding to but it's not always conscious. Once we begin to turn our attention toward it, we can notice those cycles, and work with that energy, rather than fight it, going downstream rather than upstream.

Patricia: Thank you so much, Stephanie. I really, again, appreciate your taking the time to be with me. And once again, your website is ecoastrology.com. And, again, I just thank you for all the beautiful work that you're putting out into the world. There's so many people who are bringing their own expertise and their own perspectives, to this moment, this global moment. And thank you for being your light. And for sharing it with us.

Stephanie: And my gratitude to you, Patricia, for your wonderful work and the bright light that you shine into the world.

Patricia: Thank you and many blessings, Stephanie, in this new year, and blessings to all of our listeners