Introduction to the Regenerative Life Podcast

Hi, I'm Dr. Scott Stoll and welcome to a regenerative life podcast where science becomes hope, food becomes a catalyst for healing and every conversation explores the profound connections between personal health, human flourishing and the earth and future that we will share together.

But more importantly, we'll explore one of the most important questions of our time. What happens when we actually begin living in alignment with the way we were designed?

Tell me about Dr. Drossman because he was one of your mentors. Yes. So Dr Dossman is a whale of an academic researcher within my specialty of gastroenterology.

And his work started in the early eighties and he always outside the box. He's highly unique because when he's still on faculty, he is retired now. And psychiatry.

Yeah, I'm always curious about these outliers. Like, they think differently. And they see connections that other people don't see. How was he different?

Why was it different. I think that he was an early adopter of seeing the human side. Right? We're not robots. We are not in the car.

Dr. Drossman and the Human Side of Medicine

You can't just like run a diagnostic on a car like you would with a that there's these other inputs that are distinctly human that he very early on identified, hey, this is relevant, right?

And it's not just the manifestation of disease. He actually has taught doctors for decades about bedside manner. Right. How do we talk to our patients?

How did we receive information? how do We have a sufficient bond to patients so that they're willing to share personal information that They're not even comfortable sharing with, you know, many people beyond perhaps their partner.

Right, right. I think it was beyond just the right questions, right? So he was empathically connecting with people and recognizing them as a valuable individual.

There's ways that you go about this. And these are techniques that he taught that, like, I, think that there's value to not just winging it, but actually becoming intentional about your craft.

Yes. So an example would be that if you were sitting in the room, And if I come in and I stand over you with my arms folded, right? I've put you into a position where it's intimidating.

Yeah, there's a power difference. I even felt this as we're standing, but a hundred percent because that's hardwired into us as people. Right. Whereas when I.

And I turn towards you and. Damn on your eye level. All right. and make it clear that I'm ready to listen. Right? That really changes actually the dynamic of the encounter.

Yeah. I can't even feel the difference in my body as you do that. Right. And that's like body language. You know, of course there's books that define like what body which is and what it means and it can get very tactical, but it's also quite simple, which just understanding how to connect to another person and show them that you're open.

and that you are, like, that this is a safe place for them to share. So it's interesting because his work included that, but then what he started to see was in the sort of getting into the late 80s.

And he, at this time, he's a, you know, if he is not a professor of medicine, He's like a young academic, early career. And there was a pattern that gastroenterologists were seeing all over the place that we now call irritable bowel syndrome, right, or IBS.

And so this pattern, it didn't first show up in the 80s. Like there's papers from the 70s where people are kind of describing this, but they don't have a term for it.

So what Doug did, and forgive me, I'm going to call him Doug because he's my friend. This is Dr. Douglas Drossman, who's like this, you know, world leader, but he is my friends, so I call them Doug.

What Doug Did is he brought together a group of the leaders in the field within this space. And it was actually in Rome, Italy. And what they came up with was a framework, irritable bowel syndrome, which as we sit here in 2026, there is no blood tests, no poop tests.

There's no CAT scan that can allow a doctor to diagnose irrital bowel. Yet some estimates say that 20% of America has this. It's incredible. Right? And we don't have a diagnostic test.

So constellation of symptoms. It's the symptoms, right? And it's, the pattern and it says this reproducible pattern. So they put a framework to this pattern that they were seeing when they gave it a name and those are called the Rome criteria.

And that was version one. I don't think they realized how big of a thing this would become. Actually it was very interesting, Scott, because version five was just released in the last three weeks.

Awesome. Still first author. led by my mentor, Dr. Douglas Drossman. So, and he's, he is 80 years old now. I love that passion. But like, you know, this goes back to late eighties and she must've been roughly about my age at that time.

He started to notice once you had a way to, cause you can't study something if you cannot diagnose it. Right. Right, so in order to understand what causes this pattern, you first need to identify like who has the pattern.

So they did that. And then in the early 90s, they started to study it. He was one of the first people to publish saying that people who are exposed to childhood trauma are more likely to be diagnosed with these digestive health conditions.

Rome Criteria and Diagnosing IBS

So that was sort of the first evidence that we had that our experience in our life, right? It's not just the food that you eat. Like, again, it comes back to like, we're human, and that makes us special and unique.

And with that, There can be experiences in your life that linger, right? Or there can experiences that you're having right now that are creating adverse health effects.

So I think in today's world, this has become a much more accepted concept than it used to be. But when he was coming with this concept, people thought he a weirdo.

Like I can imagine that. Yeah. You know, if you had childhood trauma. pull it up by your bootstraps and move forward. Right. And no concept that these things leave an imprint and an emotional state in the body that can last a lifetime.

Yeah. So that's why I was lucky because it's interesting because I It was not my choice. It's like a divine assignment at that point, right? That's right.

How did you feel about that? I was upset. This is just the least of my interests. And now here we are and I write about the impact that this has had on my career.

in books that get read by many. So I was assigned to this clinic and it was the most unique clinic that I've ever worked in because we would have a half day of work and that would be two patients.

And they almost always were people who flew in, because they were failing, you know, six different doctors. No one could figure out what was going on.

And Dr. Drossman would have us, like I was the GI fellow. So my job was to review the medical records and understand like, is there any testing that's missing?

The answer every single time was these people have had every, single test. They have a binder this thick, five CAT scans, four colonoscopies, 12 doctors, right.

And sometimes what happens is some diagnosis. gets assigned and then it just lingers and no one ever takes a moment to step back and ask the question, is this right?

So nonetheless, like what I witnessed in that clinic was healing that defied anything that I understood about medicine. And I went to Georgetown for medical school and I was the chief resident at one of the top internal medicine programs, Northwestern in Chicago, was trained by great doctors.

And so I've been lucky from start to finish, trained by the best.

Trauma, Stress, and the Gut-Brain Connection

Then you see something that's like, hold on. So you're telling me that the answer to our problems is not their diet, their exercise, they're lifestyle, some medication they took.

The answer is their problems, is to get to a point of sufficient trust. between doctor and patient that you can take that thing from their past that they don't want to talk about because it hurts.

So what they've done with that. Thing is they have made it into the smallest package they could possibly have it. And they'd tucked it in the corner and they know it's there.

They know what's their, but they're kind of like a child pretending that But your body knows it's there. That's the issue. Is that you can pretend and not acknowledge it, but it is the truth.

And the Truth, when it comes to our body and our physiology, is what manifests. It doesn't matter what you want to be true or not want it to, it ultimately is The Truth.

This is wild to consider, like the healing that I saw. People who failed every single doctor and the answer wasn't in the newest technology. The answer was getting back to the basics of human connection, trust, a doctor patient relationship, and understanding the history.

I think just for everyone that's watching too and they're wondering, how is this actually contributing to IDS or disease? You have the trauma, you have a memory, but how's that activating chronic inflammatory states?

So the process of going from initial discovery to where we are today, it takes time, right? Dr. Drossman's initial research These were associations and we couldn't prove anything yet.

Here's where we are today. That when you experience a stressful moment, your body is hardwired with something called the autonomic nervous system. And that can basically be like you turning on your survival instincts.

And we call that the sympathetic nervous system. So in a moment where your life is threatened or some sort of

threat, right? The word threat becomes an important word here.

Because whether you acknowledge that it's a threat, I mean, it really doesn't matter how you feel about it. Right. Your body will interpret that as a thread.

You're safety security is threatened in some way. you do not feel safe. And so then you activate the sympathetic nervous system and it starts in the brain and there's this sequence of steps that occur.

The brain will release a hormone called CRH, corticotropin releasing hormone. And this is the activation of your sympathetic nervous system, and it will ultimately lead to the release of things like adrenaline.

And so your heart rate goes up, you're breathing fast, your locked in hypervigilant, Your muscles might be shaking, okay? You might sweating. Those are the manifestations of the acute, like sudden onset activation, of this sympathetic system.

designed to flee, fight, freeze, neutralize the threat to that safety. Right. So this comes from a background of like, imagine that you are out on your own and something is rustling in the bushes and you don't know what that threat is, but you know that there's a chance that it's not good, right?

So your body is basically putting you in a position where it is going to divert blood resources, energy, including sugar, It all gets diverted to like activate your muscles and get oxygen flowing through your body.

That's why your heart rate and your lungs pick up because it's in anticipation of you needing to do something physical to save your life. Right? So that's what that like sort of mechanism is.

And really designed only to be on a short time. Exactly. Run away and then at night sit around the campfire, tell the story, laugh. Emotions are dissipated and you kind of move on.

Which by the way is why human connection is such an important part of who we are and what we need. We can come back to that in a moment, but just to close out this thought, Any choice that diverts resources from one thing to another, one part receives, the other becomes deprived.

And so it's the gut that gets sacrificed because within the context of this moment where you need to basically do something to save your life. It is not the time to be digesting your food.

So you basically say like, we'll prioritize the muscles, the heart, lungs. This is what we're going to focus on. But then, you know, people like I don't know about you, but when I was in medical school on test days, it was such a pressure cooker.

Because these people are so smart, right? There's 150 people in my class and all of them were at the top of their class in undergrad. And half of us are going to be for the first time in our life below average.

You have this massive fear of failure because you're so used to being the best. Yeah. It's traumatizing. I just remember the bathroom, it was a line out the door.

Because we all on some level, we manifest what I'm describing in our gut, right? You may feel a little queasy, nauseated, sometimes it's adult discomfort.

Sometimes that dull discomfort builds into a wave. that lands with cramps, right? You may get diarrhea. Some people actually clam up and they get constipation.

Those are the manifestations of stress. So when we talk about the impact that stress has, it can manifest with those symptoms and the gut, but also what it does, It's been shown that it actually disrupts the Gut Barrier.

And when you take down the gut barrier, the Gut Barrier is what separates our gut microbiome from our immune

system. 70% of our Immune System is in our Gut.

So when You take Down the GUT Barrior, basically what ends up happening is things from the gut microbiomes start to sneak across. so we call that Wikigut and the immune System reacts to it.

And that is inflammation. and then this leads us on it into a vicious cycle. where the inflammation that got activated is going to further disrupt the gut barrier, which further destructs the microbiome and round and around this vicious cycle we end up going.

This is how you manifest inflammation. So, but a real life example of this, Scott, is that I had a patient that, I think about actually a good bit because I worked with her closely.

And this was by the way, after fiber fuel came out, right? So I'm applying these concepts that people know me for, and she was following my advice. She changed her diet, she changing her lifestyle, She was doing everything right.

And yet her ulcerative colitis, we could not get it under control no matter what we did. We were getting to a point where we were going to have to escalate into really strong medicine.

And then one day she comes in and I literally can just see it in her face. She looks healthy. she looks different. and she says to me, you know, Dr. B, I almost canceled today.

because I'm so much better, but I decided to come in cause I wanted to tell you that I am doing really well. And I sat down next to her and I go, you have to me.

What is it? What a gift she gave you. Right. So I was like, what is, like what it is that that was missing this whole time? Yeah. The fiber expert, the microbiome and gut expert.

I doing all the stuff for you, right? And as a great patient, she's acting upon the advice I've given her. That was not the issue. She says, well, I never told you this, but when I would get into my car in the morning to go to work, as soon as I got in, the car, my heart rate would jump up.

A Patient Story of Healing Through Change

My blood pressure went up, I was breathing heavy and I felt the stress because she had a boss who was, would characterize her boss as being verbally abusive, where she would be, you know, in a meeting with her peers.

And just like the rest of us, she wants her peers to accept her for being competent to core respect. And her boss would disparage her, verbally berate her.

It wasn't every single day, but it was often enough that she lived in fear every day. So that word fear, right? She didn't feel safe at work. And it required her to have the audacity that frankly, most of us, like this is hard.

She left the job, right? She had to make the decision that based upon this alone, she would leave the jock. And she did that and immediately she went into remission.

That was the last time I saw her because I don't think she ever flared again. That's a stunning story. Yeah. The power of trauma to impact a chronic disease.

Right. And how often are physicians asking their patients these questions or even developing a relationship where they feel safe to share that kind of information?

You know, relationships develop with time and trust and a safe environment and good, compassionate listening. And the problem is that, and I don't, like, I think doctors want time with their patients and the system deprives them of that.

And you get stuck into a position as a medical doctor where you run into the room. You hear just enough to make a decision on which medication, not enough time to talk about what to eat.

Not enough times to about other aspects and not even enough. Time to listen long enough, to get to the point of hearing something like this. Right. And our colleagues are in the same stress situation.

Yeah. High burnout rates, high cortisol, adrenaline levels, facing equal levels of disease that their patients have because of the system. That's right.

And this is actually a very important thing to surface directly because people hear the term burnout. And they may think that that is exhaustion, fatigue.

No, you can't sleep it off. You can take a two week vacation and be okay. There's something different that has changed. And so to me, burnout is us applying a unique term to trauma.

Trauma is what happens when we overwhelm our coping systems. So it tends to occur more in children because a child's ability to cope is much more limited than a mature adult, right?

They just don't have the ability. To process. But nonetheless, as adults, if you take a medical doctor and you overwhelm their coping mechanism, then you put them in a position where they can develop burnout.

And I think a big part of this story is that doctors sign up with a vision of a career that is defined by the doctor-patient relationship, defined my ethical medicine.

And then what ends up happening is the system imposes a requirement that forces them to sacrifice. So, in a way, they're facing a professional dilemma because, like, this is not what I signed up for, but they have to show up every day and do the thing because they are paying the bills.

Right. Yeah, that's right. And as harkening back to your earlier comment, it's a depletion. Resources are being, you know, shuttled here for survival at the cost of depleting the resiliency, the vitality, energy, to gut lining, gut microbiome, blood brain barrier, endothelium, all being impacted.

So, what's interesting is that this concept of safety, right?

Burnout, Safety, and Human Connection

So safety is not just you being able to lock yourself in your home at night and turn on a security system. In fact, I would actually argue that when I'm away from my family, they don't really feel that safe.

Because where we come from is the need for safety in numbers and social bond. So we are, we're innately social creatures and you can't take that out of us.

And you cant rationalize it away in a way. Uh, if you want to inflict harm on a person, of course we do not, but like isolation is the way that you do that.

Right. So now, and that could be an extreme form where like literally, uh, solitary confinement is torture. It's been used through history as a way to torture a person.

You put them in isolation. But like in today's world, you could ostracize a personal. you can remove them from the group, You can make them feel like they're no longer welcome as part of the Group.

And then where we come from is that our human connections, which really started with our family. Like family was the number one above all else. But the strength of the bonds to other people is what empowered our survival.

And we needed that. if that saber-toothed tiger were to show, our likelihood of survival is far higher if I have my

entire family and you and your entire and maybe one other family, and we're doing what we need to do to protect ourselves.

It's quite a few kids, right? Yeah, it's almost the football team. So that's where we come from. Whereas if you are alone, then your likelihood survival as much less.

survival was not attached to your job or your money. Those things didn't even exist. Survival was attached. To your human connection, your bonds, and we continue to carry that forward in the modern world where like we desperately need that connection.

And when we don't feel that. Which I think in today's world. A lot of people don't feel that. So a statistic from before the pandemic, before 70% of Americans report loneliness.

All right. The problem with this is that when we all retreat into our individual homes and we talk over devices, but we don' actually sit down together and talk like this.

We lose those bonds and then we don't feel safe anymore. And then what ends up happening is you activate your sympathetic nervous system because once again, you don' t feel save.

You feel threatened, whether you acknowledge it or not. This is the reason why they found, Scott, that, again I said 70% of Americans report loneliness.

Loneliness has been associated with the same level of mortality as being a rigorous smoker. Yeah, I think I read in the studies, six alcoholic beverages and 15 cigarettes a day.

That's right. Equivalent. Yeah. So, and that, you know, it's not something that we bring forward very often. Like Dan Buettner is one of the few people that I've heard who really brings forward the need for these bonds.

We often tend to fixate on sort of engineered mechanics of a healthy life. Here's the diet, here's lifestyle, you should exercise, cardio, aerobic resistance, like what do we do, right?

And then it's like really you need to get back to the human element, which is our need connection to other people. And I love what you're saying that, you know, safety is meaningful, loving connections.

And feeling unsafe or fearful is aloneness. That's right. I also think that one of the things that gets overlooked, but I actually feel is quite important, and I see this in the world today, is that we as humans, every single one, of us, I would challenge the people who are listening to our podcast right now to for themselves, like introspectively, Just think for yourself.

We all struggle with the same questions as adults. Who am I? Why am i here? What does my life mean? And what happens when I pass? Right? And what I've seen is that there is a loss of purpose for a lot of people that they're searching, trying to find some sort of a purpose, for their life to define it.

And also these questions of what happens at the end. I think people live in fear of this. This is why the longevity space has exploded so much. Don't get me wrong.

When I'm in my eighties, I would love to be healthy and dancing at like my grandkids wedding, right? But at the same time, these are things that we're all sort of grappling with and you need a way to resolve those questions that you are totally at peace in your heart.

So I think about that every culture in human history has landed on the same belief. Different places, different parts of the worlds, completely independent, not in contact with one another.

Yet all of them in their own way point to the sky and say, there must be something there. And there's never, to my knowledge, been a culture that their belief is just what you see is what.

Yeah. So there was a part of me that believes that like part, of what we need in the modern world is we mean more of each other. And part of what we need in the modern world is also to open our heart to the possibility of something greater, and that we're a part that.

Yeah, it's almost like the antidote is one word, which is a reconnection, right? Reconnection with self, reconnecting with creator, a connection with earth.

And that reconnections brings an internal reconnectation as well. Yeah, words like aligned, when you are aligned with those different elements, it actually becomes almost effortless because you've created the environment that is what your body needs, but also more importantly, deep down in your soul, that's what you need.

Yeah. And when there's healing at that deep level and that sympathetic nervous system kind of dials down, parasympathetic ramps up, You're naturally inclined to sleep better, eat healthier, move more, develop healthier relationships, reestablish trust.

Purpose, Faith, and Reconnection

A hundred percent. And it sort of has these downstream impacts on so many facets of our life that we don't necessarily think about, but it's there. So for people that are listening today, and I know it's resonating with people because it resonates with me, how can they begin this process of reconnecting that leads to healing?

You know, I've thought about this myself. And one of the things that I discuss in chapter eight of my book is my own struggles that You know, when I wrote Fiber Fueled in 2020, there was the story that I was willing to share.

And there were the skeletons in the closet that wasn't ready to come and bring forward. I had a complex relationship with my dad that goes all the way back.

It wasn´t until I have the support of my wife. and also being an adult and having children of my own that really allowed me to process and understand my dad and our own relationship.

And what I discovered was the opposite of what believed for most of life, which is that my Dad loved me deeply and cared enough even to have the challenging conversations at times and things like this, that everything that he was doing came from that place of love.

So eventually I got to a point where, cause I discussed this in the book. I hadn't talked to my dad since I graduated college. And we're talking about, I graduate college in 02 and my daughter was born in 14. 12 years.

And I gave him a call and we both needed that. And ended up losing my dad right before my book, fiber fueled was published in 2020, that period of like roughly 2014 until 2020. We had six good years.

Can imagine the healing reconnection, how good that felt. Yeah. And so it's hard for me because I feel on some level that I need to take personal responsibility for the mistakes that.

Albeit as a child in many cases, right? Or like patterns that started as. That you sort of reach a point, you know, he might be in your twenties. But you sort of pass the point in no return where it's not that easy to take it back.

I have to accept and take responsibility for those things. But also there's a part of me that's just so grateful for both of us that we were able to have those six years of special time together.

And that when my dad did pass. That's where the state of our relationship was. And so what I would say to people that you asked me a pretty basic question, where do we start?

I ran with it, but I think it starts with things like that of, and it doesn't need to necessarily be that big. But to me, it's picking up the phone, making that phone call, asking someone if they want to go grab a coffee.

Go grab a meal, take a walk, talk to each other, just giving people your time. And I also think that there is power in finding a community that aligns with your spiritual beliefs and leaning into that and exploring that, and opening up your heart and realizing, understanding.

That the relationship that you personally have with your creator is uniquely yours. It's special and no one else gets to have exactly what you have. And that's for you to explore.

I think there's a step two of empathizing with yourself that really opens up your heart to reconnecting with other people and just by simply saying, gosh, this was really hard.

It's been a really challenging time in my life. I endured a lot and I recognize that. And that point of like self-empathy, just hearing yourself say those words, I thing is a beginning of a healing journey too.

And, you know, we hear things like this, but I think it deserves to be said because it's real that sometimes what we think we're doing when we are holding other people accountable, were only causing harm to ourselves.

Healing Through Forgiveness and Community

And that in many cases, if there is a love that is sincere and true, then the path of forgiveness is actually the best path for both people. Right. And it's the most beautiful path forward, which releases our nervous system, our guts, and our bodies back to that peaceful state.

You take your foot off of the gas, you take you foot away from the sympathetic overdrive, then you allow it to come back into a place that's closer to the parasympathetic.

you make it easier to activate the parasympathetic. And when we get to this place, now we're not overtaxing our body. Now we are not, you know, flogging the horse.

Instead, where we were is we've now shifted to a new place of rest and recovery. That's where healing happens. Dr. Justin Marchegiani That is where heal happens and that's what everybody's looking for today.

I just really appreciate this conversation, Will. I think you've taken us down an important part of the journey. We talk about the power of plate and food and fiber and lifestyle and sleep.

But this is something that's not a part our conversation regularly, but it should be. Because to your point, it's about being human. It's recognizing that we were made for connection, connection at every level.

and part of our important healing journey as individuals and collectively as leaders is helping reconnect. Yeah, your body is hungry, hungry for that connection both to other humans and to something bigger.

I look forward to staying connected with you and taking this healing Journey around the world. This is the time the World needs this message. And I really appreciate you stepping forward with so much courage and vulnerability because that allows people to step into a space that they may not have been comfortable stepping into.

With your chapter eight and your book and this conversation, I think it allows us people recognize something that may have pushed aside for a very long time and to see that we're all human and we all have this opportunity to live a better life and a more wonderful life.

Thank you, Scott. Thanks, Will. I appreciate being here. And please tell everyone how they can find out more about you and your new book, which is coming out in January.

My new a number of different resources. I would encourage people to sign up for my email list. It's completely free and I enthusiastically enjoy sharing new science and new stories to try to empower your health.

Awesome. Thank you, my friend. God bless you and your family. Thanks for listening to a regenerative life podcast.

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