Could your thoughts, beliefs, and emotions influence your body’s capacity for healing? Transcript

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Show Opening and Guest Introduction

Welcome to Moments with Maryanne. This is your host, Maryanne Pastana, and I am so excited to be celebrating 10 years of meaningful conversations with you [music] as we step into our new prime time hour. It's such an honor to share [music] this exciting new chapter with you. So whether you're starting your day out, headed to [music] work, or listening from wherever you are, this hour is designed to bring you thoughtful dialogue, fresh insight, and inspiring stories so you can make every moment count.

So, thank you for being here with me today and let's dive in. We're here today with special guest Avi Noom Learner who's here to share with us the science of mindbody healing. So could your thoughts, beliefs, and even emotions influence your body's capability for healing? Well, today's guest is here to share with us just that. Avioom learner is a cancer and trauma recovery coach, clinical hypnotherapist, TEDex speaker, author, and practitioner of integrative medicine who has dedicated more than 25 years to helping individuals navigate the emotional, psychological, and physical challenges of cancer and trauma. Based in Boston, Massachusetts, he works with clients worldwide, empowering cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and their families to become active participants in their healing journey while complimenting conventional medical care.

So, welcome to the show, Alvi Noom Learner. >> Thank you very much. Pleasure being here and sharing all this with you. >> Oh my goodness. Well, what an honor it is to have you here and to talk about this. I think right now so many people are so interested in the mind body connection in regards to healing. What first led you to study this relationship? >> Well, I don't know if it's a one one particular thing, but certainly the um my childhood. I mean we all had a childhood but there were certain events during the very early years of my life that um I couldn't being so young really process or understand. There were wars going on where I grew up. my parents divorced. Um I was separated from my brother, my older brother. And so there were a lot of experiences that I couldn't really fully grapple with, understand process. Um and that kind of forced an awareness into me. I I don't know how else to define it where I learned that there is physical experiences that I'm having and those are obviously significant, but then cuz those hurt me, right? uh playing with friends for example, I I hurt myself. But then there were other experiences that were non-physical that hurt me just the same. And I couldn't really understand what that was. I was probably six or seven when I came into that awareness. And in a way uh that uh inability to process the pain that followed the suffering if you will that what kind of started me on this path uh cuz I needed to understand I needed to understand myself my experience better and I couldn't I couldn't get answers um not until many years later when I I actually learned that I can find some of these answers in a field of study called holistic health which related to both the mind and the Uh that's as close as I could get at the time. Um and that was very significant because that's kind of the foundation of what I do today. But even later on, fast forward a few years, um it became very clear to me that medicine cannot really account or explain uh or didn't really have much words for these dichotomy, right? These two parts of who we are. They couldn't explain why one person or two people, let's say, with the exact same diagnosis and treatment get different results or different outcomes. They couldn't put this into words. And anyway, that fascinated me. It kind of related directly to my personal experience again early on in life. And that's how I came to it if that makes sense. >> It does.

Avi Noom Learner's Path to Mind-Body Healing

And thank you so much for taking the time to explain that to us. I mean how would you define the mind body connection? >> Well, for me uh it's quite simple and as you will as we will have this conversation you you might realize for me I'm just very grounded in my approach. I need things to be simple and grounded. So the mind body connection is not a belief system for me. It's not a philosophy. It's not some kind of u [snorts] mystical or esoteric uh something. It's measurable biology. And probably the simplest way I can put it is that there's a constant conversation between these different parts of who we are. There's the physical part and the non-physical and our brain in certain environments, nervous system and and endocrine system and immune system. All these biological

systems are somehow connected. They're exchanging signals. And you know if we just again just bring it into our experience uh fearful thoughts for example will cause our heart to beat faster and then calming thoughts will slow our heart rate. So we can kind of engage in that uh higher conversation of exactly the biology and the mechanism and so forth. But I like to keep it very simple. And the point is that how we think and how we feel impact our biology. That's for me what the mind body connection is all about. >> Well, it's so nice also that science has so much backing for how the mind and body connect that it makes it very simple for many people who are looking for those answers >> nowadays. Yes. And actually that's has been the case for probably since the early 70s. And I like to talk about this field of scientific study, it's a big word. It's called psychonuroimunology. But again, uh when you think about the times before um where medicine just didn't really have a rational explanation for how the mind, which is not the brain, the brain is the three lb gray organ in our skull. And the mind is the self, right? The non-physical part of who we are. In other words, if you cut the body open, there's no you're not going to find a little person in there. So, medicine couldn't really explain how the non-physical part of us impact the organic tissue. But, um, you know, back in the day, it was attributed to something mystical or intuition or what uh certain eastern philosophies uh kind of cherished and and promoted. But medicine, hardcore medicine didn't really know how to bridge that gap. And thankfully nowadays um we have the science to confirm that all these different ideas around the fact that we are made of these two different parts physical and non-physical they are somehow connected and very valid and it offers people a way to in my view become active participants in their healing and recovery right they have agency we have agency >> so I understand that you're a clinical hypnotherapist. What got you interested in that arena? >> Well, that's that's exactly the intersection where I noticed that some practices relate to the non-physical and some practices relate to the physical. So, medicine obviously addresses the physical body but not the person living in this physical body. And let's say therapy primarily engages the person living in this physical body, but it's still in doing so in a very limited way. And hypnotherapy or clinically hypnotherapy is one of those very practical pragmatic tools that we can use to bridge the gap to connect the dots to engage both the physical body as well as the person living in this physical body. So it's just a very practical standpoint for me. There's not too many tools that therapeutic tools that can help us do that. And what we've learned through what now science have confirmed this psychonuroimunology, we learned that there's certain mental and psychological patterns that suppress certain biological systems, mainly our immune function. And so if we can in theory find a way to engage those mental and psychological patterns and resolve them, we can support the body in its optimal functioning. And so that's what hypnotherapy allow us to do in a very practical and measured way in a goal oriented result-driven kind of way which is kind of different from what therapy and I'm happy to talk about the different between those but for me it was just a very practical tool. It engages the part of the mind we call the subconscious mind. Hypnotherapy that is.

And that's the emotional mind, right? The emotional part of our mind that governs so many of our bodily functions. Right? Now we are breathing. We are our body temperature is regulated. We are our heart rate is is is me everything is managed beneath the surface of our awareness. In other words, we don't have to consciously engage in those activities. It's all done through the part we call the subconscious mind. And again, if I kind of lean back into the earlier point about therapy, therapy primarily engages the conscious part of our mind, which is logical and rational.

Defining the Mind-Body Connection

And hypnotherapy primarily engages the subconscious mind, which is the emotional mind, and the part that governs so many of our bodily functions. So if we take the the element of stress for example, we all have stresses in our lives. But when you think about why we stress out, you'll find that the cause for stress is not necessarily physical.

It's how we perceive things to be and how we believe things to be. So if we perceive things to be dangerous, difficult, and painful that will promote stress and tension in our body. If we don't believe that we have the inner resources to cope with what we're going through, that will promote stress in the body. So both perception and beliefs are aspects of the mind. They're not aspects of the physical body. And so that's what clinical hypnotherapy allow us to do. It allows to engage with those intersections that are non-physical to affect the physical. That's kind of in a nutshell. For people who might be a little skeptical and have seen hypnotherapy in on stages, I would think that sometimes you may get some folks pushing back a little afraid going, "Well, I don't want to have anything put on me that I'm not in full control of." >> Correct. And yeah, I appreciate you bringing it up because it's such a misconception. uh and I think a disservice that uh both I mean the entertainment industry have kind of promoted for

a long time. If you read about certain books and certain obviously certain movies uh hypnosis is presented in a certain way and um as mind control as people under some influence and and the stage shows do exactly the same but in fact in in movies you see people fly like Superman and obviously in real life it's not what we do but the entertainment industry have learned how to use this innate capacity that we have that we're all suggestible right we're responding to suggestions and it learned to present it in a so certain way that that looks very real but actually is just a psychological process if you will. So what you see on stage is people that are very much encouraged to participate and there's a certain process of bringing everyone on stage and then kind of weeding them out building certain pressure. It's just it's just like a magic trick. And so we know that the the magician uh has certain ways of doing something that looks very real. Um hypnosis in the entertainment industry does exactly the same. But in in truth, in reality, in a therapeutic environment, hypnosis is just the use of a very innate capacity that we all have. And we might not have called it hypnosis, but we've all been in the hypnotic state many, many times. For example, when someone watching a good movie and getting sucked into the plot, right? We get absorbed in the story line to the point that we feel what the actors intend for us to feel. Whether it's laughter, whether it's sadness or [clears throat] horror movies, right? If we have a physical response to what we're observing, it's because of that same innate capacity that we call the hypnotic state. So, we don't have to be uh in a recliner. We don't have to have our eyes closed. Most of us have responded to suggestions many many many times. Uh commercials, for example, TV commercials, movie commercials, that's what they're designed to engage. They're designed to stimulate a certain emotion, certain action in us. That's why I think it's actually very harmful, for example, that we have um advertisement about medicine in in on TV. You know, it's just so blunt and aggressive and we're not medical professionals. We don't know what we're sold, you know, what what is promoted, but then talk to your doctor about this. The reason we respond to that is because of our uh in this innate ability to respond to suggestions. But they don't have to be malicious. We can, you know, all of us have had this friend that says, "Look, there's a great restaurant that just opened up. You might really want to check it out." And if we go and eat in that establishment, we responded to a suggestion, right? We just followed through. The same goes about certain items or clothing or anything in between. So we are as people just wired to respond in a certain way to that these prompts, these suggestions. And what hypnosis does it utilize it in a certain practical way to promote um more desirable outcomes. It's as simple as that. >> Now you mentioned something earlier I want to dive a little bit more into and that psychonuroimmunology.

Can you share what that is and why it's such an important field of study? >> Sure. So, psychonuroimunology essentially is uh the study of how psychological states, our nervous system and immune system how they interact. Uh and the term came about in the 1970s. Uh Dr. Robert Ader from the University of Rochester in New York and he stumbled upon it. His team stumbled upon it by coincidence. They were trying to replicate a very famous experiment uh that some of our listeners will recognize with Pavlov Pablo Dogs where he rang the bell and essentially the dogs started salivating because they realized that food is coming. It's called the conditioning process. And Ed's team was trying to replicate it just with mice or rodents I should say.

And what they did, they gave these rodents sweet water that are laced with a certain drug that's supposed to give them belly ache. And then they removed the drug from the sweet water. And the rodents responded exactly the same as anticipated. In other words, the rodents were conditioned to respond to the sweet water. It gave them belly ache. So that was expected and in that respect, the experiment was successful. But then the rodents began dying and that was not explained by this simple drug that was supposed to just give them belly ache.

But when they went back to the drawing board, they discovered that the drug had immune suppressing components and that was not anticipated.

Hypnotherapy, Suggestion, and the Subconscious Mind

Uh that's when the light bulb kind of went off and they realized u that the immune system itself can be conditioned and that's really important specifically to my work with cancer patients so forth because they essentially found the holy grail in mind body medicine and uh not enough is talked about it a lot of doctors are just not familiar with that field of science even though it's their language and their research. Um but for non-medical practitioners like myself, this open up the door to providing explanation for people how they have arrived at what they're where they arrived, why they're dealing with what they're dealing with and it matters because so so it gave us a rational measurable explanation for what clinicians had observed I would say for generation that Basically stress and emotional states

affect our health.

Right? So mind this kind of psychonuroimmonology or PNI um the abbreviation is PNI. It it took the mind body connection out of the realm of intuition and into the realm of biology and for my field as a clinical hypnotherapist that changed the conversation in a meaningful way. So now people can better understand why doing this kind of work is meaningful, how it can contribute and support their healing and recovery. And it give us again I love this word agency. It gives us more agency, more control uh about certain aspects of our treatment.

>> Well, and to dovtail with that, what role do thoughts and emotions really play in our overall health? it. Can we experience well-being when we're in a sick state if we are keeping our emotions and our thoughts very positive?

>> Well, well, we can talk about positive emotions in a moment, but I would say that uh the big discovery here is that thoughts are not just private experiences that we have, right? They they have physiological footprint, if you will, right? fear, grief, we could say chronic worry. They activate the stress response and the stress response raises certain particular hormones like cortisol, adrenaline, and they keep the body in a state of brace, right? And and and and in defense mode, if you will. And the opposite is true as well. Calm, I would say connection, a sense of agency does exactly the opposite. They let the body shift from uh tension into calm or into rest and repair. And over time, these kind of states influence how we sleep. They influence inflammation, how well we tolerate treatment. And um and and so this is significant, but I would say that it's really important uh for anyone listening to to hear that that saying that emotions impact biology does not mean that emotions cause disease because I I've heard this in so many different ways. It certainly doesn't mean that anyone thought their way into illness. It's not that simple. Okay? And uh that brings guilt and shame and all of those things that we have to address. What it simply means when I say that emotions are not just private experiences that they have any physiological footprint. It means that our inner state is one factor among many factors that shape the conditions that the body is functioning with or in.

Right? The the conditions the body heals in. And so that's why it's so important. For the most part, we have not been fully conscious of what we were thinking uh throughout our lives uh for all kind of reasons. How can we blame oursel for something we didn't even know that is going on? So I'd like to kind of help people shift away from the self-lame and and self-loathing and and and shift into different questions, better questions that gives them agency really. So how does chronic stress affect the body's ability to function at its best?

>> Well, stress is in fact is not the enemy. Uh we all have stress in our lives and and part of it is normal and there's it's kind of a protective response that help us meet all kind of threats in our lives and those are important cuz it [snorts] help us manage oursel better. The problem is really when that response the stress response that we have to certain events that it never get switched off right then the the hormones [snorts] of stress cortisol and and the u sympathetic activation stay elevated uh maybe for days for weeks sometimes for months and they interfere with the normal functioning of who we are they wreck our sleep they they slow tissue repair they sustain lowgrade inflammation And uh there was a neuroscientist by the name of Robert Sapolski and he basically said that chronic stress slowly erode the systems that sustains us. And so the body is simply not built to stay braced indefinitely. It's built to alternate between alertness and recovery. This is really where much of my work is helping people that's what they we help people do shift away from the stress and alertness into rest and recovery.

>> So what does the research tell us about the relationship between the brain, the nervous system and the immune system? Well, the old assumption was that uh you know the immune system somehow works on its own that it's completely sealed off from the rest of the body certainly from the brain uh that it has its own um protocol if you will but we know through research mainly through psychonuranology um we know that that's not really true. um the different systems of the body are in constant const communication, right? The brain signals the immune cells through the nervous system and through hormones and the immune signals or the immune cells signal back in ways that affect how we feel, how we think and so forth. And uh there were there were a couple of researchers um from Chicago, one particularly Janice uh Janice Glasser's work uh and she showed that physiological stress measurably slows wound healing and weakens immune response. So we have a different picture because of their research because of that particular research. Uh and the recent picture is essentially the mind and body are one integrated system rather than separate parts. Right? The immune system is not disconnected from the brain or from who we are or from how we feel and how we think. It's all impacted. In other words, the mind and body are an integrated system and change in one part of the system affect the whole system. So I think this is what uh we've

really learned through through research about that relationship about psychonuroimanology that what this field of science kind of help us wrap our head around right one integrated system.

Psychoneuroimmunology and the Science of Stress

>> That's so encouraging to hear because I I think the science is finally catching up with where people can really have a major impact on their health.

>> Exactly. It gives them agency. It gives them a way to become active participants. It give them a reason for why becoming an active participant. And and again we know through research that helplessness and hopelessness uh those are two states of mind that are very I don't know if if normal for us to get you know when you receive a diagnosis when it's difficult and painful when uh the evidence the tangible evidence is sort of against us it's very tempting to feel helpless and sometimes even hopeless. But we know specifically that these two states of mind have shown um to impact the way that our immune system function in a negative way. So we want to move away from those. We want to learn how to break free from those and and step into a different mindset. And people say, well, what can I do? There's there's so much that I don't control.

Well, it's true. uh we don't control what the scans will show and we don't control million other elements um when it comes to health and treatment but what we can control is how we take care of ourel how we engage with ourselves how we respond to stresses uh we can do that in various ways it's not complicated simple practices and all of my practices every every tool that I ever offered uh my clients is all about you know what if it takes more than uh 5 minutes. We're not going to do it on a regular basis. So everything, all these different tools that help us regulate, they have to be practical, tangible, so we can practice them, integrate them into our lives.

>> What does it look like when someone comes and makes an appointment with you and let's say they have a terminal illness? How do you work with somebody?

The reality is that sometime someone does walk through the door and um they are either in an advanced stage or they discovered uh that they're struggling with something when it's a bit later in the game. The first thing that I do is meet them where they are and we acknowledge the truth of where they are in the moment. um if it is in fact uh terminal, what we aim to do is to still give them as much agency as possible in terms of how they respond to this uh to the demands of this moment. When something changes so drastically in our life and it and it's long before it even becomes our defined terminal. When something changes so drastically in our lives, there's a lot of change that we're facing. A lot of it has to do with change in identity, right? Until that moment in time, we were somebody's father, mother, son, daughter, and all of a sudden uh we become a patient, right? If we talk about illness such as cancer, which is what I I focus mostly on, we become a cancer patient, which means we become statistics and and charts and and you know, we lie on a table while people in white coats tell us whether we get to do more living or not. And that's devastating to our identity. We were someone with a full life, productive life. Maybe we even had dreams and aspirations. But now we're a cancer patient and our world shifts into uh the hospital environment and and that's that caused a great deal of suffering. So when someone comes to me with a terminal condition, we try to minimize the suffering to provide that person as much agency as possible and help them improve their quality of life in their duration. If someone comes right after they receive the diagnosis, there's a lot more that we can do. We still will work on those components of reducing suffering and identity elements but we will also go after the particular mental and psychological patterns that we know through research are suppressing the functioning of our immune system. So in this way we become an ally. I help these people become allies to their medical team because their medical team is again only treating the physical body not the person living in it. And what we know through research is that there's tremendous meaning and value to addressing the person as well.

>> When we talk about like our past experiences and unresolved issues or stress, how does that affect our health later in life? >> It defines in many way the bar or status quo for our nervous system. We grew up in um a demanding, emotionally demanding environment, sometimes even um um physically demanding environments. We learn how to survive. Survive is not the same as thrive. When we learn to survive, we are bracing. When we learn to thrive, we open up. And so these are different movements. When they uh when we learn to survive, we're in contraction. Our nervous system is disregulated. And that becomes our norm which in the long terms will impact the quality of our life. How we sleep, what we eat, what we choose to eat, what we how we choose to live our lives.

And people with a disregulated u nervous system tend to go on the risky side of life.

All kind of behaviors that might not be health conducive. can be addictions, it can be violence, it can be uh different environments that are incredibly stressful. And it's not to say that this is bad, right? I mean, I would you can say, well, being a firefighter is very stressful. True, but different qualities of stress. Again, what we know through this field of study called psychonuroimology is that there's consequences to our mental and emotional makeup. And some patterns will lead more to thriving and some will lead more to surviving. And so these are two different trajectories. One is contracted and therefore diminishing. One is opening oursel up and therefore empowering. And and we know how it feels in the body, right? A person knows if they feel tension or if they feel relaxed. That can help us navigate better. >> It's interesting. There's a lot of talk going on right now about elevated cortisol levels and how someone can in some ways manage that. What are some of your thoughts around that?

>> Well, I again I like to keep it simple at risk of people having some reaction. I would say that I'm not big on meditation. uh I think meditation was plucked out of a different kind of cultural environment and kind of placed in front of us as it's something that we need to learn how to do. We can learn how to do that but it's extremely demanding and it requires more than just 5 minutes a day of practice. For the most part the notion that I hear from my clients is meditation I'm supposed to focus on my breath and do nothing right but my brain cannot do nothing. my brain is constantly jumping like a crazed monkey from one issue to another.

Thoughts, Emotions, and Chronic Stress

So essentially what they end up feeling is a bit I would I would say defective for lack of a better word. You know they can't even do nothing. What does that mean about them? And they and they give that meaning they make meaning out of that. So I don't I'm not big on meditation as a pathway. Uh mindfulness is better. It's a more active process of awareness that can be very useful. And I would say just you know the breath that we have if we just in a very practical way strip away all the fluff around it.

If we just take breathe in for let's say the count of four but we exhale for the count of eight it's as simple as it gets. It communicates to the nervous system that it's safe that it's calm that the body can shift into healing and repair. And it's that practical. It really doesn't have to be any more complicated than that. And I I see a lot of people struggling with this. What should I do? How should I I teach certain practices to to my clients.

Practices again that are simple and practical. I love tapping. Some of your listeners might have heard about EFT, emotional freedom technique or otherwise knows known as tapping. These are very practical practices that can help any one of us become uh I I would say a master of our experience in the most secular kind of way that I can mean it. It's just you have agency practice bring yourself down to the level of experience that you want and manage yourself better. >> How does mindfulness support overall health and resilience? >> Well, mindfulness forces us to kind of slow down, right? It's a trainable skill of noticing what is happening around us.

It invites us to be more present without immediately reacting to what's happening around. And that small pause that we can learn to exercise, that small pause matters because well it matters physiologically because so much of our chronic stress comes from our mind just rehearsing certain well either rehearsing or dwelling in the past or kind of bracing for the future. So when we focus on the here and now, what's in front of us or around us, uh when we bring attention to the present moment, that stress response can settle. Uh it's just a trigger that we can settle and mindfulness is very efficient in doing that. I would say that in cancer care mindfulness uh based programs they've shown to improve quality of life uh for participants reduce anxiety uh and yes lower stress markers during treatment being the cortisol levels and or anything else and so it builds resilience not by removing the hardship but by changing our relationship to it. How can someone shift from feeling overwhelmed to feeling more empowered in their healing journey?

>> Well, overwhelm uh for the most part comes from us focusing on everything we can't control, which is very attractive to the mind cuz the mind obviously the mind's job is to maintain our integrity. So, it want to pay attention to everything that is going wrong or everything that is not in our control.

And when we're dealing with serious things, let's say diagnosis, right, that list is very long. there's a lot that we don't

control. The shift itself really begins by turning our attention and we can do that toward what we can actually influence even if it's small. Uh obviously we don't control scan results as I mentioned earlier but we can influence how we sleep, how long we sleep, our breathing for example um whether we ask for support um and and how we talk to ourselves. those things that are easy for us to engage with to practice. And I I often help people just move away from the famous question, the why me question to which brings about blame and shame and so forth to how do I want to respond to what's happening around me or to me right now. And and it's important to say it's it's not been in denial, right? The fear is very real still, but but it's the way that we're reclaiming our sense of agency which itself steadying to our nervous system. A simple answer would be shifting from what we cannot influence to what we can influence from what's happening outside of us to what's happening within us. >> Does having a practice of gratitude and hope help in that healing process? then >> most certainly but it's worth clarifying what hope really means. I remember working I live in practice in Boston and I worked at a certain time at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and I remember some conversations with uh oncologist and clinicians that uh were kind of edgy. They kind of uh insinuated that I give my work gives people false hope.

And my answer was very simple. False hope can only exist when you provide false guarantee. And I don't do that. What I give people is realistic hope. Right? Real hope holds the difficulty and it still keeps the door open to possibility. And that matters because helplessness, as I mentioned earlier, tends to shut people down, right? They they stop participating. They stop advocating for themselves. They stop doing the small things that really help them. And hope is the opposite direction. It keeps people engaged in their own care. And of course, uh, we have to be honest. There's only certain things that are possible in given situations. Um, if someone is defined terminally, you you have to be honest and truthful and and realistic. My point is that staying engaged is almost always better for a person than giving up. So that's where hope comes into the fold. with regard to gratitude and there's a lot of conversation about this partic particular quality of feeling we call gratitude but I would say that most people if you ask them what does gratitude feel like in the body they will have a hard time answering that if I ask them what does fear feel like in the body they have an answer right away cuz it's tension it's contraction but what does gratitude feel for us in the body we've all said thank you a million different times I teach gratitude a little it differently. Uh I like to talk about it as uh you know cuz you can look at a beautiful flower and appreciate its beauty.

Mindfulness, Gratitude, and Reclaiming Agency

That's where most of us on the surface do with gratitude. We experience something, we say thank you, and we move on. But I want someone when when you think about gratitude, I want you to take that flower. I want you to bring it to your nose and I want you to inhale its wonderful scent. We forget to do that. What we have learned from the mind body science is that we have to in a way close the circuit and what that means is that we can't just think things through. We have to feel them and most of our listeners will probably uh have heard of Dr. Jo dispenser. And one of the things that I like that he's saying is the way that he explained thoughts and feelings, it we have it's kind of a full circle. Thoughts create an electric charge in the quantum field and emotions magnetize it back to our experience. Which means that we can't just think I want to be healthy. We also have to feel worthy of healing and recovery. If someone wants to be to have an experience that person also need to feel that this experience is authentic and real for them. If we just think thoughts nothing will happen. The potential the field of potentiality stays inactive. And if we learn to close the circuit with thoughts and emotions then then it becomes more real. We've all done this in a million different ways before, but in the wrong direction. And what that means when I explain that to someone or a client, and they say, "Well, I I don't know how to do that." So my question is very often, have you worried before? Have you have you had any worries before? Oh, yeah. I worry all the time. Well, what do you think we're doing when we worry? We have a certain thoughts, right? We can sit in the privacy of our own homes safe and sound and even healthy and we have a scary thought that just popped into our mind. It's just a thought at that point.

But what we tend to do it almost uh happens automatically because we have not trained ourselves to observe when that happens. But a thought when infused with emotions become active in the body. So just thinking about something that that happened and it's unpleasant. If then we infuse even unconsciously we infuse fear or stress into the particular thought then it begins to activate and reverberate through the body in the form of stress. And we've done this so often that it's seamless. We can again stay at home, feel safe, think about something difficult that happened and have an emotional reaction.

This way we activate our biology and um you know crying is a we think about someone who whom we love and really want to be in a relationship with and that person doesn't feel the same about us and it all of a sudden that particular thought about a person became brought to the surface some sadness and that sadness expressed in a biological response we call tears. That's as simple as that. And if we can do it, my point to people and the reason we can demystify the healing process is because if we can work this path one way, we can also work it the other way. We can also use our higher mental faculties, imagination ma mainly to see more desirable outcomes or think about better things and then infuse that particular frequency of gratitude or emotion of gratitude into the experience. Because gratitude or the emotional signature of gratitude is of something that was already received and right that's when we say thank you when someone did something nice to us or or for us and and someone gave us something nice or we just say thank you because it's already done. So the subconscious mind can't tell the difference between what's real and imagined. If you say it's done, it's done. So a simple path supporting ourselves is to just focus on let's say a more desirable outcome feeling better.

It doesn't have to be completely cured or in remission. It can just be a better better experience and then infuse intentionally [clears throat] generate the emotion of gratitude to close that circuit. It's it's really important that people understand that worry takes us in one direction which is more stress and tension and inflammation and doing what I suggested using our higher mental faculties to promote better experiences and better emotions will take us in a different trajectory. Well, thank you for taking the time to share that because that was such an important piece and it's interesting how we can make these shifts to really have such a positive impact in our lives.

>> We can make these shifts on a dime. We've just never really been taught how to do that in, you know, in our education and our parents probably didn't know much about it at all. They because no one taught them. And so where do you where do you come across this kind of information? But I think the whole purpose of upper part of it, let's say religion and so forth and and then further down um the new age era and all of that, it was all to help us get more in touch with our inner agency. And we haven't necessarily learned how to do that. But we can do that with our higher meta faculties. Reason, inspiration, intuition, memory, and of course, imagination. Those are available to all of us. But we kind of have an odd relationship with these higher mental faculties because when we grew up, we've heard different things about them, right? So how often did we hear ah you're just imagining it, right? Someone saying that in a in a way that is diminishing, right? But then you look at a beautiful original masterpiece painting or listening to a masterpiece of music and someone says wof now that's a person with great imagination. Right?

So we haven't really heard what we don't know what to think. We think imagination is child's play but it really isn't. It's a very tangible faculty mental higher faculty that a higher mental faculty that we can utilize every single day to contribute to our quality of life to improve um the way that our biology is working. And it's just one of many tangible ways to do it. Even top athletes use their imagination to run through like a course or uh any type of game that they're playing in order to elevate their skill level.

>> Exactly. Exactly. And they rehearse the event before it actually happens. And again, if I can demystify the healing process a little further, if we can embrace the emotions, desired emotions ahead of the environment. In other words, our physical reality suggests that we might still be dealing with illness, but we can dwell in the mental experience through imagination of oursel already feeling better, somewhat restored, maybe even healthy. And then we can engage or infuse uh emotion of gratitude into the fold. If we can embrace the emotions ahead of the environment, we can signal our genes ahead of the environment.

Supporting Patients and Closing Remarks

And this is such an important point because u some might recall that back in the early 2000s, we completed humanity completed a very important project. It was it was called the human genome project. And the human genome project was incredibly important because we really believed before the experiment. We believed that there's a particular gene pericular condition. Understand the implication. There's such a I mean if we could find the cancer gene and free humanity from that suffering. Oh, what a gift that would be. But the reality was that the I think the project was completed in 2003.

And what what we ended up uh realizing is that there's a certain number of genes and a lot more conditions than

genes. So onetoone theory didn't work.

So then uh researchers said okay so it's not a particular gene a particular condition it's a combination of genes and not only it's a combination of genes but some of these genes are turned on and some of these genes are turned off.

So then they had to ask themselves okay so what turns genes on and off and in part because the answer is complex but in part the mental and emotional environment right our mental and emotional atmosphere whether it's breathable or not whether it's supportive or um diminishing uh our mental and emotional environment certainly plays a part in turning certain genes on and certain genes off. So if we can embrace the emotions ahead of the environment, we can signal the genes ahead of the environment which makes healing attainable and possible. That's the simplest way of explaining or demystifying the healing process. >> So how can family members and caregivers support someone who's dealing with a serious health issue?

>> Well, I would say that the most useful thing that a caregiver can do or a family member can do is it's quite simple actually. I mean it's to be present without trying to fix. Uh I would say that if I talk about cancer patients, they very frequently feel that they have to reassure everyone around them that they're fine, right? Which is exhausting. So a caregiver that can just listen without rushing to silver linings or um give an enormous gift. I mean, and it's so much more valued by someone who's navigating something like cancer treatment. So practical help matters. I say handling logistics, right? Driving someone in and and to and from appointments, helping that person keep some ordinary life going so they don't get sucked into the I'm a I'm a you know a full-time cancer patient. And I would say that for caregivers, it's really important to important to also tend to themselves because they cannot really pour from an empty cup, right? So it's meeting meeting the patient where they are without trying to fix them. It's helping them with everyday things. Don't ask what can I do for you? Just bring something to eat. Whether that person like that particular dish, that's not the point. The fact that you engaged uh took responsibility, ownership, you you took the initiative to bring something, to do something, you know, to call that person say, "Okay, I'm available on Monday and Thursday. I want to make sure that I support you. What can I do in terms of getting you to an appointment? Do you have anything? Those kind of questions make all the difference in the world. Those these kind of engagements really help people feel supported. And we know through research that people with a strong support system do fare better on many different markers. So this is not insignificant. It's it's very significant. Well, Avi Gnome, where can our listeners connect with you and be part of your community and learn more about your work? >> Uh, having done this for 25 years, if you just Google my name, you would come across a lot of uh content. I've written certain books. There's one coming up uh hopefully next month. Uh it's called Mindful Remission, the mental science of healing. And it essentially a uh an encyclopedia if for lack of a better way of saying it where I share all the practices that I offered my clients for the past 25 years of doing this work and um my website ainomo.com um YouTube channels um again Instagram and Facebook those are good places to find information and um if they have any question if anyone is curious is I offer free consultations and it's um it's always available.

>> Well, A Nom, thank you so much for taking the time to be on the show with us here today. >> I appreciate the opportunity. I want to kind of leave um leave people with the idea that their inner life matters more than they've been taught, right? The thoughts and emotions are not separate from our physical body and tending on them tending to how we feel and think. It's not really a luxury. It's just a it's worthwhile way of taking care of ourselves and making sure that we stay healthy. >> Well, thank you Avioom Learner. It's been such an honor to spend this time with you and to talk about the science of mindbody healing. Make sure to connect with Avy Noom Learner at his website and that's spelled A V I N O A M L E R ne.com for more information on his work to schedule a free consultation and also to be part of his community. Well, we're at the end of our time today. I'd like to thank everyone for tuning in. You're listening to Moments with Maryanne, where we make every moment count.

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