Eye on Amino Acids & The Calm Mom Method: Laurie Hammer's Guide to Brain Balance Transcript

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Introduction and Guest Welcome

because L-glutamine really helps to keep that blood sugar stable. And when your glucose levels, your blood sugar is stable, and it's not going up and down all the time, then your brain health is more stable.

And so we focus on those five areas with amino acid therapy first. And then we go to everything below the neck because I believe once you balance the brain, you know, everything that's in your head, then everything else gets easier to deal with.

Welcome to the IQ Podcast. I'm Dr. Rani Banik, here to help you boost your IQ with powerful insights that connect your eyes, your brain, and your whole body wellness.

Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of the IQ Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Ronni Banek, and in this podcast, you'll gain insights into your vision health and your brain health to help you raise your IQ.

Today, I am so excited to bring on a special guest whose insights will truly open our eyes to the tremendous impact of nutrition and nutritional therapies.

My guest today is Lori Hammer. Lori is a functional nutritionist. She's also the founder of the Calm Mom Method, which we'll hear about. And I'm just so excited to have you here, Lori, and share your expertise.

Thank you for joining us. Oh, thank you so much, Dr. Rani, for having me. Absolutely. So, you know, your title, functional nutritionist is, you know, it raises a lot of, you know, it peaks my curiosity.

So can you explain for our listeners, I've met other functional nutritionists, but some of our listeners may not be so familiar with the term. What exactly do you do as a functional nutritionist?

And also tell us a little bit about your journey, your story, how you got here. Yeah, okay. So a functional nutritional therapist, I'm able to do lab work, come do things from a functional health perspective, and I look at the body as a whole, helping people with their diet, also assessing hormones and other things going on as well as the brain.

Lori Hammeru2019s Journey Into Functional Nutrition

And so my main focus is amino acid therapy. And that stemmed out of my own story. I had bulimia for almost 12 years of my life from junior high to my early 20s.

And it got to the point where I had to drop out of nursing school. My life was just a really large mess at the time. And I wasn't able to get into other eating disorder clinics because I didn't fit their parameters.

I was bulimic, so I wasn't very underweight. They told me I wasn't suicidal enough. You know all those kind of things and so I just couldn't get the help that I needed.

And so I thought I would move away and that would solve all my problems and everything would get better but it didn't. And then I had a nursing professor who kind of taking me under her wing and after I moved away she sent me an article.

from GNC magazine that her husband had randomly gotten in the mail. And it was an article about food cravings, eating disorders, and other addictions.

And they were talking about how you are addicted to what you're allergic to or you're sensitive to and amino acid therapy. And it really piqued my interest.

And she's like, you need to call out there. Because it was an outpatient program in Mill Valley, California. And so I did. And I went out there and I found out I indeed was very sensitive to all the foods that I was binging and purging on.

So I had celiac disease, I was sensitive to dairy, had yeast overgrowth, thyroid issues, adrenal stuff going on. And then the most important thing, Dr.

Rani, was they discovered that my brain was just nutrient depleted. And they used targeted amino acids to rebuild my brain. So we know that amino acids are the foundation of everything, you know, basically in our body.

So we have to have enough amino acids in order for our body to repair and to function. And so they started using targeted amino acids to support things that I was deficient in, in my brain, specific neurotransmitters and just your overall brain health.

And then the depression, the anxiety lifted, the food craving stopped so I could stop that binging and purge cycle. And then I could work on all those things that were left over from that.

So that's how I got into this space. And that was back in 1996. So personally, I've been doing this for a very long time and with clients for over a decade.

So it's been a fun journey. Well, thank you for sharing your journey and I'm so glad that you found this path and now you're able to help others and improve their lives the same way that your life was improved by discovering this.

So many of us who've discovered functional medicine oftentimes do have personal journeys like that where we're suffering or perhaps a close family member friend is suffering and we're seeking a solution because other solutions may not be working.

So a lot of our listeners, you know, many people are familiar with vitamins, minerals, amino acids, you know, maybe that kind of rings a bell going back to chemistry class.

Can you just give us a primer like amino acids 101? What are amino acids? How many of them are there? Which ones are important specifically for issues that may pertain to brain health or perhaps even mental health?

If you can just give us like an overview of that. Yeah, absolutely.

Amino Acids 101 and Brain Health

So amino acids are the basic building blocks to proteins and proteins we use from our hair to our nails to our organs, our enzymes, everything depends on these proteins and these amino acids.

So amino acids are vital to health and every living thing has them. Specific to brain health, I focus on five different areas. So neurotransmitter health is what I'm dealing with, but amino acids affect your entire nervous system and everything else in your body too.

So the five areas that I'm looking at would be serotonin, GABA. So serotonin is more of your sunshine. Like if your neurotransmitters serotonin are good, you feel like you have a lot of sunshine inside of you.

And then there's the GABA neurotransmitter and the GABA would be, lets us take a deep breath and let it out. So it helps our body to really relax physically where the serotonin is more of a relaxation mentally and just life is good.

And then there's our endorphins and those are like our inner joy, like that yummy comfy sweater feeling all the time with your warm cup of tea or whatever it might be.

You just feel like life is happy, life is joyful, you feel really grounded. And then there's the catecholamines, and those help us to focus. Those are behind our drive.

And we kind of are like, when you don't have enough catecholamines, you're like, eh, life is just kind of meh, right? And then there's the glucose regulation that I focus on, and I use amino acid therapy for a lot of that as well, because glutamine really helps to keep that blood sugar stable.

And when your glucose levels, your blood sugar is stable, it's not going up and down all the time, then your brain health is more stable. And so we focus on those five areas with amino acid therapy first, and then we go to everything below the neck, because I believe once you balance the brain, everything that's in your head, then everything else gets easier to deal with.

So with these amino acids and these neurotransmitters, these different categories you've shared so eloquently, do you give the building blocks or do you recommend the building blocks or do you give larger proteins or peptides?

Like, how are you kind of planning out therapy for your patients? And also, where does it come from? Is it from food? Is it from supplements? Is it from bowls?

I know it's kind of a loaded question, but we can take it into parts. Yeah. So I use targeted amino acids. So therapeutic doses of like single amino acids.

Oftentimes I'll use a nice amino acid spectrum. Oh, and I didn't answer your question. There's 22 amino acids and eight of those are essential. And so, but I like to use the full spectrum.

So it has all of the amino acids in it, but we'll do the targeted ones for really instant therapeutic dosing so that you get instant relief. So the amino acids really work in like two to five minutes, especially if you put them underneath your tongue, things happen really fast and you can start to feel a lot better.

And then I really work on diet. So ideally we won't want to take a lot of supplementation. We should be able to heal our body enough that our body can do most of these things on its own without a whole lot of assistance.

So that is the goal. And with the formulations that are under the tongue, are they like dissolvable tablets? Like how do they, what form do they come in?

Is it a liquid solution? There are some that do come in liquids, but when we're testing to see what amino acids you need, I actually send you a kit in the mail and it's capsules.

And so we open up the capsules and then we put the powder under the tongue. And then we kind of stare awkwardly at each other for a couple of minutes and wait to see how your body responds to that particular amino acid.

Wow, this is really fascinating.

Testing, Stress, and Visual Snow Discussion

You know, in my area of expertise, I have not yet delved into amino acid therapies for eye health and brain health and migraine, but definitely what you're sharing just, you know, could have so many potential applications.

Now, I should have asked you this first is, first of all, if someone comes in, let's say you have a client who comes in with low energy and difficulty with focusing and just, you know, brain fog, How do you know which amino acid or which neurotransmitters may be imbalanced you test?

And how do you test? Yeah, so I use a questionnaire, and it's symptom-based, and it's in those five areas that we discussed earlier. And so I have people rate their symptoms on a scale of one to 10, and then we assess what amino acids, what areas are deficient.

You could use urine or blood work, but I find this is a lot faster, and it feels to be more accurate to me over the years than doing that testing. And is there like a screening questionnaire, like a standardized form that you're using or have you developed this yourself, like based on your experience working with clients?

It's what I've learned over the years. I started with a form that the pioneers that came before me have used. And so I've tweaked it a little bit over the years, but it's been around a while.

All right. So in eye care and ophthalmology, also in brain health, a lot of conditions can be exacerbated by stress. Stress is just such a common thread when flare-ups happen, whether it be dry eye, or whether it be migraine, or whether it be an autoimmune condition.

So when people are stressed, is your assessment different? And how do you determine if there's a neurotransmitter imbalance, if the patient or client may benefit from peptide therapy or amino acid therapy?

Right. So everybody who comes to me is stressed. The assessment is just kind of what's been going on with them in the most recent time frame. And so that's how we assess that because everybody seems to have stress, whether it's chemical, physical, or emotional.

All right. And I guess my question again goes back to testing because I'm just so curious about this. If you were to run tests, you mentioned urine tests.

Are they better than blood tests or any other swabs? I know that there are some genetic tests that are done by swab. What method have you found to be the most useful?

The most useful, to be honest with you, is just using the questionnaire for the amino acids specifically. So I'll do urine testing for other things, like hormones and that kind of stuff, but I haven't found that, well, the most accurate amino acid test would be your cerebral spinal fluid.

which is very hard to obtain and not really practical, right? What I found over the years using urine or blood testing is that people will still have the symptoms even though it comes back like their levels are normal, but they still may have all these serotonin deficiency symptoms.

And so if we're only looking at the testing and not what symptoms that they still have, then I wouldn't be using, you know, tryptophan or 5-HTP with them.

But since I don't rely on the blood and the urine if they're still experiencing some disruption in that serotonin pathway. We try the amino acids anyway.

If they respond, great. If they don't, we'll just move on to the next category. Or we may need to dig deeper. Maybe their gut isn't converting the tryptophan correctly into the serotonin and those types of things.

So it just really kind of depends on the person, but I really rely on that questionnaire just to keep it simple so people get the most relief in the quickest amount of time.

Wonderful. So I'm going to pick your brain a little bit, Laurie, because there's a condition I see pretty often in my practice as a neuro-ophthalmologist.

And you may not have heard of this, but I'll explain kind of what it is. It's called visual snow syndrome. Have you ever heard of it before? I haven't.

No, I'm excited to hear. Okay. So it's actually it's a neurologic condition that can cause visual symptoms and the visual symptoms people have is static over their vision.

So imagine, you know, like the old TV screens where there's a lot of shimmering and static and it's not when it's not tuned into a channel. Imagine that as a very fine overlay over your entire vision.

And it's constant. It's there all the time. And it may be more pronounced depending on the lighting. And sometimes there are other symptoms like ringing in the ears, numbness, tingling.

And I have a very deep connection to this because I myself have visual snow and a lot of my patients have it too. But the reason I am bringing this up, Lori, is because it's thought to be some kind of imbalance caused by some kind of imbalance between perhaps glutamine and GABA.

Oh, interesting. So in that situation, and I'm just again picking your brain here because you have all this expertise in amino acid therapy for these neurotransmitters.

So if there is glutamine overactivity in some parts of the brain and perhaps GABA underactivity, how can one support those areas using amino acid therapy?

So you could take a GABA supplement if it's underactive or you feel like you're deficient in that GABA. So you could kind of depends on how much you need.

Sponsor Break

So that's why we test under the tongue, but you could definitely take that GABA and then that will help to raise that and hopefully would have a better conversion for you.

Is a glutamate issue or a glutamine issue? Sorry, glutamate. Glutamate. Got you. Got you. So I would definitely go right directly to the GABA and see if you can bypass that conversion and see if that would help.

Yeah, there is actually a supplement that I use that has GABA plus a few other things that are calming. And even though there's no cure for visual snow, it definitely has helped.

Interesting. Myself and some of my patients, just that calming effect of the GABA. Yes. Yeah, when you calm that neurology down, amazing things happen.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Well, this has been so incredibly fascinating, Lori. Thank you for sharing all those insights. We're going to take a very short break to hear from one of our sponsors, and then we'll be right back with more on the IQ Podcast.

So stay tuned. Did you know that your gut health can play a crucial role in maintaining your eye health? Inside your gut, there is a bustling community of microorganisms, known as the gut microbiome.

When this community is balanced, your entire body, including your eyes, can benefit. Research shows that imbalances in your gut microbiome, called gut dysbiosis, can contribute to eye conditions like uveitis, dry eye syndrome, age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma.

To help you support your gut and your vision, America's integrative neuro-ophthalmologist, Dr. Ronnie Bonik, developed Balance, a potent probiotic. Balance provides 10 highly researched strains carefully selected for gut and vision health.

Balance's moisture resistant specially-lined packaging ensures strain viability. With Balance, you can promote a healthy gut microbiome. This may help reduce the risk of eye conditions linked to gut dysbiosis.

Support your gut and support your eyes with Balance.

The Calm Mom Method

Welcome back, everyone, to the IQ Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Ronni Banek, and today we're chatting with Lori Hammer, who's a functional nutrition therapy specialist.

And so, Lori, you've done a lot to help so many clients, but in doing so, you've developed a very unique process that you call the calm mom method. So can you just share a little bit more about that with us and how that came to be?

Yeah, so there's only one of me. And so I wanted to create a method where I could reach a lot more of those moms out there, because I love being a mom.

And I believe is that when we calm the mom, that ripples into the effect of the kids, the husband, and then when the whole family is calm, that ripples out through society.

So we wanna create a lot of calm moms, because we're pulled in so many different directions. Whether you're working or a stay at home mom, you still have a ton of things going on.

and that is mainly who come to see me or moms who have anxiety and depression. And so I developed the call mom method over the years and now I turned it into a group program that you can either see me one-on-one or you can have a group experience as well.

But basically we always start with the amino acid therapy. So we're balancing that brain first, we're getting those neurotransmitters calm, we're getting the neurology of the body calm, and then we go below the neck.

So it's really important that we have the best mindset, we have the best neurology before we start working on the gut, before we start working on the hormones, because if we start working on those first, they kind of like, there's a fight going on there because your body isn't calm enough to heal.

So once the brain is calm, we're changing the diet, You know, taking out some things maybe that you're sensitive to or regulating your glucose with your diet, those types of things.

And then we work on healing the gut. And then we see what's left over. Is there still some hormone issues going on? Maybe do you have a hidden infection?

You know, all those kind of things. So we start with the basics. I love to do foundations. The brain is the foundation to everything. And then we move below the neck.

And that usually takes about three months to get those foundations kind of dialed in. And then after that point in time, we can start working on other things if somebody needs help with that.

Got it. So you mentioned it's a group program and I'm assuming it's virtual. It is virtual. I have an online portal that goes through. There's different, you know, lessons, modules, whatever you want to call them that you can go through, learn how to do the amino acid therapy.

And then we meet twice a month in a group call. So you can ask me questions one on one. I have fun things that we'll do every quarter. You know, maybe it's a challenge or a new cookbook or something like that.

So there's lots of fun things always going on. And what's the duration of your program? Is it like six months or one year? There's about 90 days. And then if you want to go past 90 days, then you can extend that.

OK, wonderful. Well, I know that many people listening certainly do fall into that category, moms who are stressed out.

Wearables, Client Success, and Migraine Support

And so they may benefit from your program. So we'll definitely share the link to your virtual program. Thank you for sharing that. Thank you so much. Yes.

Yeah, absolutely. So I know a lot of the things that you mentioned, you know, for example, blood sugar balance,

and you did mention earlier, like sleep and some other lifestyle things.

There are all kinds of wearables these days that collect a lot of data, and then we can use that data and, you know, tweak it with their run it through AI and get some patterns.

Do you ever use any of these devices as part of your work? For example, like a CGM continues glucose monitors or an aura ring or fitness tracker, anything like that?

Yeah, I have a lot of clients who already have those things. And so that data is always helpful for sure. So I like the Oura Ring. There's lots of other things that people will use.

Sometimes we'll use a CGM. I don't feel like I often need to do that with my clients. Sometimes like a Keto Mojo for trying to get into ketosis. So definitely some things, some gadgets that I like to incorporate.

Yeah, sometimes it is good to have data. And also, from the patient or client perspective, it's nice to see their progress. That is very motivational, I think, to be able to see, oh, I used to be like that, but now I've instituted some changes in my life with diet and lifestyle and sleep, et cetera, and now I'm in this place.

So it's nice to see that improvement. It is nice to have those numbers. Yeah, absolutely. Could you share maybe a story of someone who's gone through your program who maybe was really, you know, really needing help and you were able to kind of guide them through the journey and improve their quality of life?

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. So I had this mom who came to me and she was exhausted. Her husband wouldn't let her drive past noon because she would often fall asleep at the wheel.

And she was anxious. She wasn't sleeping well, just feeling overwhelmed. She wasn't on any medication. If you want, I can give an example of a medication client too.

But this was just a mom who came to me and she's like, I just feel like I am 50 and I'm only 30. Like her body just was really hurting at that time. And so within six to eight weeks, we had her driving past noon.

And then about a little over, I think it was like 10 weeks, she sent me a message. She's like, I drove all the way to Michigan. And that would have been like a 10 hour drive.

And she did absolutely fantastic. And then a couple of weeks later, she sent me another message. She's like, my kids told me I have my fun bone back because she was just so tired and just kind of anxious and she wasn't any fun anymore.

And so that's the goal with most of my clients is to get them sleeping better and feeling better so their family enjoys them and they enjoy their family better.

And then we worked on her hormones and stuff after that. I mean, that took us a little bit longer, clearly, than the 90 days. But she had some really good results.

And honestly, every now and then, about once or twice a year, she still checks in with me. Um, and it's been a lot of fun, but that would be a tip of keeping up with the part.

Like, is she continuing with the particles? So I would love to teach those lifestyle changes that are very sustainable for you to keep doing. Is everybody going to be perfect?

No, I'm not perfect, but I'm sure you're not perfect with all your lifestyle changes either. But the goal is that you'll be able to implement everything that we do together over the longterm.

Amazing. Well, I'm sure she's so fortunate to have found you and enjoying those long drives and also enjoying her family because I think just when someone doesn't feel well, it just takes away from so many aspects of their life.

They may not realize it, but that ability to engage with others that we love and really appreciate them and for them to appreciate us, that makes such a difference.

So I also deal very frequently, I mentioned this earlier, Lori, with patients with migraine and various visual symptoms of migraine. Migraine is just such a complex neurologic disease process.

We still don't exactly know what triggers it, what propagates it. what we can do to improve it. There are some supplements out there that have been studied in terms of magnesium and riboflavin and CoQ10.

Are there any other neurotransmitter imbalances that you've seen in your clients who have migraine that you would like to share? I would. I have seen people get great relief with working on their serotonin pathway with migraine and also the GABA pathway.

So those particular supplements, whether it's tryptophan or GABA or taurine or theanine, those things can be very helpful for my clients. I've seen that be pretty amazing.

And again, is this something that they would do through diet and supplementation? Diet and supplementation, yes. And is it something that they would, let's say they do it for three months or six months, could they eventually, let's say they're taking a supplement, could they eventually wean off of it?

Or is something that they would have to take indefinitely? Well, I think it just depends on the person. I have some clients that take it whenever they get a headache still, you know, a few years later.

And I have other clients that once everything is balanced, their gut is healed, their diet is good. We've worked on other root cause issues, whether it's hormones or hidden infection, that they just don't have the migraines anymore.

How to Connect and Final Takeaway

Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah, no, definitely. I think once you get past that threshold for the migraine and you nourish your body from within and fix some of those imbalances, it makes a big, big difference.

Well, again, Laurie, this has been such an amazing conversation. I really appreciate you sharing your wealth of knowledge. If anyone wanted to reach out to you, how could they find you?

Find out more about your work and your programs. The easiest way would be to go to Instagram and find me on the CalmMom Community and just send me a direct message.

And you can also visit my website lorihammer.com. OK, so we'll definitely be sharing all those links. And again, if you're on Instagram, make sure to follow Lori on the CalmMom Community.

So as we wrap up here, Lori, is there any one last piece of advice or thought that you'd like to leave our audience with? that your body can heal. If we remove those interferences, we fix those deficiencies, then your body has the capacity and the ability to heal.

So I know some of you listening have been on really long journeys and you're like, I've tried everything. And I will tell you haven't tried everything, that there is something out there You just have to be with the right practitioner and maybe, you know, just the right protocol or whatever it might be.

So don't be afraid to try the next thing because your body is designed to heal and it's pretty amazing when you get on the other side. I love that message and that's something I also tell my patients is there is a solution.

You just have to keep working to find it and if you're not able to find it with your current care team, then maybe seek a different And it doesn't mean you don't have a good care team right now.

It just means you need something. Something needs to change. That's all. Yeah. Yeah. Keep exploring. Keep

looking for solutions. Absolutely. Well, again, Laurie, thank you so much for your time today.

It's been a pleasure. Thank you for having me. And thank you all for tuning into the IQ Podcast. I look forward to seeing you during our next episode.

Stay tuned. Thank you for tuning in to the IQ Podcast. I hope you enjoyed today's episode and learned something new to help you boost your IQ. Leave us a review and share the podcast with your family and friends.

Stay connected with me for more eye-opening insights on eye health, nutrition, and lifestyle. Until next time, keep your vision clear and your IQ sharp.