From Gymnast to Groundbreaking Healer Transcript

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Introduction to Root to Rise

Dive into the way that our body processes emotion, trauma, that allows them to live the highest quality life as possible. Why did I want to call it Root to Rise?

That's a very important part of my story. Hello and welcome to route to rise episode one. My name is Dr. Emily Spickle and I am so excited to be kicking this off.

It is long overdue. it is a podcast that I've been wanting to do for actually several years and have been asked Dr. Emily, where is your podcast? Well, here it is.

Root to Rise is going to be an incredible exploration into movements, into memory, emotional regulation, longevity, neuroscience. It is gonna be a deep dive into everything to help you truly optimize the way that you move, feel and live.

And yes, there will be some information on feet. Don't worry, we will covering the feet So my goal with the first episode is going to be a little bit of a journey into my story, where I ended up, Where I am and how I got into specifically functional podiatry.

So not just podietry, but functional Podiatr and specifically barefoot science and the evolution into really just sensory science. And how sensory stimulation.

is my belief, is the secret to longevity. And that is as it relates to your movement, your mood, and memory. So those are going to be our big three takeaways that I want you to think about.

In every single episode, we are gonna be covering mood memory and movement. So let's kick it off where it all began. Where is my story starting from? And this really helps you understand the lens at which I look at human movements, health, and longevity.

From Gymnastics to Forensics

So when I see my patients, this is kind of the lense of what has shaped my approach. So my story actually begins as a gymnast. So I was a mover. I've been a movers since I'm six years old.

And for any of those who are familiar with gymnastics is it is a barefoot sports and it's a sport that is also very much based around body tension. So understanding how to access the fascial system and create power through just tensioning your muscles and your fascia.

Of course, back then, when I was six years old, I didn't know what that meant. I did not know, what foot to core integration was, or really fasciol tension.

And I actually didn' even understand the power of the breath, but it really did start to formulate and shape my approach to human movement into posture and from the ground up.

And that is something that I carried throughout my entire, entire career into my adulthood and actually led to why I eventually got into aerials. Aerials is another body tension based sport I guess or art and then of course ballroom so it all kind of feeds into each other now from that again this is important to the lens at which I look at the human body is my background is actually forensics and not many people know this my bachelor's is forensic science.

And that is why I truly believe that when I approach movement disorders, movement dysfunction, it's like detective work. My brain loves detective works.

So I am looking for the compensations. I'm trying to see if I can figure out what is happening in this individual's body by thinking outside of the box.

thinking in a way that all the other providers that they've seen so far are not thinking. So it's fun, it makes it challenging, and it make every patient that I approach something that is like a unique puzzle, keeps it engaging.

That forensics is really, really important. Of course, I switched out of forensics and I got into functional podiatry and into the fitness industry, which that happened after I moved to New York City in 2001. And I was working at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice doing forensic, forensic DNA research and totally miserable.

I remember using a micro pipetter and for anyone who knows what these are, they're itty bitty pipetters and I was pipeting DNA into these little ity bity vials and then we were reproducing the DNA and it would take weeks to do this at that time, 20 years ago, and by the time several weeks later, the dna would be duplicated so we could do criminal investigation with it, I would realize that I had contaminated it with my own DNA.

And I just remember being so frustrated. I was like, you can't even see the DNA.

Fitness, Injury, and the Path to Podiatry

How do you know if it's contaminated? So fun, but frustrating. So I actually stepped away from forensics and I got into fitness. And this is one of the most pivotal occurrences that happened in my career living again in New York city at the time.

And I remember walking into a Crunch Fitness. This is a crunch that was on 42nd and 8th for any of the New Yorkers out there and walked in and said, I think I want to be a personal trainer.

And remember the training manager at the time looked me up and down and goes, you're hired. Don't understand. That was a qualification. I'd think he was like, eh, You look like you know how to work out.

You're hired. Anyway, didn't know what I was doing in the beginning, but walking into that gym, getting into fitness completely changed my approach to really human movement.

It expanded my passion for human movements. Now, working as a trainer, I got into group exercise, teaching group exercises, started getting hurt. So my exploration into injury, injury prevention and rehab started when I was teaching a lot of group of exercise and I kept getting injured.

And what I realized is that my body as my tool coming off 13 years as a competitive gymnast, I did not have the longevity in it. So I needed to look for some other career direction.

Looked into medicine. Now this was in 2004 in New York City again. And I'm looking at graduate schools, medical schools. Because again, I get asked all the time, Dr.

Emily, why or how did you get into podiatry? Like why feet? What led you into this? Was one of your parents a podiatrist? Did you always go to a pediatrist when you were a child?

Whatever it was. And here's the not sexy answer. There were two requirements that I needed when I was looking medical school. First, I had to be able to stay in New York City.

That was one of the biggest requirements. New york city is just a key part of my story and it has shaped really who I am and has shape my career. Second requirement as I was looking at medical schools is that I said I have to able stay and fitness.

So I need to still be to teach some of these spinning classes and maintain some my clients because fitness at that time was feeding my soul. Those are my two requirements So guess what, you guys, there was one choice.

Podiatry school. So that is why I became a podiatrist. Not at all what people would expect. However, truly it was of the best decisions of my life. And I think sometimes the universe understands this.

We don't understand it, but the Universe does. The higher powers that be wanted me to be in feet. Going through podiatric school, and really learning about it from a isolated perspective.

It was like the patients didn't even get out of the chair. We never saw them actually walk. I was learning to give recommendations of one calf stretch and every professor that was teaching me and the doctors and students, they just kept saying the one-calf stretch or the one pair of shoes that patients should be wearing.

And because I was still within the fitness industry, I knew that there was more. I know that they were other options. Foam rolling was on the market. Why was no one talking about foam rolling with these patients?

So I started to doubt. or question a lot of what I was being taught as I going through podiatry school. I knew what what i was learning was not the full story.

Barefoot Science and Functional Foot Care

So this period of time between 2004-2008 as i going to podiatory school became this periods of questioning knowing that there was more Of course I had to pass the test, meet the board requirements, get licensed, play the game, but I knew that I, I have to kind of challenge and questions a lot of what was being taught during this period.

Staying within the fitness industry, long story short, graduated 2008, started residency. Now residency for podiatry is fully surgical, which means you have be a surgeon.

I had to learn how to do surgery, even though it was completely conflicting with my internal mission and really why I was starting to identify my goal, my purpose behind podiatry and healthcare.

So I actually left residency. Do not recommend this to anyone. very much could have burned that bridge, but I took a break from residency, went back to school, and I got my master's in human movement.

Now, this is where another key pivotal occurrence occurred. This was during 2008, 9, 10, around those period. this was when the barefoot running boom happened.

So remember the five finger shoes, Veebrom, Nike Free, Born to Run, that is when this was happening. So I saw this opportunity as I was going through my masters to focus on barefoot.

footwear, surfaces, and that's what I did. So as I got further into the fitness industry, the education into podiatry further, into my career, I was really focused.

I knew that I wanted to own this niche. After I'd got my master's in barefoot science or human movement focused on bare foot science, finished podiatry school, learned to be a surgeon, because again I had to play the game to get licensed.

But from day one of private practice, I approached my patients different. I approached my patients by giving them options. I told them that orthotics are not the only answer.

Supportive shoes are the not only the answer, I did a gait assessment on every single one of my patient. This is when I started getting into regenerative medicine and I start to explore and tell them there are growth factor injections, there's other options, you don't have to only do surgery.

And then the last big thing that I want to share as far as my background is in 2017, I put the scalpel down for the time and I actually left surgery. I left traditional medicine.

And I created the Center for Functional and Regenerative Podiatry, which is a direct care practice. It's boutique.

And I see patients out of pocket, I'm not under insurance, but I spend an hour with my patients and I really explore a integrated functional approach that is non-surgical and is trying to get them back to their natural foot strength.

So that's a very important part of my story. Of my goal through this podcast is to carry that lens and to help people to understand that there is so much more that they can do with their body besides orthotics, supportive shoes, injections, prescriptions, and surgery.

Okay, so as we continue, Another big realization that I had here was that, of course, barefoot science, natural function, but for people who follow my work, they know that.

I actually don't just talk about feet. I talk about our fascia. I talked about the pelvic floor. Oftentimes people are like, you are a podiatrist. Why are you up in the pelvis talking about pelvic floors and the way that we're breathing?

Well, it is all connected, everything in the human body is connected. So I had the pleasure to study under some of the best facial specialist, Dr. Robert Schleipe out of Germany, definitely check out his work.

Dr Perry Nicholson, he is the founder of Stop Chasing Pain. He is a rebel and the chiropractic industry absolutely love his. Work he's huge into the lymphatic system.

Studying under Diane Lee, who is ninja with the pelvic floor. So I really began to break boundaries and realize that there is so much more to our movement and our longevity story that includes the feet, but has to be integrated with.

The rest of the system. And that is something key that I want to carry throughout this podcast as well, is that we are integrated beings. Everything is connected.

Then of course, that's going to go to the next side of Really, how I think of the human body and longevity is as an emotional unit.

Emotion, Trauma, and Sensory Regulation

And here's the thing, humans are very complex. Humans are complex, anyone who works with a human, let's say you are a personal trainer, you're a strength coach, a leader of a team, manager, doctor, teacher, Whatever it is that your profession may be, if you encounter other humans, which is literally everyone, you have to have a respect and appreciation.

You have allow space and really I would say a curiosity. for the emotional complexity and the uniqueness of the lens at which every single one of us looks at the world.

There is a book that I read, several books that have read that completely changed my career. One of them is by Dr. Gabor Matei. And this is when the body says, no, if you have not read this book or you've not heard of Dr.

Gabor Matei. Please check him out. Listen to him on YouTube. He has lecture after lecture on Youtube and really it's taken this deep dive into the way that our body processes emotion, trauma, interactions with other people, pain, disease, right?

So how, how are we processing all of these things? Another book that I would highly, highly recommend is called Waking the Tiger. This was by Dr. Peter Levine.

He's actually the founder of somatic experiencing. Somatic Experiencing work is trauma release work. And it's a fascinating exploration looking at animals in the wild, how they process stress and trauma or traumatic situations, How they release it and process it within their nervous system and how the human differs and why we are so different than animals in the wild as far as processing stress is because we have our neocortex and this consciousness and we continuously question things and, why me, right?

Why did they target me? And we kind of get into these loops of stress, of kind an anxious vortex of asking

ourselves why. which then allows disease to perpetuate.

So how I got into this, of course I'm just generally curious into, this but in my practice I started seeing a lot of chronic pain patients. and I don't know why they were seeking me out or they're coming to my practice, but a lot of chronic neuralges, neuropathies, neuritis, and there would be so much heavy complex emotion behind their presentation and i would actually embody a see them as a patient and of course we cannot do that as healthcare providers but I started to become very curious of the emotional attachment of that individual to their diagnosis and how did it affect their experience, the persistence of that pain, their ability to heal, or their Ability to create a relationship with that chronic pain that allows them to live the highest quality life as possible.

So I became very, very curious on this. I started doing my own emotional journey. And I think we all have shit, we have trauma, stuff that we've gone through, so to be human is to have complex emotions, to trauma.

To have things that you need to heal through. So for me to better provider, I wanted to understand this deeper aspect of emotional healing so I could understand for my patients.

and be fully present for my patients as well. So I started getting into EMDR. I got into self-regulation through holotropic breathing, sensory deprivation, other sort of hypnotherapy.

A lot of different healing. And I'm now very much into Saracet. We'll talk about that on another podcast, but that's actually an EEG neurofeedback method that I am very, very into.

So this emotional side, of course how it ties into sensory is very important. For any of my patients who have some sort of emotional connection to their chronic presentation, I'm always teaching them how to tap into their sensory system, how the anchor, and how they anchor through their feet, How to use sensory stimulation not just through the feet but through body to have a calming effect on the nervous system.

I actually recommend this a lot with children.

Why Root to Rise Matters

Emotional regulation in children is based off of sensory stimulation. So there's a deep interplay and a thread of really the sensory story that goes into emotion, emotional regulation, mood, right?

And we'll of course be taking a deeper dive into that. As I wrap up this first episode, I want to just kind of end by exploring this title. So why did I want to call it Root to Rise?

Well, to me, root to root or anchor is a very powerful word. Of course, it has to do with your feet. You've got to tie it back to the feet, but if we go back thinking movement and strength, right?

We build strength from the ground up. When I teach Lower body exercise, so strength moves, swinging a kettlebell, doing a deadlift, you are doing that movement from the ground up.

You want to be anchored in your feet, to want a grip into the grounds. So this rooting through a movement perspective is really, really important. But of course that ties into mood and the cognitive function.

and, of course, emotion. So to anchor, to find stability, strength, calmness through our base is very, very important. The more that we can feel grounded emotionally, posturally, movement-wise, systemically ground anchor That then allows us to rise.

That allows to find our highest potential. To find out peak performance, to unlock your human movement, whatever it is that you are trying to raise to.

Are you trying be a better leader, a mother, boyfriend, girlfriend, partner, sister, brother, right? Friend, the more that we can connect into our physical body, the better that we can rise.

And I actually want to share one of my favorite quotes from Virginia Woolf. It is, I am rooted, yet I flow. To me, that is such a beautiful, beautiful quote that pulls you into the meaning of to root, to rise, so as I wrap up, i want you to remember one last quote.

When we root deeply, we rise fully. My name is Dr. Emily Spickle. Are you ready to root to rise?