Introduction and Guest Background

Hi, and welcome to another episode of the Healing Lyme Summit 2.0. I'm your host, Doctor Maria Hinchey, and in this episode, we're going to talk about getting back to basics.

So when suffering from chronic illness, it can be easy to forget about the basics of health that can help us to build resilience and support our bodies basic needs proper food intake, stress outlets, regular movement, supporting detoxification, getting adequate deep sleep are all core strategies for every lying patient to help enhance their treatment outcomes.

So here to discuss these core strategies for Lyme recovery and building basic resilience is Doctor Casey Kelly. Doctor Kelly is board certified in family medicine, and she was among the first physicians to add a board certificate in integrative Medicine as well.

She has studied the causes, effects, and treatments of Lyme disease extensively and lectures nationally on this and other topics. She's a ten year member of the Institute of Functional Medicine and past treasurer of the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society, or Islands.

Doctor Kelly serves on the board of the Illinois's Lyme Association and is the faculty and is on the faculty at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University.

Welcome, Doctor Kelly. Tell our listeners a little bit more about yourself and how you came to specialize in treating vector borne diseases. Thank you so much for having me.

So good to see you. You know, my story is probably not all that different than many other providers who find their way into this, you know, somewhat treacherous, treacherous area.

It was a personal story. You know, I had my own health journey, mostly with chronic fatigue and postural orthostatic tachycardia, where I feel dizzy when I sit up too fast and for too long.

And, that really brought me to adrenal fatigue, which then brought me to vector borne illness and kind of getting myself through that and starting to look for it in patients.

You know, once you start looking, you can't stop because it's just it's everywhere. And it's been just a true honor and joy to be able to help these patients feel better and get to their best life.

Yeah I think a lot of physicians who've been through this themselves, it's like you are like you're like a living Lyme detector, right? And then you get it and you understand the symptoms in a way that, like nobody else does if you haven't actually lived through it.

So it enhances your ability to relate and treat patients so much better. Yeah, totally. Yeah. Okay. So lifestyle plays a huge, huge role I believe in, you know, treatment outcomes and in the speed and fullness of recovery.

So we've got a lot to talk about. Let's start with diet. I think that diet is our biggest interaction with our environment.

Diet Basics for Lyme Recovery

And food literally tells our body what to do and how to do it. So what do you feel like is the right nutritional profile for someone suffering from Lyme?

It's tricky because there are so many different healthy diets out there, and so I try to meet people where they are,

but at the core of it, the three foods that I think are the hardest on the immune system are gluten, dairy and sugar.

So that's where we usually start. And trying to work through cutting those out and eliminating those to the best of our ability. And just trying to keep it a little simple at the beginning.

You know, there are a lot of elimination diets and keto diet and carnivore diet and autoimmune paleo diet and all these different diets out there. And that just is really hard, especially when your brain doesn't work as well as you want it to.

A lot of these line patients have brain fog and can't think clearly, and so too adds a lot of stress to have to think about every last morsel that you put in your body.

So if we can kind of focus on 2 or 3 things and get started and build from there and see the changes that can happen just by trying to cut out some of the bad foods and add in some of the good foods.

We see big differences and changes right away just with that. And then we can build on that and continue to to help create a healthier anti-inflammatory diet.

Yeah I agree. Absolutely. I think those three are my top three. And just eliminating them can decrease a lot of the inflammation and immune dysfunction, you know, going on in the body too.

So if those are the three things that we would take out first, are there maybe like three top things or top suggestions that you would focus on trying to then incorporate into your diet?

There's really two for me. One is animal protein because we need that animal protein to help us make our antibodies to have a robust immune response, and then eating the rainbow, trying to get as many different colorful fruits and veggies in, to get all of those different phytonutrients that we need in our diet.

And I think that's helpful for kids to kind of makes it a little more fun to eat and see how many different colors we can get in in a day or a week and, and kind of process through that.

So those are two big additions that I like. I love that especially love at the Rainbow with kids. It's actually it's very helpful for adults too. Yeah. Okay.

So anything else that you want to say about diet before we move on to stress management? How much is water? Water intake? You know, our kids are so much better at this day and age than we were.

I know I never carried a water bottle around, and now I do. And I do find that when I am hydrated, when I'm drinking enough, when I have enough electrolytes, I also feel a lot better.

My energy is better, my mental clarity is better. And so that's often a thing that's simple. A little addition to think about an added to. Yeah, that is simple. And that's a great tip.

And it's so important. And I'm glad you brought up electrolytes too, because I have so many patients that are like, I drink so much water and all I do is run to the bathroom and pee and it's like, well, but are you getting electrolytes?

And then you bring up sodium and they're like, wait, what? Like, salt's bad for you. And I'm like, no, like we're, you know, because everyone gets, well, not everyone.

But I think at this point it's accepted, right, that we're over 70% water. And I'm like, no where, like over 70% salt water. Like if we don't get the salt, we can't bring the water into the salt.

So yeah. All right. So let's move on to stress management. What are some easy ways that you use to help your patients. Incorporate stress management into their daily routines.

Yeah. You know this is funny. I ask people all the time, what do you do for your stress? And a lot of time, I get the deer in headlights look at me. I'm, you know, and it's it's hard.

I get it, you know? I'm a busy working mom. It's it's hard to add one more thing to my plate, especially when that thing is supposed to be relaxing, not thinking.

So, I mean, I have a plethora of things and options that I will give to people, but I'm often starting with more of the passive support that we can do to help relax a little bit without adding a layer of one more thing to to check off, you know, and have to add to it.

So some of it is as simple as breathing and we have to have some. We are not designed anymore in our culture to relax and breathe and really kind of settle and have an off switch.

We just kind of live in this constant fight or flight. In this background, stress and everything that we have going on is we have to retrain ourselves to have a break, you know, I will explain it, to, to patients where you take a soda bottle and you shake it out.

Eventually it will explode. Right? But if you just open the cap a little bit, the whole thing settles and you can buy more time. You can shake it up again.

So that's kind of what we need to do is have some of those outlet. So breathing is a quick and simple way to do that. And most of us are pretty shallow breathers anyway.

We don't even realize we're not using our diaphragm and expanding our lungs. I use the numbers four and eight because my simple brain helps me remember.

Breathe in through your nose for, for, and out to your mouth for eight, 4 to 8 times in a row, 4 to 8 times a day. And I will use like red lights or bathroom breaks to do it, because then I don't really have to think about it.

I'm just, oh, there's a red light. Then I can kind of get triggered to remember to do it, and no one has to see me or hear me or know that I'm doing it, and it can just instantly I have that little access, that little outlet, and can reset the system a little bit and get you ready for the next, the next couple hours.

Right. You get it. And it's fun to that. But I love that. Yeah. That's great. It's a nice. Especially like the reminders with the red light or bathroom.

Yeah that's perfect. Something to trigger the the mind to remember to do it. And then, you know, to think about it, worry about it. You just start to learn.

Oh yeah, this is what I'm supposed to be breathing, right? Yeah. Yeah. Okay. One of my other favorite really passive ways is binaural beats.

Stress Management and Meditation

So there are loads of free apps and paid apps and things you can do. You have to wear headphones when you listen to the music, but it just helps this music and the patterns and the frequencies are set to help.

Coordinate with different brainwaves. And so you can set it to sleep, you can set it to de-stress, you can set it to focus. There's a lot of different ones out there, but it's passive.

Don't have to think about it. You can put some headphones on while you're brushing your teeth, or while you're getting ready for bed or laying in bed, and it just helps that brain get into that calmer mode all by itself.

So those are just a couple of ways that we'll start to talk about ways to incorporate this in in an easy way, and then we can build from that when we start to see these changes, it's easier to go, oh gosh, okay, see where this is

headed?

What else can I do. What's the next step. And then we can talk about meditation or gong or other things too. That can kind of calm the system and support that stress.

That's great. Do you want to talk about a little bit more advanced techniques for stress reduction? Yeah. So meditation is probably the most researched thing out there.

And that's I find it really hard personally. And I think a lot of people have a hard time to it. Just our brains are going, going, going, going. So to to retrain it to stop is it's hard and it's work, but it's, it's work that if we can actually do in training, it can make a world of difference and really reset our system and set us up for the day or help us calm down at the end of the day.

And there's lots of different types of meditation out there. You can do walking meditations, you can do guided meditations, you can, listen to sound bowls, you can do transcendental meditation.

There's tons of health there. So you just sometimes you have to try and, you know, a couple different shoes to see what fits. But that's where the evidence is and that's where where, you know, it really can get us to that spot.

And once you really learn to get into that meditative state, you can get there faster, and you'd only need to do it for a shorter amount of time as well.

So it's one of those things that takes some chunk of time until you get used to it and get better at it and get that, you know, muscle memory, for lack of a better term, to get it down into a quick thing and then you can get really good and just kind of go and almost instantly get into that meditative state and stay there for a few minutes throughout your day.

So it's actually pretty, pretty amazing what it can do. But, you know, there's lots of apps and there's lots of things out there to help people to get to that spot.

Be patient with it. You know, I personally, I watch it. It took me years to really figure this out. And it can really it it's made a big difference. Yeah it does.

And I mean there's a lot of clinical studies to back it up too, you know, of the actual changes that occur in the body and the ability to switch back into, you know, parasympathetic branch of the nervous system and really calm down.

And it helps with the healing a lot. But I'm right there with you. It took me forever. I still wouldn't say like I'm anywhere near, well, not even a master.

So I didn't even know what the right word is. But when I first started, I would literally have to keep a notebook next to me, and I would. I would make lists of things that I had to do because it was like the first time, you know, that your mind isn't busy and distracted, and so you start remembering all of the things that you need to do and like jotting them down was like, okay, I'm not going to forget that.

And then you could try to go deeper. But it's funny. I had someone say to me, you know, meditation isn't isn't about clearing your mind, which is what I always thought it was, and I thought it.

That's impossible. I can never just not think about anything. And then it was suggested to me, you know, the meditation is more about observing your thoughts and letting them go.

And then that was helpful. That was a little that was helpful to me because I was like, oh, it's okay to have thoughts. Yeah. Because you. Yeah, there's no way.

My brain never is blank and empty. But I can be focused, you know, I can focus on one thing if I can kind of pick a thing to focus on so I can let the rest of it set.

All right. That's where I can get my brain to. But it's. It's an effort. Yeah, but it's work and a lot of really worth it. It is totally worth it. And a lot of times I will use that sort of meditation practice to actually get to sleep, which is the next thing we're going to talk about.

So, I know for so many Lyme patients out there, sleep is a huge, huge issue. There's a lot of inverse sleep patterns and difficulty falling asleep and waking up in the middle of the night and all of that stuff.

So I want to talk about, you know, how to make sleep a priority. But I also want to talk about, you know, if you have any tips for helping patients specifically where the vector borne disease to actually get to sleep and stay asleep.

Because it's hard, like you mentioned, for so many people, sleep disturbances are a big, big part of these infections and these chronic illnesses. And so it's really easy to just say, me, you know, sleep better.

Sure. No problem. Okay. Right. So there there are lots of different tools. And my job is to try to figure out what some of those tendencies are. And so sometimes that means sleep study, you know, if you're snoring, if you're clenching your teeth, maybe there's some sleep apnea or other things that we need to to look at.

Often there's adrenal issues. So goes back to the stress that you were mentioning are adrenals. Are are our glands that send out our stress hormone cortisol.

And that can wake us up in the middle of the night as well, because the physiological stress, as well as the psychological stress of all of these, these infections take on us.

And you start coupling all of these things together. I mean, you know, throw perimenopause on top of it and just, you know, where, you know, where are we? So, that's part of my job is the providers to help kind of weed through that, is that falling asleep isn't staying asleep.

Are you having hot flashes or you having vivid dreams or not dreaming? Are you snoring? You know, these are a bunch of questions we have to ask to try to really get in to the crux of what's happening in there.

And a lot of us don't prioritize sleep. You know, that's kind of the last thing. And, you know, a lot of my working parents will take that at nighttime and they'll stay up too late, because that's the only time that they have for themselves.

Or they just, you know, there's too much work to be done, etc., so we're not prioritizing it. So I do think it's important to prioritize it. And often women need more sleep than men.

So the rule of thumb they say is seven hours, right. Try to aim for seven hours. But sometimes women really need 8 to 10. And when you're sick, often you need 10 to 12.

It's that recovery time. It's trying to revamp the adrenals and the brain and the toxins and trying to kind of clear that out. And so sometimes we need more in there.

And so if we're not prioritizing or we're not scheduling it, we're not creating that space to get that sleep. That is one thing to definitely take a take a look at.

But there are some other little tips and things. And again, it kind of depends on what the cause of some of these sleep disturbances are. But mouth taping is one of my favorites.

It's always fun to say, if anyone ever told you to take your mouth shut. There are breathe right strips that also kind of go along with that to help open the nasal passages.

And, there are different brands of tape that you can get. There's also just you can just use medical tape. Yep. And I get it. And that for a lot of patients it's almost scary.

And a lot of patients with like nasal congestion type of issues, you can't breathe through their nose. I will start with just the breathe right strips in and of itself.

Because the tape can almost feel suffocating, initially. But for a lot of people, that is a great way to help just reset their their sleep patterns. Within a month or so, you can train yourself to sleep with your mouth closed, and that's going to get better, humid air to your system.

Sleep Support and Nighttime Routines

It's going to get you better, deeper sleep. That's a simple thing to try, not to expensive. I'm just going to say sorry. Even like when you use the tape, it helps to clear up the congestion, right?

Which is ironic, but it does. It makes such a big difference. As it does. Yeah. And so it's just you got to try it. You got to try it out. Because I do have a lot of nasal congestion in patients.

But it seems to help immensely. Just. Yes, I make my husband take his mouth shut when it's morning and it's, it's it works. It works. Really well. And it just gives you a little fun.

Little. Hey, do you take your mouth shut? Yep. That's some of the stress relief that we need in our lives, right? Yeah, it's definitely just. Just the good laugh.

What other tips do you have regarding sleep? So I mentioned the adrenals can be a big cause of sleep issues in a typical adrenal wake up will be around 3 a.m.

and often wake up feeling alert, mind racing, anxious, almost. And it can take a while to get back to sleep. And so that's happening. Often the adrenals aren't place, so there are supplements and and other things to do, but a nice fat or protein filled snack at bedtime will help keep your blood sugar stable, because your adrenals actually do play a role in your blood sugar regulation as well.

And that plays a role with the waking up. So that is a little trick in taking, you know, a handful of pistachios, a half an avocado and nothing too big.

But that fatty protein snack at bedtime can keep the blood sugar more regulated and can help you sleep a little bit better. That's another one. Yep, that's a great tip.

Anything else? Share all your secrets are honest. Yeah. You know, there are various supplements and things that we will try. I try to avoid medications because that's often I'm almost like a fake sleep.

And it's not doesn't quite get us to where we need to go. But sometimes, sometimes we just have to because people just need sleep. And so we have to kind of meet them where they are.

But I try to avoid that. Some of the supplements that I will use, include actually even CBD and CBN to help with sleep, melatonin and often melatonin doses I finding are too low in some patients.

Pills typically range from one milligram three milligrams. Maybe five milligrams will be a normal melatonin. And sometimes that's all it takes. But sometimes with a lot of nerve, it, nervous system inflammation.

We need higher doses. We need ten 20mg, which is a little, abnormal, you know, dosing. Right. So we think of in cancer patients, we will go up to 66 zero milligrams.

So there's a wide range. And it really does help with the neurological inflammation. But we don't want to wake up groggy and you know sick. And so we've got to kind of find that middle ground in there.

But also just teas throughout the day. Valerian. Chamomile. You can do a lot of these herbal teas and it not necessarily gonna make you sleepy all day long, but it can help keep some of some of that adrenals and some of

the stress and things a little calmer, which can help people sleep a little bit better at night to.

So and then you have the regular sleep hygiene, you know, turning off the blue lights at night. You're wearing blue blocker glasses, you know, turning your screens off an hour or so at night before you go to bed, turning your Wi-Fi off, getting in a dark room.

I tell people, you know, when we're little, I have babies. You have to get them ready for bed. You know, you have to calm down. You have to give a warm bath.

It's time to settle and relax, and then they can sleep a lot better. And as adults, we don't do that. We're just doing stuff all day long and doing doing it.

And then we're on our phones and we're doing all this and stimulating and we're like, I don't understand why I can't sleep. What's going on? You know, we're too overstimulated.

We have to do that for ourselves too. So often it's, you know, meditation, Epsom salt baths, reading a book, listening to binaural beats. You have to do all the things to retrain yourself, to calm down, to be able to sleep.

Right? Yes. And, you know, being on your phone, having the blue light shining into your eyes, stimulating your nervous system in a very negative way, and getting all riled up because of what you just saw on social media, is not setting the tone for a good night's sleep.

Ever so obvious. But when we all do it, you know. I know. It's just you're not sleep and you've got to. You got to cut those ties. Yeah. For sure. Okay, so let's move on to movement.

So how do we even start to talk about exercise and movement. You know, when a lot of our listeners are like you know it's it's all I have just to get in the shower and get ready.

Yeah absolutely. I've been there, been there I understand that. And then then what you do that day is you you take your shower and the next day you go to the mailbox, you know, and get your mail and come back and you just you have to, to do something every day.

The last thing I want is people to just be laying around doing absolutely nothing, getting deconditioned, because that's worse for you and your overall health and your immune system and your and your longevity and your muscle and all the things.

Right. But I get it, because often it's fatigue and pain that are really holding us back. So we also don't need to go to the gym and take a high intensity workout class for an hour every day to get movement.

Movement can be simple. It can be taking a walk. It can be folding the laundry, you know, if that's what you can do that day. That's what you can do that day.

But do something. And ideally it's something fun. I wouldn't say folding the laundry is fun for me. You know, but it's, you know, we have to prioritize and we have to get stuff done in life.

Right? But know, maybe it's just taking a walk right to the mailbox, like I said, or around the block or, you know, calling a good friend and having them come over and help you lead whatever you like to do, do something.

But it's that big balancing act, especially when you are really sick and not feeling well, because if you do too much, then you can pay for it for 3 or 4 days, right?

And that's, you know, a big mitochondrial sign that our mitochondria are really tired and fatigued. So it's not about reaching anybody else's goals, it's about yours.

And if not to pressure us or do too much, but do something every day that gets you up and off the couch to get you

up and out of bed. And if that means afterwards you have to go back to bed and rest, go back to bed and rest to that.

But get that movement that's going to help your lymphatic system help you detox. It's going to help your immune system be able to fight the infections.

But it's a little bit of movement can increase your your white blood cells to help you fight infections.

Movement and Gentle Exercise

So it doesn't take much. And the more you do, it will get easier. And then you'll find you can do a little bit more and you can do a little bit more, and then you'll be able to do just more in your day in general.

But start low, build out, find something fun that you like. Yeah, that's great advice. That has to be fun. It has to be something that's not stressful and something that is somewhat enjoyable.

And, you know, I always tell my patients to like, you know, we all have it in our head, right? Because we read these things and see these things where, you know, you need to do so many minutes a day for it to count.

And I'm like, look, I don't like go walk up and down the stairs, you know, and and if that's it, that's it, you know, or go for three minutes. Go for five minutes.

You know, I'd rather see you do a small amount, you know, a small period of time multiple times a day than to not do anything because it's like, well, I can't do anything for the recommended amount of time.

You know. Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. Your recommendations are not the same as anybody else's. So, yeah, I. Really. Felt. Yeah. So you brought up detox which to me is one of like you know the three main treatment goals of, of helping to heal these infections.

So do you have any good detox tips for our listeners. Yeah. Pretty much every vector borne infection patient that comes in has some sort of detox problem, whether it's just an overall whelming amount of toxins or some genetic inability to clear out the toxins.

Both. All of the above, it's in there. And it is such a big, big part of the treatment. In there, I think there some of the simple things we've kind of already touched on, actually, because diet is a big part of detox.

So not ingesting the toxic and inflammatory foods, but also eating foods that are going to help you detox, like broccoli and garlic and eggs and things that are high in sulfur, and high in fiber.

You know, those are food things that are going to help you detox enough water to make sure you can flush things out. A little bit of movement here and there, which will help with your lymphatics, etc.

to help you detox good adequate sleep. That's where your brain is going to do a lot of its detox. So a lot of the other things we talk about are going to help with detox.

But you know, often we just need more support. Was there just so many toxins in our system? So when it comes to toxins, I think about three things. One is trying to avoid that as much as possible.

So, you know, trying to avoid a moldy house chain, avoid toxic foods, trying to avoid toxic people. That's a tough one. That's a tough one. Two is to help flush them out.

So help mobilize and get those toxins moving. So outside of just regular movement, saunas can be helpful. Epsom salt baths can be helpful. Supplements like to thiamin and milk thistle can help work your, you know, your system to help flush these toxins out and then binding up the toxins in ways most of us need some help with having a sponge in there.

Then to mop up all that stuff, we started moving around, which are different binders. And they're, charcoal, modified citrus pectin, chlorella. There's a whole host of them in there, but things to help us and fiber.

Detox Strategies and Closing Advice

So I talked about to, to help make sure that we, we are literally flushing them down the toilet and helping them get out of our, our system, and not just reabsorbed right to our body as we start to move them around.

But there are gentle ways to build up into that. I've definitely seen people over detox, and I think detox is probably a whole day long topic in and of itself.

And you can feel just as crummy if you over detox as when you're rehearsing kind of one in the same in a lot of ways. So gentle ease into it. But there are a lot of things that we can be doing to start that process and teaching ourselves and helping clear out all the gunk that we're exposed to.

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And I love that analogy. Right. Like we have to, you know, stop putting it in. We need to get it down the drain and we need to mop up everything that's that's overflowing.

Great advice. So any other lifestyle strategies that you would like to talk about when looking at healing Lyme and vector borne disease? You know, I think for me, my goal is to get patients to feel really well and to and to kind of get into remission and feeling good.

And then when we have those bad days, not get so bogged down by the bad day. And because we all do and it's a mindset, can we all kind of go back to that dark place?

But reminding ourselves over and over again, I can't get better. I will get better. I was better yesterday. I can do this again. And looking at these things, you know, how am I eating?

How am I stressing, how am I sleeping, how am I moving? And then my cleaning stuff out. Usually that's enough to kind of get us right back to where where we used to be before, for if we're kind of having a dip in things, but just giving ourselves grace through this process because it's a yucky, mucky process.

And if we feel tired and fatigued and all the things that it's hard to do, all the things no one is perfect. So, you know, aim for 80%. Try to do the things that you can and give yourself grace when you have the days where you just can't do it.

And that's okay. It'll get easier. Yeah, that's great advice. So if our listeners wanted to have an appointment with you, are you still taking new patients?

Yes, we are located in Chicagoland area and you can reach our website at KS Integrative health.com and set up a discovery call to meet with one of our team and see if you're a good fit and who you're a good fit for in our practice.

All right. Awesome. And then for patients that maybe can't get in on a one on one, I know that you have a master class, right, that you've put together.

Do you want to tell us a little bit more about that. Absolutely. This you know, kind of what we talked about today is the crux of the foundations of the course.

But the course was put together for patients who are trying to manage chronic complex illness and vector borne infections. And there's going to be lots more information continuously added.

But please check out our website. You can find it all there at Case Integrative. Doc okay. Awesome. And then also, for our listeners, if you want to go and download Doctor Kelly's PDF that talks a little bit more about the masterclass, you can do that as well.

So any last minute piece of pieces of advice that you want to share with our listeners before we end? Yeah. You know, we were joking earlier about taping your mouth closed and all that fun stuff, but I think it is important to laugh and have fun and try to, you know, smile and love.

Especially as adults, we don't tend to have as much fun, you know, maybe as we used to. So what is fun for you is that taking a pottery class is at walking with your friends.

Like, do something fun, even if it's just laughing at some memes or whatever. As long as it's not right before bedtime or on your phone. But smile and have fun and just try to remember that joy, and life and that spark because it comes back and but we gotta, we gotta foster that a little bit too.

Yeah, absolutely. Well, thank you so much for being here. And thank you to our listeners at home for joining us. I hope that this was helpful and helps you on your journey for Healing Line.

Take care. We'll see you next time.