Introduction and Co-Hosting the Summit

This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most. Hi there, everybody. Welcome back. How exciting that we get to talk with our fabulous co-host, Dr.

Carolyn Leaf. Dr. Leaf, such a treat to be with you. It's been so much fun co-hosting the summit with you, and we wanted to make sure and give everybody the opportunity both to speak with one another and hear sort of Dr.

Leaf's expertise and my expertise and kind of how we've framed up this solution summit for everybody. Uh, so Dr. Leaf, it's great to see you. Let's maybe just start.

Can we share a little bit your background, who you are, how you got into mental health and what you're doing these days? Absolutely. Well, as I agree with you, Drew, it's just such fun doing this together and I'm sure this is the beginning of lots of great collaborations because both of us have such a the same goal of helping people with their mental health, which just means helping ourselves too, doesn't it?

We help others, we're helping ourselves. I think that's something that we've liked about each other from the beginning is you and I both have a real demand.

You walk the talk that, you know, we can't be up here hosting this. We can't be thinking about mental health unless we've done our work, unless we're struggling with these things ourselves in a certain way.

How do we move our bodies and control our minds and engage with the self in a way that really minimizes symptoms of depression and anxiety? And so it's one thing I've really enjoyed.

We were talking at the beginning of my interview about, you know, or at the end, if people heard, you know, just the enthusiasm of hearing what you're cooking for dinner and just that, you know, everything around mental health, brain food, nutritional psychiatry is, you know, right there on your plate as it should be.

Absolutely, it's very exciting. So my journey began nearly, I'm quite a lot older than you, I'm actually 61. So my journey began 38 years ago when I was in it, I was doing, I had a degree that they don't do anymore now, they've kind of broken it up.

So I did communication pathology, which is a combination of clinical neuroscience in the early days, because neuroscience back in 40 years ago was still very much in it.

It was more neurology and moving into neuropsychology and that kind of thing. So I did that was part of my degree. And the other part of the degree was we did some medical stuff and we did communication pathology, which is speech pathology is part of it, audiology is part of it.

So it was an interesting combination. And I tell you that to tell you that I had a very great background, a great background that helped me not to just get stuck in a very medical focus or a very biological focus, but also to have that psychological, neuropsychological focus and then to have the neuroscience.

So when I practice, I practice as a clinical neuroscientist. And what that is, is someone who basically looks at how people are functioning and helping them to then look at those signals of how they're showing up in the world and then track that back to where's that coming from.

Dr. Leaf's Background and Clinical Journey

and then to deconstruct and reconstruct that. So I worked in with people with dementia, with learning disabilities,

with severe traumatic brain injuries, with Alzheimer's, to the neurological side, even cerebral palsy, and then obviously the emotional side, trauma, and just the challenges of life.

And so it was a great, interesting approach, and it really trained me to look at things very differently. It was a terrible degree to do because they worked us to death.

We worked seven days a week. We were in clinic seven days a week, literally, in lectures. Even on a Sunday, we had to go in because they took a seven-year degree and they put it in four years.

And that's why I said they don't do it anymore. There's only 60 of us that qualified. And I'm just so glad I did. I hated it at the time. I loved and hated it at the same time, but it opened my mind to understanding the mind-brain-body connection.

It helped me to see things from multiple perspectives and it helped me to get that balance between the very physical side of how we function as well as the spiritual side.

I actually did some of the earliest work in neuroplasticity and what stimulated in my field back in the late 80s early 90s was only from the mid 90s once we had the fMRI technology as you know an MRI, that we started really understanding the idea of neuroplasticity, that your brain can be changed with how you manage your mind.

So back in the 80s, I was in one of my lectures, one of my neuroscience lectures, and one of my professors started saying, giving us this whole thing about how the brain can't change.

Now in the 80s, they did believe that the mind-brain body was separate, there was a connection, very much that they were two separate things that work together.

Fast forward to today, not everyone, but the general idea is that the mind and the brain are the same thing, which is not actually accurate scientifically.

The separation does exist, but they work together. They separate mind and brain, but they need each other. back to the eighties, they were telling us, well, your mind changes, life changes, things happen, trauma happens, et cetera, but your brain can't change.

Then I said, something's wrong with this picture because we as humans are changing, our bodies change, we respond to environment, we grow, we learn, et cetera.

And the professor, I remember saying to be very like almost in an aggressively challenging way. We'll go do research on it." So I said, okay. And he said, well, what area?

So I said, well, chromatic brain injury interests me because it's just an area that I'm very interested in. And he said, well, go do that. And his comment was the brain can't change, so you're kind of wasting your time.

Well, that was a young, naive student. I was working with neurologists as well in clinic, and they would often say, these people are vegetables, you can't do anything about them.

And I think it was that attitude that made me think this has got to be different. We can't just be telling our patients if they've had a traumatic brain injury, if they've gone through some severe life trauma, that that's it, that you've just got to compromise and learn some way around it, kind of band-aid it.

And so I started working with traumatic brain injury patients because there was hardly any research in the 80s on traumatic brain injury. I don't know if you're aware of that.

And long fast forward, I started seeing dramatic differences. We used CT scans because we didn't have MRI at that stage and behavioral changes, cognitive changes.

And essentially what I saw with the research was people going in changing dramatically from being literally vegetables to academically achieving and going to university within eight months periods and this didn't happen just once it was happening all the time and I started seeing this in my practice and that stimulated me to try and understand what is going on what is the mind what is the brain what are thoughts what is how can we help people change how can we obviously traumatic brain injury there's obviously changes happening in the brain and the body and the mind and the mind's driving this process because some of my patients didn't You know they didn't um it was they didn't progress as much as others others progressed more than others but they all changed they all improved cognitively academically so what was going on so i started a lot of research i was in south africa at the time come from south africa well from zimbabwe actually and i worked through the pre-apartheid transition and post-apartheid eras and i was working with a lot in the very poorly performing schools in the terrible education system and clinical system that was at that time.

And so I had the privilege of going into the townships, which are the very dangerous areas. And I say that because I saw life at its worst. I really worked in Rwanda after the genocide.

So I've worked in areas where people have been through some of the worst traumas and have had some of the worst experiences. And it's in those areas and those experiences that I saw, hey, if we can help a person to understand the mind and help them to process what is going on through the mind, we can actually change.

We can have a physical response in our brain and our body that's positive. We can change the structure of our brain and hence neuroplasticity. And that's what I showed with my research.

When you actually help a person to process and you can rebuild the brain and change the brain, the brain will actually change. And then I practiced for nearly 25 years, I practiced clinically, continued my research.

This is my little brainy character, sort of mascot that we use for the work I do and to help children. And I still do research, still run clinical trials.

I don't practice anymore. I've taken, I developed a theory, I developed a system for the work that I was doing. I put it into a system so that I could train other therapists, doctors, physicians, and then also started working directly with people and realizing that I can't reach everyone, but I can take these systems, simplify them, put them into books, apps.

We've got an app called the Neuropsycho app, podcasts, et cetera, to help people to understand how they can help themselves. And that doesn't mean that they don't need the psychiatrist.

They need you. You know that. They need therapists. We need counselors. We need psychiatrists. But at the end of the day, and do they not with your patients are not with you 24 7 they also can't contact you 24 7 but they live with themselves 24 7 so I wanted to be able to empower people to manage their mind with day to day struggles toxic habits that people have built Traumas whatever wherever that we all at different stages as we know at every point in our life and empower them to be able to know how do i when i wake up with a panic attack at three in the morning when i'm in the car going to work and i have a panic attack or that anxiety is so pressing that i can't function or that overwhelm or that depression or whatever it is how can i How can I learn to manage that?

How can I change that? And then also, how do I just deal with the day-to-day struggles? I mean, every day something hits us and it could be something as simple as you have a meeting with someone and they just say something that throws you off and you've got to go and do a podcast interview.

How do you get yourself back in that frame of mind that you can do an interview or be a parent or see your next patient. When you just had a very difficult clinical time, maybe with a patient that you feel quite emotional, you've got to get yourself into that space where you're ready for the next client.

So the day to day struggles, I wanted to take all of the supply and that's currently what I What I do is helping empowering people to understand what the mind is, what the brain is and how to basically use neuroplasticity to manage the thoughts that drive us and sometimes drive us crazy.

Now that's quite a long answer, but I'm sure you've got lots of questions out of that. Well, that's a great answer, Dr. Leaf, and thank you. And also, I love the idea of not really differentiating, but kind of mapping out for people.

Everyone listening, I think, probably knows about this, right? Where, you know, there are roles for therapists, psychiatrists, coaches, right? But then there's also all of the work we have to do on our own time with ourselves and journals, journal prompts.

Apps like Dr. Leaf's apps, books that inspire you, self-help groups. I mean, there's a lot of different ways to engage with the cell, but it's an essential part of this, right?

How Neuroplasticity Works

I mean, everybody watching knows when you're struggling with depression, you're struggling with anxiety, you're struggling with these symptoms most often.

As you know, you know, we're only with our patients maybe once a week, maybe twice a week. So most often we're with ourselves with these symptoms and making sure that you have a robust set of tools, not just one tool, not two tools, robust like Bassett.

We have this, we have this ice cream store in America known for like 31 flavors. Sometimes I want to think about this solution summit, like an ice cream store where there's all kinds of different flavors of help for you in the solution summit.

There are all types of different solutions, and the ones that resonate with you, that speak to you, that's where we think there's good work for you to get started.

I want to get into habits because being a neuroscientist, the way you think about the brain and how things like habits, thoughts, and trauma are wired into our brain, I want to dig deep into that with everybody right now in our time together because how we shift brain wiring is really the hope of neuroplasticity, right?

I'm going to take this neurotic, anxious, struggling, regressed, angry brain of mine And through our conversation, through some tools, I'm going to be in a different state.

My brain is actually going to be wired somewhat differently. Can you tell us a little bit about habit and habit formation and how that happens in the brain, how to optimize that for ourselves?

Absolutely. So first of all, I love your ice cream example. It's so important that we understand all of these different options that we have. And I always see the work that I do, which is why I do what I do now, is complimentary, very complimentary.

what you doing and a therapist or counselor or coach or whatever because you, you've got to get your habit to form. You need to take advantage of how the mind uses the brain and the body and that whole connection.

And we see this very obviously with the foods that you eat, the impact you can feel immediately on your body. same thing with your mind is driving so the decision to for example eat well is a decision of your mind and then that's going to and then to keep eating well you've got to build that into a habit you've got to turn so essentially the the mind drives everything mind is number one if we don't manage our mind i can read all the good books i can listen to all the advice you're going to give me if i come to you for a session I'm using my mind to do that.

But I also have to use my mind to apply that stuff. I have to make the decision to go and apply the techniques or the systems or the advice that you give me or whoever gives me.

And that's where we habits come in. And that's where we've got to drive the way that we make changes in our life that are sustainable is to use the concept of neuroplasticity and done correctly.

So neuroplasticity, it's become such a buzzword. In the late 80s and early 90s, people didn't know what I was talking about. It was so new. And even up to 2000, honestly, it's the last sort of five years that people have really caught on, and I've been talking about this for, as I said, 38 years, because I did some of the first work in it.

If it's a new term, sorry to interrupt Dr. Leif, if it's a new term for you, neuroplasticity, as I define it, is the ability of the brain to heal, repair itself, to make new connections, and to engage in neurogenesis, which is the formation of new brain cells primarily in the hippocampus.

Dr. Leif, that's how I'm defining it, but you're the neuroplasticity expert. Is that pretty close? It's close and it's close. It's a very good basic definition and it's definitely the result of.

So I would rephrase it slightly and say it's your ability that your brain has to be changed with your mind. So it's with your mind that you do your work.

Your brain can't do anything. It has to be driven. And your brain is a filter and a store. It's like a library. A library or a filter, I think a library is a better analogy.

So is your body. So every experience we have is stored in the brain and the body. And every day we're having more experiences which then is being built into the brain and the body.

So the neuroplasticity is the ability that we have to wire the experiences of life into the mind-brain-body network. So that's the change. And we're always having new experiences and we're always getting more insight into current experiences.

And experiences are basically memories clustering together into thoughts. So this podcast is an experience. It's a lot of words that we're saying, a lot of data that we're giving, and the data that we're giving on memories, and they will cluster together to form a thought.

And as we are talking back and forth and people are listening and processing and understanding and hearing, that your mind does that, and then your mind puts that into the brain.

And as the mind connects with the brain, the magic happens. And we have all these neurochemical, electromagnetic, energetic responses. And the proteins are made quite literally.

And this experience, this discussion, which is auditory sound waves and light waves and all that kind of gravitational fields, becomes a physical structural change inside of your brain and your body.

And that's neuroplasticity. And what I've shown from my research is that you can drive that neuroplasticity in the direction you want it to go. So related to habit formation, we get what we call the plastic paradox.

And the plastic paradox is that your mind is constantly What work you're alive if you get to my world is all kinds of spiritual beliefs of what happens there but basically we're alive and you are having this conversation people are listening your mind is doing that with the thinking feeling choosing responding that's a very energetic process your mind is putting this information into the brain to the mind needs the brain and the body.

in order for you to be able to function. So it's the connection of the three. So as neuroplasticity kicks in, in that as we are processing something, it goes into the brain and the change happens.

It builds into the network. And we can change that network, we can drive it. So it's happening all the time. So if I don't manage that toxic thought, that intrusive thought that's popping up about how this person said that, or that happened to me and it's impacting my relationship, or I'm just feeling so depressed and frustrated and life sucks and my gut's sore and everything's terrible.

And I just get stuck in that revolving door of those emotions and perceptions and bodily sensations and behaviors. But I don't actually track where it's coming from.

All I'm doing is I keep thinking about it and whatever you think about the most is growing. So the network's getting bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and stronger and stronger and stronger and that's what drives us.

So what our mind builds into the mind-brain-body network becomes our driving forces. And those are toxic thoughts or healthy thoughts. We have a combination of both.

So the plastic paradox of neuroplasticity is that regardless of whether you like it or not, you are always growing something. You are always growing something.

Life is being grown into your mind, brain and body constantly. And if we don't look at the impact of what we're growing, like you watch the news all the time or you're stuck on social media, you are growing that, you're merging with your environment, you're growing that, and that impacts what's driving us.

So whatever you're watching or thinking about the most is growing. If you don't train yourself to become aware of the impact of that, in other words, being able to stand back and observe yourself, neuroplasticity is happening in the wrong direction.

So chaos is ensuing. If I keep on thinking about that thought that keeps, in other words, if I ruminate on that intrusive thought, but I don't see it as something that I could, that's telling me something, but I just keep playing it over and over.

I just keep doing the same thing over and over. That's the habit forming. That's the network that's growing. That's still neuroplasticity in action, but it's going in the wrong direction.

What we can do is we can interrupt that. We can actually drive neuroplasticity in the right direction. You can drive it. You can get in the driver's seat of neuroplasticity.

And the way you do that is by learning, training yourself. And this is something we do actually naturally as humans, but we get out of it with the busyness of life.

We're training ourselves to stand back and observe ourselves. I call this the multiple perspective advantage. And this is what you're doing as a therapist and as a counselor and as a psychiatrist, anyone in this field, is you're teaching people to say, okay, listen, what's going on in your life today?

What are you feeling? Tell me about your behaviors. Tell me about your perspective. Tell me about what are you feeling in your body? You start there as you think of it as a therapist, even as a person, you start there.

How are you showing up? And then you can't just stop there. You can't just band-aid that away and say, okay, I feel bad, so I'm going to do a meditation technique or take it.

medication to numb it. I need to embrace that for the information it provides because those signals are not who you are. It's because something's going on in your life.

So when I use my mind to look at signals, I'm starting to interrupt neuroplasticity paradox. I'm starting to get in the driver's seat. Instead of me just changing in a constant chaotic random way, I'm saying, okay, this is showing up.

This has come from neuroplasticity. I've built a habit and we'll talk about timing and habits in a moment. What I can do is I can stop and I can say, okay, how am I showing up?

I'm showing up like this because I'm neuroplastically wired in a habit, otherwise it wouldn't show up. Nothing shows up unless it's established as a habit.

So if it's established as a habit and it's showing up and I'm feeling depressed and life sucks and whatever, and it's affecting my relationships and brain fog is ensuing and I just can't seem to move forward and whatever.

That means that there's something that's become a habit. And it's got there through neuroplasticity. I can interrupt this. I can stop. I can look at my signals.

And then the next thing is that's coming from something. I'm not just randomly having this way I'm showing up. It's coming from a thought. A thought is an experience.

An experience is made of memories. Every experience we have is a story. If you are abused, it's an experience. There's not just one memory. There's a bunch of memories in that.

And that's the source. It's the root. It's the origin story. It's the root of the tree, whatever you want to say. So that then produces that experience is growing into a thought over time.

And that's what drives us. So if you reverse engineer that process, if you go experience, experience wires into the brain and then creates this pattern that drives us.

If I reverse engineer and say, okay, I'm showing up like this, what is it attached to? What is the source? And you deconstruct and reconstruct. You can't change what's happened to you.

You can't change the fact that the abuse happened, the past happened. But you can change what it looks like and how your neuroplasticity is going in the wrong direction.

Habit Formation and the 63-Day NeuroCycle

You interrupt that you find the signals to the thought you deconstruct to find the source you reconstruct and then you rebuild and stabilize and now you have you change how the past pays out into your future and that's taking an interrupting neuroplasticity that's gone in the wrong direction.

and you're taking advantage of the ability to change, but now you're driving it in the right direction. And that takes time. And that's neuroplasticity is linked to a timeframe.

And that's what most people don't recognize or understand because it's just not really trained sufficiently. And there's been lots of research on how long it takes to form a habit.

And most people think 21 days, although that wasn't scientifically, it was some plastic surgeon back in the 60s. How long does it take to form a habit?

It takes at least nine weeks. There's been anything from 56 to 66 days. In that region, what you see is there's a process. We've done studies where we've linked in looking in the brain neuroscientific research using QEG.

We've looked at the neurological, the psychological, and the behavioral. and measured in multiple ways. And we've also looked at the biological. So we've looked at things like DHEA, telomeres, DHEA cortisol ratio, prolatin, various different biomarkers that have been established as showing whether someone's in emotional distress or whatever.

So what the biomarkers in the body linked to stress and toxic things that have been happening in our lives. We've looked in the brain, we've looked at the behavioral, how you're showing up, okay?

And so we've done the research showing, looking at that and looking at how long it takes to change. So I saw the time frame happening clinically, I saw this time frame and then I've also, there's quite a lot of, not just myself and my team, but there's a lot of researchers who've shown that you break down a complex behavior, not a simple thing, not like when you talk about getting into a habit of flossing your teeth, you can do that in a few days.

That's a tiny little, you know, that's a simple thing. But when it comes to complex behaviors like patterns that are established, habits that are formed, toxic patterns in your life, traumas that are various things that are so emotional that they become so rooted.

When it comes to that big stuff, it's minimum cycles of nine weeks. And in that cycle, it's an up and down. There's certain points along the way that you can, if you understand that if I stop at like day four or day seven or day 21 or day 42 or day 36, certain things happen along the pathway.

And most people don't realize this. So in my work, I've actually tracked this path. We've created an app that walks you through the path here over 63 days, doing a systematic guided process, which is a system of how you get those thoughts, get those signals and find the thought and track it down to the roots and rebuild.

You do a five-step guided process daily. over 63 days and that is the time frame that it will help you to rewire. Now very quickly before we dive into the detail because I know you want to ask for the detail if you have a complex trauma like a sexual abuse or something that's not going to go in one nine-week cycle.

I've had patients that have taken up to two years and if you do the math 365 days in a year divided by 63 days it's around about six cycles in a year.

The whole thing is that for you to become the driver of neuroplasticity to form habits that will change because any experience becomes a habit. Habits are just basically patterns that have formed that drive us.

So to change, to create a sustainable change in your life, that it's no longer driving you. If you stop too soon, you're going to get so frustrated because you'll know how you want to be.

You've already seen glimpses of the change, but because you didn't wire it in properly, you fall back into old patterns. And that's really key to why the 63-day cycles are so important.

Oh, wow. That's great, Dr. Leaf, because we all just think 21 days, and I love you differentiating. You know, there are habits, easy things to pick up, you know, starting to eat more vegetables maybe.

Yeah, that you can do quite quickly. But when you think about complex behaviors, dealing with, you know, complex emotional experiences, making sure you're giving yourself a long enough runway is a really, really important piece of advice.

I also love where Dr. Leaf directs us. Everybody was thinking about this wrong before you came in. I don't mean the habit. I mean what she said about neuroplasticity.

I don't know if anybody else listening picked up on that, but you know how we always talk about, you know, like getting into a neuroplastic state or now with psychedelic medicine, oh, there's this neuroplastic window.

Dr. Leaf really said something I hope everyone heard, which is neuroplasticity is always happening. You're a library. You're always writing a new book.

You're always paying attention. You're always wiring in behaviors. And it's a really important shift. I had not actually thought about it this way myself, even though every day I'm sitting with patients in therapy.

I mean, that's neuroplasticity if there is no electricity, right? But we think about it as, oh no, it's like after a psychedelic experience. It's like, oh no, it's just not good after the run.

It's like, no, those are increased periods. Those may be neuroplastic factors like BDNF that help this process. But it's happening every single day. Exactly.

And you as a psychiatrist are helping your patients. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you. I get so excited. You are actually just driving that you're getting them to focus.

So you are putting any, even you help someone, you're putting them into the driver's seat and you're giving them the tools because you can't, as we all know, I can't change you, you can't change me, but you can guide a person to hopefully make the right choices.

And even then there's no guarantee. But whatever choice you do make, whether it's the right or the wrong, neuroplasticity is still happening, habits are still forming because that's how we function as human.

Life gets wired in and the more we think about it, whether it's the good or the bad, whether it's the positive or the negative, whether it's deciding to change or just deciding to stay the same, that choice is neuroplasticity in action going in either direction.

And we hope to give people and empower people the tools to be able to do that. And that's what I'm doing with my work is kind of getting them ready for your work.

Because they're coming to you for either psychedelic experience or as part of a whole treatment protocol. They're coming to get good perspectives. So in changing, in helping someone to get in the driver's seat, they need someone to help them embrace process and re-conceptualize.

They need someone And for some things, once you get the hang of it, we can help ourselves a lot. We're very capable of helping ourselves a lot. But when you've been through big stuff, to get an outside perspective is so vitally important.

And that's where the role of a therapist and counselor and psychiatrist is so important. And I'm so excited that you do psychotherapy still and that kind of thing, because Those are ways of helping a person to get back in the driver's seat because when you're so caught in that toxic area of, imagine a library, you're just reading all the toxic stuff or you're in a forest where you're just standing in this dense cluster of thorn trees with a storm brewing, you can't see the wood for the trees.

Going to talk to someone and even if it's just a loved one, helps you just get out of that storm for a moment and look back and see, okay, this is a storm in my life.

And now I can start driving that in the right direction. And then you can, you don't have to let that totally dominate every aspect of your life. You can actually learn to compartmentalize and recognize, okay, this is what's causing this in my relationships or this in my imposter syndrome, people pleasing, whatever it's, how ever it's OCD, how ever it's showing up.

That's not who you are, but let's learn to compartmentalize, let's work through this limited time each day because we get tired. So if you're giving your patients something to do, the neuro cycle that I've developed, which is this five step process that you do over the 63 days, is how they practice what you've told them to do, if that makes sense.

And, and as they practice that they become empowered to recognize, Oh, I could do this amount on my own, but I need Dr. Drew to show me, Hey, I got stuck here.

I need this perspective or this is still dragging me down. I'm not quite sure why, or I keep getting stuck here because I had this experience with my.

husband or work partner or as a child or whatever. And I can't, I can't, it's something. And then talking to you, maybe it's this. And then that reshifts and helps them.

Oh, okay. Now I can reconceptualize. Does that make sense? That's kind of- It makes sense. And a lot of times, you know, as you're describing the therapy, part of my role is, is sitting with people and, and having, and somebody's like forced them to create the space to reflect on, you know, it's not like the husband, but I say, wow, something sounds like really powerful.

What do you, what do you think's going on? And what I find fascinating, Dr. Leaf, is so often people say, oh, I don't know. And then they tell me exactly what's going on.

Exactly, because we do know it. I'm not sure, but, and they, boy, and you sit there listening and there's so much innate wisdom we have about ourselves.

Oh my gosh, yes. Part of therapy, part of the techniques, part of, you know, the techniques Dr. Leaf is talking about, part of what we're thinking of as solutions in this summit.

is really creating frameworks for you, whether it's in therapy or, you know, as we're really focused on this summit, solutions outside of traditional treatment that you can engage with yourself, is trying to invoke some of this reflexive self-awareness that is absolutely fundamental to this.

Self-Awareness, Therapy, and Turning Insight into Action

In Healing the Modern Brain, my new book, Self-awareness, is the very first step to mental fitness. Before I talk about food, before I talk about exercise or nature, all the stuff that we love to do for mental health, the step number one is we've got to, all of us, we've got to up our self-awareness.

We have to up ourselves. Yeah, that's so true. And that's the very first in the work that I've done is Dr. Ramsey. Can I call you Dr. Ramsey or Drew? Which would you prefer?

Caroline and Dr. Lee. You can call me Drew and Dr. Ramsey. Okay. That's because we know each other. So it's kind of going back and forth. But the whole idea of part of the research I've done and I'll go science and then I'll go simple, if I may.

Is that okay? Quick bit of science is that I looked at how does an experience like Like whatever experience you have, every day we have experiences all day long.

How does that get wired into the network? What is the process? And then how to reverse engineer. So the new, the nearest cycle is that system. So within that, you can put all kinds of therapy techniques and CBT techniques and visualizations and meditations.

It's not replacing it simply. How can I make what you tell your patients to do or you learn as a person just going, getting a self-help book, all these great techniques.

Where do I put them in this neuroplastic cycle in order to make them become a habit? So that's what I've created. I've created like the vehicle and the timeframe.

And then you can use all this great stuff that you learn because not everything works for everyone. So you find what works for you. You slot that into the five steps because it's a five step process and put it over that timeframe.

And then what you've done is you've ensured that you're in the driver's seat of neuroplasticity. That's essentially what we're doing. And the first step of doing that, the first thing that I felt when I was doing my research is that as you with your mind start becoming, you talk about awareness, the first thing you've got to do is gather awareness.

You've got to step into your, activate, if you look on a brain scan, you'll see activity in the frontal lobe. Your brain isn't everything. Your mind is embodied.

So your heart, for example, as you know, is the body's oscillator. it generates a magnetic field and it's around about eight foot around us and we see from gravitational fields that people have these biofields and this is not weird, this is hardcore physics that I'm talking about.

When you have an EEG done or an ECG, we're picking up on these gravitational fields that your mind is generating through your brain and your body and what I'm saying is that through therapies, through interventions like what Dr.

Du does and to what I'm telling you is that you actually get in the driver's seat to drive these energy Packets of energy, which is life. Life comes in these packets of energy and you can catch the ones that have implanted and driving you crazy and you can change them.

So it's that sort of scientific thing that's happening and the very first thing to start that process is to get yourself into

a gathered awareness step.

So you gather. Now notice I say the word gather awareness and that's the very first thing that happens as you start putting things into your brain. as you start learning to focus instead of just life happening you start saying what is actually happening at this moment or how am i showing up like you said you ask your patients what is going on right now so i gather you are gathering awareness when you ask that question you are gathering you make like you go into an apple orchard and you pick an apple off a tree i like that apple i like that apple you it's not just general oh i feel anxious it's I feel anxious because I'm feeling this anxiety in my body.

This anxiety is affecting my behaviors. It's shifting my perspective. It's very focused and that's the very first thing. And the minute you do that on a neuroscientific level, you have activated and opened up the networks.

They are closed and stuck until you open them up. So awareness opens up the networks and I can go into all the signs, but it's complex. But essentially think of a tree and now you're shaking the branches because I use the apple orchard as an analogy.

The branches are loose. I can start maybe picking off the leaves that are a bit rotten or taking the apples off that are good and throwing the ones. So I'm creating it.

If I don't gather awareness, if I'm just generally aware, if I just carry on, you can't even get in the apple orchard in the first place. You don't even know where to go.

You're just stuck. You just know there's an apple orchard. Living in that way of like, you know, I'm feeling this, I'm feeling anxious, I'm feeling depressed, I'm feeling worried, I'm feeling sad, which, you know, that's the beginning of self-awareness.

But what you're really asking and noting, hey, this is something that in your self-care techniques and the tools that you're building through the summit, you have to engage in, whether it's getting involved with an app like NeuroCycle, or whether it is getting involved in some coaching, or whether you're a very disciplined person.

Or a combination. Or a combination. This is self-awareness. And then I love this talk about neuroplasticity for everyone to really feel inspired on what's happening right now.

What just happened for the last 30 minutes that these thoughts and ideas from a wonderful neuroscientist are now swimming around in your mind. And I think the Solution Summit is really here to ask you, or meeting you at this moment in your life, to ask you to raise your self-awareness, keep raising it, because I'm sure you have a lot of it, to really double down on your efforts.

They don't always take away all of our sad moods, worried feelings, but by being consistently engaged, as Dr. Leaf is saying, in the driver's seat of your neuroplasticity, That's really, really how we get to a place of healing.

It definitely is. And can I just jump onto that with an analogy? What you said so beautifully there, that's what the summit is providing. If you think of that gathering awareness, that's your first step.

It's kind of like almost flying a plane. You've got to prepare the plane, but the plane takes off. We can't stop this. So you want your way and there's so much emphasis on awareness in the general media in self-help books.

And there's a reason why, because that's where you start, but it's not where you end. And what the research has shown is that if you just become aware through meditation, through mindfulness, through various different techniques that you can use to become very aware of your emotions and those, if you stop there, you'll crash.

You probably actually get worse, right? Because I'm really aware of how much I'm suffering and anxious and how awful my situation is. Exactly. That's why people find that if you just do meditation, for example, you get worse because the thoughts come up.

Now, what do I do with him? I've taken off. I've got to fly. So you've got to take it. The gather awareness is taking off. It's embracing. But then you've got to fly.

The pilot needs to know how to fly. And that's going beyond mindfulness. That's going beyond awareness. You need to then go into deep reflection. You need to go into exploring what's there.

You've got to get into the non-conscious mind. You've got to do this reconceptualization. So the flying is a three-step process of doing this embracing, processing and reconceptualizing.

But then you've got to land the plane. Because if you just do all of that and you don't land the plane, you don't start building it into a useful habit.

And so you've got to land the plane. So that cycle of taking off, flying and landing. which is a five-step process. What I've shown is that you've got to do that every day.

So neuroplasticity is a five-step process that is done daily over a period of time. And each day that you do it, as you all know, habits are built a little bit at a time.

As you're doing that, then over time you are turning it into a habit that's useful. A habit is a useful thing. So all the things as you're learning from the summit, all these things, if they just become knowledge, they just get stored.

They're not going to do anything. But if you need to start, you actually can learn them using the same You want to wire the skill using neuroplasticity and then you want to use the skill to detox and deal with the mental health.

So it's both phases. Neuroplasticity is for learning and for detoxing, if that makes sense. It makes sense and it's something I often talk about this idea of awareness is wonderful.

We have mental health awareness month in the US in May and I love it. It's a great time to talk about mental health, but I always make the same recurrent point.

Awareness doesn't do anything for us. It only starts. Awareness leads us to actions that do things for us. Exactly. We can't have the right actions without increasing our awareness.

We can't think about actions to improve mental health until we are aware that we have a lot of mental health problems, a lot of mental health stigma. but we cannot get stuck in awareness.

Awareness is very painful. Awareness is a place where we're observing, we're taking in, but we're not taking action. It's very frustrating. It's important to sit in that.

Got to do more. Got to go beyond. Right? Because we're going to maybe potentially take the wrong action or we don't have enough information, but we have to use our awareness to lead us, guide us, motivate us towards action.

Because that's how we get better. I can be aware of that. Exactly. We've got to do this stuff. And that's what I found so much with my patients and with working with people.

And now we work with millions around the world. And that's why I created the app. Because I thought, I mean, I've got books. And I've got nine. I've just handed in my manuscript for my 19th book.

But this is a book, Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess, my most recent. There's a second most recent. I've got a version for parents helping your child clean up their mental mess.

So it's to help a parent help their child or teach your grandparent or whatever. but in here I've got everything we've been talking about the exact how to do the five steps where the science first part is science it's not hard to understand but if you skip that you can get to the action I always recommend you read both but then I've got the apps if you prefer hands-on it's on the App Store Google Play web version Cause it's, it's, it's not that difficult.

I walk you through the process. So there's a lot of great signs, but it's, it's to get into that. So we've got the app as well that I literally walk people through that.

And then they can take all the techniques that they learn on the summit, plug it in to the different steps of the app and they can turn what you said awareness into action.

Dr. Leif, what an absolute treat to put some frosting on the cake of this amazing depression and anxiety solution summit that we've put together with Dr.

Talks. We've talked about habit formation, we've talked about neuroplasticity, and we've talked about this really important mantra that I hope you take from this particular talk, which is around growing your awareness and then turning that into actions as a way to create habits and put yourself in the driver's seat of your neuroplasticity.

It's such a treat to interview my co-host, Dr. Carolyn Leaf, wonderful neuroscientist, clinician. Please check out her apps. We'll have links to everything on the on the page of this talk or books.

Dr. Leif, thank you so much for co-hosting. Thank you much for your inspiration and all of your creative work, leading your team to really help us master our minds, clean up our mental messes, and have more empathy and compassion for ourselves and our mental health.

Everyone, there's been another episode in our Solutions Summit, and my request is always the same for each and every one of you, each and every time we talk, which is, I want you to do something with this information.

I want you to do something amazing with it for your mental health, for your mental wellness and fitness. What a treat to be with you all again and to have a little bit of your time.

I'm Dr. Drew Ramsey and we'll be back really soon with the next episode of the summit. Everyone take care and have a great day. Thank you so much. Thank you for tuning in to Doctor Talks.

We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health. Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your well-being.

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Real talks from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.