How Emotional Trauma Affects Your Digestion Transcript

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Introduction to the Interview

Welcome back. We are continuing our conversation on Reversing Chronic Gut Conditions. I'm your host, Sinclair Kennally. And today I am joined by my wonderful colleague Alex Howard.

He is so interesting because he's actually the founder of Conscious Life and co-host of the world leading Super Conference series which has been attended by over one million people.

And my team turned him on to me. Actually, we had not met until this very moment. And in reviewing your body of work and the contribution that you have made to the space with The Optimum Health Clinic, you know, all these world leading integrative medicine approaches that you guys have, I really wanted to have you on the summit to speak specifically to that maladaptive stress response that can impact our digestion so that this is going to be a treat for you guys as viewers.

And I'm really excited to have you on here. Welcome, Alex. Sinclair, thank you for having me. I'm just going to say it's a bit of a strange set up in the studio, so I think I'm just going to I'm going to talk to the camera.

That's better. But thank you for having me. Excited to be here? Yeah, excellent. So let's dive right in. Why don't we unpack for folks? Remember, we have a range in our audience today of newbies just taking control over their health.

People who are, you know, bona fide summit junkies who know more than their general practitioners do. And they're really just looking for those, you know, advanced gyms and of course, the wonderful practitioners in the audience who really want to deepen their practice and pick up new tools.

So with that range of audience in mind, how would you describe what a maladaptive stress response is and how it impacts our digestion? Well, I think the simple way to put it is that our body at any one time can be in one of two states.

So it can be in a state of stress or it can be in a state of healing. And when it's in a state of stress, there is a healthy, normal stress response. And then there's what I call a maladaptive stress response.

So a normal, healthy stress response is you and I are walking down the streets in London. We don't see the big red London bus that maybe it's an electric bus, so we don't hear it that's coming towards us.

And then in that moment, we have to leap out the way as to survive the danger.

What a Maladaptive Stress Response Is

It's no different to thousands of years ago. We're walking along. We don't see the sabertooth tiger, which is a sudden and immediate threat to to our survival.

And so in that moment, the most healthy, intelligent thing that we can do is to be able to respond very, very quickly. So we get a hit of adrenaline, of cortisol.

Our blood flow goes from, for example, our digestion to our arms and to our legs or heart rate increases. And we're able to do one of three things. We can fight if it's a bus.

We definitely shouldn't fight the saber tooth tiger. I mean, if we have spares, maybe we can we can flight so we can run away as fast as we can or we can freeze and we can hope that, well, the bus definitely has anyway.

The saber tooth tiger may not see us, so we can freeze in time when not in danger and and in those three situations, whatever happens, if we don't survive, it doesn't really matter.

But if we survive relatively quickly, we know that we've survived. And so our nervous system can come back to a place of balance. One of the things that often happens when we have a sudden acute stress is that, as I mentioned, our digestion will shut down because digesting what we ate for lunch is not a physiological priority in that moment.

And so we may get constipated like everything cramps up or we get diarrhea, we just expel everything in our system so we can have all of our resources and capacity to respond to the threat is there.

So that's a healthy survival response, which is the reason why the human species are surviving, except for the years that it has. The difference is when we have a stress that doesn't go away.

Now it's important to make a distinction between a real threat and a perceived threat. So a real threat is, for example, the boss or the sabertooth tiger.

A perceived threat is an anxiety about something that we think may happen. It may not happen. Replaying a memory or a conversation from the past. We're sort of torturing ourselves, going round and round around or something we wish we hadn't said or we should have said, or whatever it might be.

Our nervous system doesn't distinguish between something that's real and something that's vividly imagined. And so what happens is there can be a very real threat which is ongoing.

There may not be a threat that's ongoing, but we are perceiving a threat that's ongoing. And classic example of an ongoing threat is suffering from what's labeled a medically unexplained illness.

So my background to this was I suffered from any or chronic fatigue syndrome for seven years, which catalyzed my whole interest in this space and people listening to this summit, many of them may have been diagnosed or self-diagnose or things like IBS or bowel syndrome or SIBO or parasites or Candida.

Many things that may be going on. But when you suffer from a condition where you don't fully know what's wrong, why it's wrong, will you ever get better?

Should you do that? Should you do that? What if this makes it better? That thing made it worse. That is like being hunted by your nervous system. It's like being hunted by the saber tooth tiger ongoing.

And so that healthy stress response, that necessary survival response over time becomes maladaptive. You go from being triggered to stress and coming back to balance and normal to gradually the homeostasis, homeostasis, meaning same and stable, the homeostatic balance of a nervous system starts to shift.

And so the maladaptive stress response is a healthy stress response that has then become maladaptive. This has enormous impacts on all of our bodily systems.

We can come into that maybe in a moment. But the key thing is here for our body to be healthy, for us to be able to unlock our natural capacity towards healing, we need to spend most of the time in a healing state.

So I go back to my initial point stressed state or healing state. If we normalize, we get so consistently used to being in maladaptive stress response, we normalize to that.

We then lose our access to our innate capacity to heal. That's beautifully said, and I really want to unpack further how this continues to affect digestion over time.

I am really curious, though, why is this such an area of passion for you? How did you come into this body of work? Yeah. So as I mentioned briefly, I was diagnosed with any chronic fatigue syndrome soon after turning 16 years

old.

And I remember at the time being told by my doctor, this could be 6 to 12 months to get back to normal functioning. And at the time that seemed like a life sentence.

I don't know how I would have responded if you told me the truth, which was it was ended up being seven years and the first two years of that was waiting for somebody else to find the answers.

And the subsequent five years was times obsessive path of health recovery.

Alex Howardu2019s Personal Healing Journey

And along the way, I mean, I saw, you know, 30 something different practitioners. I think at one point I was taking about 70 supplements a day, which is not something I would recommend anyone do.

And and I didn't find I didn't find any one answer. What I found was many answers and lots of pieces of a jigsaw. And that was really, for me, the catalyst of my life's work over the last 20 plus years.

Since then, and particularly in the inception of the Optimum Health Clinic, which the key thing has always been that, you know, we work a lot with a complex chronic illnesses, such as fatigue related conditions.

We work a lot with digestion, we work with anxiety, sleep and trauma and so on. And we have an integrated functional medicine and mind body healing or therapeutic coaching psychology approach.

And for me, the thing has always been that everyone is different and there are maps and there are frameworks that can help you make sense of different people's experience.

But there is a one approach and there isn't one answer. And so the trick of any skillful practitioner is to have to be as informed as I possibly can. Different framework and diagnostic principles and protocols to work.

But then, rather than try and make the client bend to the protocol, they can have the protocols that adapt to the client and so that that was really the one of the big learnings of my journey and yeah, how I ended up not being an accountant as my, as my parents would have liked and a rock star as I would have based so.

Well that was not taken. Like didn't work out but it not. So funny. So you mentioned frameworks that can be useful in helping people to navigate this and adapt these frameworks to their bio individuality.

What are your favorite frameworks for doing that when it comes to fatigue, stress, nervous system issues, gut issues, that whole nest of chronic conditions, so to speak?

Well, my starting point is always you've got to get an accurate diagnosis. So a diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome or a diagnosis of irritable bowel syndrome or a diagnosis of chronic pain or whatever it may be, is not a diagnosis.

It's it's a label of symptoms. Right inside, you go to your doctor and say, I have a lot of digestive pain. And they say you have an irritable bowel. And it's like, I know I just told you that.

Can you tell me what's actually wrong? Right. And so it's the same thing with chronic fatigue, the signs of chronic pain. It's like these are not diagnoses.

They are they're symptom labels. And so you can't you can't effectively map a path to recovery until you get an accurate diagnosis of what is wrong. And for me, that diagnostic process needs to happen at several levels.

And so we you know, we have a team of nutritional functional medicine, trained nutritional therapists where we're certainly looking at things like, you know, the obvious things like diet, dysbiosis, see bone parasites and so on.

And that's a really important part of the jigsaw. But we also have to look at what's caused a system's become disregulated and imbalanced in the first place.

And actually, in many cases, even more importantly than that, the real question is not what's caused someone to get sick, but what's stopping them from healing.

So think about how the physical body works. It has a natural capacity to heal. So, for example, if you get if you get a car, you cut your skin and it and it bleeds.

If you cut deeply, you're going to have to get stitches to hold the skin back together. The stitches don't make the skin heal. The stitches just hold it together so the body can do the healing.

Same is true. You break a bone. There's no there's no miracle drugs that you get that makes the bone heal. The miracle is the bone heals itself.

Diagnosis, Root Causes, and Blocks to Healing

You just go set the bone in the in the right place and you might want to manage the pain in certain ways. And so the same thing is true emotionally. We can experience the most.

I mean, hopefully we don't, but if we experience the most horrendous traumas, we have a natural capacity to heal, but for healing to happen, we have to be in a healing state.

We have to create the environment externally and internally that allows that healing to happen. So taking the example of of of the of the torn, torn skin, if you don't sketch the skin, states the skin together, then it's hard for the body to heal the wound.

It's more likely to get infected. You're more likely to get complications that come from it. Too, too, to be able to heal from, for example, digestive issues, we need to cultivate a healing state in the body.

And I'm back to my original point. Your body can be in a stressed state or it can be in a healing state. Therefore, if your body is in a stressed state, it is not, therefore in a healing state that stress they may be because of things that happened in childhood.

It may be unresolved childhood, emotional trauma. It may be things that happened in adult life or both of those things. Condition and train your nervous system to be in a maladaptive state and in some cases the most significant trigger to the nervous system that we are dealing with is the ongoing anxiety of suffering from, as I mentioned, the medically unexplained and illness.

And that in of itself is a significant trigger to a maladaptive stress response. And that's really beautifully said. I could not agree more. It's you remember vividly in a diagnosis things like chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia.

So yeah, I know. And let me just tell you that now what? And I really like the distinction that you're making here, because so many of the people that come into our our courses in our practice are talking about like, oh, I have leaky gut.

Okay, well, but why do we keep that? You know, it's such an important question. So I really like the distinction you're drawing here, too, between originating root cause and blocks to healing in real time today.

Can you unpack that a little bit further? Like what would be some examples of blocks to healing in today versus an original root cause? Yeah. So I think we have as a profession a and a problematic history.

I'd say that. Well, I think a lot of people if you go back, you know, it was 20, 25 years ago, 27 years ago, 25 years ago. It was a long time ago, a few decades ago when I was diagnosed with me CFS and one of the the enormously frustrating things at that time was the, in a way the incredible arrogance of mainstream medical practices of we

don't know what's wrong with you, therefore there's nothing wrong with you is how it started off and then they can get away with it any longer.

So it was like, we don't know what's wrong with you, there's something wrong with you. But because we don't know what's wrong with you, no one has any answers and therefore it's not possible to recover.

So in a way that the narrative became that you are real because their secondary gain, like there's some benefit that you're getting from being ill or you're ill because you're depressed or you're ill because you're not really motivated to recover.

And, and so I think it's really important just to speak to the fact that in the, like 99% of cases I've dealt with over the years, that is fundamentally not what is going on for that person.

It's not some major secondary gain. It's not that people are nice to them because they're real, because frankly, when you suffer from these kind of conditions, no one's blind actually to no one understand it doesn't work because there's not what's not what's happening.

Oh, I. Spoke to my friends and most of my family and my cousins. She's a real drag now. Yeah. Yeah. Right. You know, and it's like, oh, I'm not well, because I don't want to be.

Well, it's like, do you think I could like this life that I have? And it's also the case that when we end up with a condition where we don't know what's wrong, why it's wrong, what to do about it, in fact, the very experience that we just spoke to that in of itself is highly anxiety inducing.

And so that becomes a block to our capacity to help because we are now in a maladaptive stress response, which is directly impacting upon our physiology.

In fact, in a way, if mainstream medicine had more helpful, critical answers, that could at least explain in simple terms what's happening. You wouldn't have this major anxiety response on, which happens in some not all, but I would say a lot of people.

And then the trouble is that mainstream medical practices will just respond to what's in front of them. So all your highly if I had a patient recently who has a specific hormone related medication which can be prescribed by the National Health Service here in the UK, but it's expensive to prescribe and it's been figured out over the years that her body needs a very specific dose of this medication.

Her and her doctor was refusing to prescribe the medication and at the time there was no known private. We managed to figure out another way to to get this prescription, but there was no known path to get it.

So this patient is flipping out in front of the doctor, crying, shouting, and they're like, See your you know, you're this is all psychological, you know, taking away the medicine, which gives me life.

I've gone from 15 years of chronic illness to normal functioning and recovery, in part because of this drug that you're taking away. But now you're saying to me that the problem is, is my react.

It's like punching somebody in the face and then they start crying and you say, See, you're always, always crying. So the point that I'm making is that there are significant psycho emotional elements that exist within complex chronic illnesses, but they're not simple and they're not conscious things that people are deliberately doing to try to get attention or because they're just a bit low mood or they're not motivated or whatever it may be, and the impacts of what's happening in our nervous system on our physiological body is significant.

And and one example of this is I don't know if you're familiar with Dr. Robert Narvaez work on on self danger response. It may be that some other people have spoken about this and some if I just very briefly speak to it in this context.

Yeah, please do. Yeah. So so Dr. Narvaez, work basically is looking at the impact of what I would call a maladaptive stress response on cellular energy production.

And so your mitochondria, which are like the powerhouses in your like the energy power stations in your cells that are manufacturing and creating and making energy and in fact seeing complex chronic illnesses, particularly fatigue related conditions.

We can measure mitochondrial function and pretty directly map it against someone's physical energy and their capacity, particularly explaining things like the delayed fatigue response where someone does something is okay at the time, okay the day after and then by crash.

And we can we can relatively accurately map that too much. But what's interesting is the mitochondria actually have two functions. They have the function of setting the energy production and they have the function of danger signaling.

And so when there's a threat or there's a danger in the environment, it's a little bit like so my paternal grandfather that I, who I never met, that was a coal miner in in Yorkshire, in England.

So he would go down into coal mines and chip away the columns. And before the coal mines were closed decades ago and they used to coal miners used to maybe they still do that.

I'm sure they have more technologically advanced ways doing this these days, but they would take a canary in a cage down into the coal mine. And if there was a gas leak, they wouldn't know about it.

They wouldn't be able to smell it. But the canary would fall unconscious and that would be the warning that there was a danger. And, of course, a gas leak in a coal mine is not just the fact that the gas can can affect you, but you get a spark.

The whole thing's going to going to explode. And so the canary in the coal mine was the early warning signs, our mitochondria. It is their job to spread the message that there is danger in France when we are living in a maladaptive stress response, when our nervous system is living in a constant state of anxiety, threats and danger, our mitochondria have to prioritize cellular energy production to prioritize danger signals.

And so there is a direct impact on cellular energy metabolism. If we are energy deficient, that doesn't just impact our physical capacity to have energy to do things.

When we are energy deficient, it also directly impacts our body's ability for repair. So healing is another fascinating study.

Mitochondria, Stress, and Digestive Repair

A fascinating study looking at the impact of chronic stress on wound repair. I did a three and a half millimeter muscle punch biopsy on people, which is basically taking a small sample of muscle, but it's causing an injury to the skin.

And then they had two groups. They had a group which were a control group, and then they had their intervention group who were people who were caring for a relative with Alzheimer's or dementia.

So an ongoing stress in their lives. And in that group, the wound took around 25% longer to heal. Make sense because there's less energy, there's less resource available for healing.

A lot of the digestive issues that people are dealing with require capacity to heal, apart from the cause of stress in all kinds of ways in triggering and causing these pieces.

And we can maybe talk in a minute about how emotional stress specifically can impact and cause digestive issues,

but it is also impacting the body's ability to repair.

And so, for example, if you've got leaky gut, there's a healing process required just like that muscle biopsy that needs to heal. The gut needs to be able to heal, but the gut can't heal when it's in when you are in a state of maladaptive stress response.

It's also worth saying that our ability to tolerate interventions and protocols is also significantly impacted by being in and out of active stress response.

So one of the things that we find and what we find a lot with patients at the OTS and Health Clinic that they come in and they say, I can't tolerate any foods or any supplements, any changes in food, or I can't tolerate any supplements.

And it makes it very challenging as a practitioner because it's like effectively your hands are tied. And what we found over the years is that it's a little bit like so it back in, I think it was about 2004, 2005, there was a series of bombings in London on the London Underground and some busses in London.

And prior to that somebody would leave their gym bag on the on the subway or the London Underground. Someone's left that bag, whatever. And after that, everything was a bomb.

So every time someone left a bag or, you know, whatever, the whole network would shut down. It was like a massive response because the threat level has been raised and everything is seen as being dangerous.

The same thing happens in our immune system when we are in a maladaptive stress response, when when our nervous system is hyperactive aged, our immune system sees lots of things as dangers and threats that otherwise aren't.

And we discovered this because we found that when we did work with people to reset their nervous system, we and because we were working with a psychology team and a nutrition same nutrition team, kept saying, hey, this patient can now tolerate this supplement, all this protocol.

And it happened so many times that we started to realize that that calming of the nervous system was not just a cycle, psycho emotional change. It was also a direct physical change which then unlocked interventions that may be really important that previously that person wouldn't be able to tolerate.

So I would love to help the audience look at how to apply this in their life right now. I so resonate with what you're saying. I think these are possibly the most critical aspects to healing in our time, and I really want the practitioners listening to become more literate with it because I, I speak with a lot of practitioners.

We have a mentorship and certification for practitioners and they come in valuing what you're speaking about, but only able to give lip service to it, you know, and since it's such a focus in your body of work, in your practice, I would love to help them understand like what is the next step they can take to become more literate in this?

And, you know, for the the students in the audience, the people working on their their own personal journey, you know, if they I'm sure I can you just hear some of our summit junkies saying, you know, but Alex, I, I read the vagus nerve books.

I, you know, I do the gargling, you know, I splash, I do the cold showers. I do what I can tolerate. What how should I be thinking about this? What should I do next?

You know. So I'm obviously very aware of the vagus nerve work which has gathered a lot of momentum in in recent years. And I'm sure it has I know it has its place.

And so it's just not been been my way of working. I mean, I'm kosher. I so I'm really into checklists. But when your nervous system is hyper disregulated, they can actually make it more disregulated because actually that shock to

the nervous system is more triggering and more activating.

And so, you know, my my experience is that often you need to go and you also have to recognize that for a lot of people that have one piece we haven't spoken about, which I picked up from brief because I think it's very important is one of the significant reasons why people have disregulated nervous systems or a maladaptive stress response is because they've experienced significant trauma.

Now can be overt trauma like like what would be classified as adverse health experiences, like physical abuse, sexual abuse, absent, absent parents and so on.

But they can also be covert from what I call covert traumas, which they wouldn't necessarily be labeled as traumas, but they shape us and they impact us.

And so that's things like standing up in class, to answer your question, putting a hand up and getting it wrong, and everyone laughs. And then you learn that people people reject, young people don't like you, and so on.

So when we have these significant impacts through our lives, one of the things that happens is that we learn to speed up, to try and get away from the danger, and we effectively disconnect emotionally and we move to our mind as a place of safety and sanctuary.

And so it feels dangerous to be in our heart if few times to be in our emotions. So everything speeds up as a way of getting away in a way that trauma is like the sabertooth tiger or the bus that's coming coming towards us.

We we don't just try and get out of the physical location. We disconnect emotionally from from ourselves. So when it comes to working with how do you bring balance, how do you reset your nervous system, you have to do it in a way that has a wider understanding of what's happened in the first place.

And so things to turn to, for example, bring balance back to the vagus nerve. If you're not dealing with these other pieces, in a sense, you're you're trying to run uphill, dragging, you know, boulders of stuff behind you because you're not actually releasing the stuff that's holding you back or triggering your system in the first place.

And so in in my in my way of working, I saw in the reset framework, which we had.

Resetting the Nervous System in Practice

So we had for about 14 years, twice a month every month except for December, when it was once a month, a group of people would come in and go through a program at the Option Health Clinic.

And so we just had the most extraordinary research and development, say, of these tools and not the theory of the tools, but the actual reality of what happens when people work with them, which then became the basis of about four years ago of my reset program, which is now many, many, many thousands of people have come through.

And the thing that we found and that's so important in that is how you sequence the intervention that you do. So you can't just go straight into, for example, doing deep emotional healing because you've got to build the safety and you've got to build some regulation system before you do that.

You can't just work on an emotional level, but you also can't just work on a concept or a pattern of thinking. There's there's, there's different pieces that the in our experience, are really important.

And you got to put them together in the right way. And so very briefly, that reset framework is you have to recognize that your system is disregulated.

You have to figure out when, how, why, and so you start to get a map of what's actually happening in your system. You then have to examine why, what are the triggers, what's the trauma, what's the history, what's the background, what all the pieces that are driving that disregulation.

You then need to have ways to break those habits of thinking behavior. So and that to me is a two sided thing. One is so this is the essence of reset.

And you need to have meditation or minds training practices where you learn to train your attention. That's likely all over the place and bringing some capacity to presence.

And that is important. And secondly, you need to have ways of breaking those habits, patterns of thinking and behavior to recondition and to retrain. What's happening in your mind once you've done those pieces, then that allows the system to start to slow it back.

But at that point, what often happens is you start to contact the feelings and the emotions you've been trying to get away from. And if you don't deal with those, all that happens.

Everything just speeds up again. So you got to get out of that. No, thank you. That's uncomfortable. So now this is why people do brain training programs just go round in circles endlessly because they're alive, still applying techniques years later because they haven't gone to the next piece, which is that you have to have ways of learning to understand how you reject your emotions and then how to feel them, how to hold them in a way, how to build the emotional holding and safety that most of us didn't get when we were kids.

And so that's the E which is the emotions work for free. So the second day of restart and then the T is to transform you have to transform your relationship then with yourself.

And most of us have learned through being in a dysregulated nervous system, we've learned to be critical, cruel, unkind to ourselves. So we have to recalibrate and reset that relationship.

And so the reason why I think a lot of people have tried things that have worked is they often haven't got to the real core of what's going on. And they have a work with an intuitive framework which is working with things on each of the levels that, that need to be impacted.

That's, that's beautifully said. I, I really appreciate you taking the time to unpack that because I know I can tell what a very impassioned this is for you.

And obviously, this is a major focus in your body of work. And so many practitioners are literally enough to at least point to it and say, yeah, that's a component.

But really, what are those missing pieces? Where they unwittingly getting their patients stuck? So it's fantastic. So for people working on this at home, you know, it would be that first step that you would suggest.

You mentioned that safety comes first, right? Yeah. Well, I think the first thing is you've got to cultivate an awareness of what's happening. So one of the things I get people to do is to write how the nervous system fails on a scale, scale of 1 to 10 at multiple points in the day.

So for example, when you wake up mid-morning, lunchtime, mid-afternoon, dinner time, when you go to bed and just spend 3 to 5 days writing, you'll never like how activated is your system?

And you may just notice patterns. It may be that you're hyper anxious first thing in the morning, and there may be physiological reasons that it may be that your blood sugar is dropping to like the night, and maybe that your cortisol levels are too high and there's things to be looked out there. And so you want to get the awareness and then starting to have practices that help regulate your system meditations. Great.

A lot of people who most need the benefits of meditation really struggle with it. And so and so, having simple well structured practices that one is able to be more consistent with, I think is important.

And it takes time. You know, when it's someone spend a few decades disregulated, they're never system. It takes time to bring it back into balance and for some people on that healing path, it's the most important piece.

For other people, it's a piece. But without that piece, the other pieces don't work. And that's often our observation. The people bring balance to their nervous system and they move from being in that stress states of being in a healing state, and then that you're unlocking your body's own capacity to heal.

But it does take time and it does take practice. And I think sometimes what happens is someone has a technique or two and they do the really religiously and nothing really changes.

Yeah, well I've tried that. So Will you tried that take me. But if it didn't actually shift the state in your nervous system, you haven't, you haven't worked on your nervous system its felt like taking a supplement, taking a anti-microbial for, you know, SIBO for some.

I'm taking it a few times and going, well, I still have all my symptoms. I could work as opposed to going, well, maybe it needed more time, maybe it wasn't the right dose, maybe it wasn't the right intervention.

Maybe you needed something, maybe it rifaximin maybe it maybe you need is a combination of rifaximin neomycin and then anti-microbial. There's all kinds of different ways that different things work for different people.

But you need to stay on this pace of resetting your nervous system until you bring some balance that suddenly might. My experience with people. And it's beautifully said, I really appreciate that and I want to make sure that everybody gets to the end of your interview because there's so many good gems here.

So what are those final thoughts that you want to share? Any last piece of encouragement or hidden gem that we haven't uncovered yet? The thing that I always want to say to people is that these healing pathways are difficult and they're difficult because it's not the same answer for everyone and it's not the same approach or the same practitioner for everyone.

And when something doesn't work, people will blame one of three things they'll blame themselves. They'll blame the practitioner or their brain, blame the methodology and the one person.

As long as you've been diligent in your practice of something, don't blame yourself. Recognize it may be the wrong practitioner, or it may just be the wrong method.

And that's where I think the on these healing pathways, whether we like it or not, we have to cultivate a level of patience and resilience and determination and it is ultimately possible to create change.

And it's just I've seen so many people I'm sure you have as well over the years have turnarounds. You know, people sometimes maybe a good way of putting this is people come to the optimum health clinic and they say, you know, I'm going to be a nightmare patient to you because I've tried everything.

And you look at the case history and sometimes they're right on a lot of things. And and how I look at those case histories is it's just the most enormously valuable set of information of all the things that one's tried.

But if they helped a bit, that's really valuable. If they didn't help, that's really interesting. If they made things worse, that's really interesting.

And so sometimes the people that think they're the most complex and the most difficult, then I'm sorry to say that necessarily easy to figure out, but that's a lot of valuable data.

Final Advice and Where to Find Alex Howard

And to a really well-experienced clinician, that is a goldmine of information. And I do think when you're working with these complex conditions and yet you need to work with people that are seeing those complex conditions day in day out.

You know, a mainstream general practitioner in mainstream medicines may be saying a few people a year, a

generally nutritional therapist or functional medicine doctor is maybe saying a few.

Among someone that's a real specialist is saying multiple people a day. And you can imagine the difference in insight and understanding that that comes from that.

I really want to affirm what you just said, because we get so many people like that in our practice where you look and, you know, they've said, Oh, I've tried everything, look, I'm unfixable.

And all you're really saying when you say that to a practitioner is I've tried everything in my awareness. So there's so many other opportunities out there.

You know, people come in all the time. To me, they're just screaming molders, screaming parasites, screaming mercury toxicity. You know, there's so many things that could have been overlooked or mishandled and so many great tools out there.

And the good news is, you know, they're more accessible than ever. But so many people have tried great tools in the wrong timing or to your point, they they skipped the nervous system piece and their body simply was not ready for a great tool, but it just wasn't there yet.

Yeah. And I think that's where sequencing of intervention is really important because for example, you mentioned mode, so, you know, classic example, someone comes in and says, I've got mold and I want to do this protocol and it's a super aggressive protocol and you're like, there is no way your digestive systems.

And so with that protocol, there's no way your nervous system is going to handle that protocol. And so that may be something that we're going to do, but it's going to be three or four protocols along once we put these things in place.

And then you may not even need that protocol, or maybe there's a different way of doing it. And and so it's that recognition that just because something, you know, it's I think it's been really careful not to take a traditional medical approach of of this problem with this pill and go, I've got this problem.

I want to have a natural pill as opposed to look it up. Look at it the effect. Yes, yeah. Yes. Thank you for saying that. Yes, I totally agree. It's not a pill for every ill.

And with the complexity of our issues today, and nothing is more important than understanding that not just the root cause, but what a box to healing to your point earlier and what order they need to be addressed in so that they can actually make progress.

I love the way that this conversation unfolded today, and I think it's really the most important pieces that people need to hear actually right now, I just got goosebumps.

So where can people find your work? Yeah. So the best place to gois to my my website which is alexhoward.com and you'll find sign posts to the different parts of my work.

So The Optimum Health Clinic there's a free three part video series on that on how to reset your nervous system, which takes what we've talked about and goes into it in more detail.

And I also have a YouTube series you could find on YouTube just searching in Therapy with Alex Howard, where we film. You know, I used to have any one time sort of 50 to 100 active patients these days.

I generally have one active patient and we or one or two and we film their therapeutic journey with me and then we put the sessions out on YouTube. And so my hope is I'm working with one person, but, you know, they operate sort of 5 to 10000 views in an episode.

And so I get to work with one person, but speak to two more people. I wondered what happens in a real life

therapeutic context. Check that out as well.

And people often say that they get a lot from watching other people doing doing this work. We totally agree. It's why we still do group courses. And I think people need that witnessing and the fostering of community and watching each other heal.

If we could do it alone, we would have, right? So you need that community we're by nature, community beings. So love that you're doing that. That's really inventive.

That's so cool. And of course your book Decode Your Fatigue. So that spoke to you and my lovely listeners. Please do check out Alex's work. Thank you so much for your insights today.

I loved getting to unpack these concepts with you. Wonderful. thank you for having me Sinclair. Thanks for putting on this summit. I know that always a lot of work to put together, but I think it's really important that the it's important that people recognize that anything is possible and that there are many different pathways towards that.

And I always say if what I say doesn't resonate, no problem. Listen to what does resonate. And different people resonate with different things. And so yeah, thank you for putting this on and thank you to everyone for listening.

Wonderful. Yeah I always think of each of these interviews as like a love letter to where I used to be. And so and there's so many good chances today.

Thanks again.