How Exercise Can Help You Work With (Not Against) Anxiety And Depression Transcript

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Introduction and summit welcome

Hello everyone, I am your co-host, Doctor Sharon Stills of the Hormones and Mental Health Summit, where we're talking about overcoming anxiety, depression, ADHD, and I am really happy to be here and I have a very special guest today, Tracy Stein, who I bet some of you already know because she is all over the place.

She is an influencer online and she is a fitness coast coach coast fitness coach specifically for women in their 40s, 50s and 60s. Like all of you who are listening, who need to learn how to move daily.

And I love that because that is such an important thing. I think about all the forms of medicine like, yes, we need and love our hormones, but if we're not putting hormones into a body that's being nourished properly, that's moving daily, that's sleeping nightly, then we're missing such a big piece of the picture.

And so I really wanted to bring Tracy on to just talk about, you know, movement daily and how this helps with our mental health. And so she is a good friend and colleague, and I love chatting with her and and excited to have you here.

So welcome, welcome, welcome to the summit. I'm excited to be here as well. And yeah, I was just thinking the same thing moving daily in your fitness, wellness and how big a part that wellness is.

And nutrition, that's kind of our catch phrase, is that we want to be doing something daily in all three elements. And, you know, without that wellness piece, without that mental health focus, that you know, that focus on that element, I think we are lacking the growth that we could have.

Yeah. I mean our bodies are are meant to move and our, our lifestyle is like I wear the aura ring. And some days when I'm working and I'm doing interview after interview, I just had patients now and my, my ordering will like pop up.

And it's like move your butt. You know like come on girlfriend. Like, don't you think you should stretch your legs a little and it's like, yes, yes, yes.

Why daily movement supports mental health

And so we, we I've always said and I know in my own personal life and I've seen it with patients. And to me exercise movement is the best antidepressant anti-anxiety.

Like when I'm feeling like I want to jump out of my skin or I'm getting ready to overreact to something, I'm like, I'm going to go take a hike and then revisit this.

Yeah, I. Spoke at this conference once and it was a bunch of men, and, everyone had stayed up late the night before, I think playing poker. Anyway, I got there in the morning, was supposed to speak on fitness, and the the leaders wanted me to do about a 5 to 7 minute little exercise protocol with them.

So everyone was quiet and probably hungover and tired, and I got them to stand up and start moving. And at the end of the seven minutes, everyone sat down and there was laughter and there was joviality.

Everyone was happy, like it was just so different. You know, when we just add that little element of movement, you can just change your whole mindset, your whole trajectory.

Right? But that is so true. And you reminded me I've been at conferences too, right? Where we're just sitting, sitting. And then someone will get up and be like, okay, five minute movement break.

And it does it like changes everything. So let's talk about I was just talking about this with a patient the other day, that vicious cycle of if you are having mental health challenges, if you are feeling depressed, it can be I'm to depressed to get off the couch and go move my body.

And how do you help women overcome that cycle of like, I'm not moving and I'm depressed. So I don't want to move, which makes me more depressed. I think so often we set ourselves up for failure almost because we expect so much, right?

We'll look at influencers, we'll look at people on Instagram or Facebook. We'll see what others are doing. And we think, I just I cannot rally to do that.

I don't have the motivation. I don't have anything about me that wants to do that right now. And so we do nothing. But I think sometimes if we set the bar a little bit lower, especially if we're in a season where our emotions feel depressive or we have more anxiety and we just we can't, you know, we it's hard to get out of our heads.

I think knowing that if we can just do something a little bit less, that's going to benefit us a lot, right? We're going to, in essence, get out of our heads and move into our bodies and anchor into our bodies.

And sometimes that just gives us a real good, grounded space, right? You feel the earth beneath your feet or you feel the ground. You maybe you're doing yoga, or perhaps you're doing Pilates or some stretching or mobility work, even something that's light and gentle.

But but it's so good to get out of your head and into your body where you're moving it and you feel the movements. So my suggestion is always to set the bar a little lower for yourself and just do something daily.

And it could be as little as, you know, a 5 to 10 minute walk around your block. Right. It could be, like I said, maybe some late stretching or yoga, but that movement and that, you know, just even getting yourself from the couch or from your bed into a different position, where your body is starting to be activated, you will receive the benefits of that increase serotonin, right?

Lowering the bar and starting small

Some endorphins, some good dopamine after you're done. So it's like you sort of have to anticipate that those good feelings will come if you commit to the process.

I love that. I love setting the bar lower. Right. We're all we're all about go, go, go. And right, like, give yourself some grace and it's okay to expect a little less and less can sometimes be more.

And just getting started because I just had a patient who was saying, if I miss my morning supplements, then I just, I don't do anything for the whole day.

Like if I missed the morning, I might as well. I'll just start tomorrow. And that's like, no, that's, you know, in the moment attitude. And it's like, so I can't do an hour walk, I don't have time or I don't have the energy, but you could do a ten minute.

But often we tell ourselves, no, I just do nothing because I can't do the big things. So yeah. Number one takeaway set the bar lower if you need to do this right.

And sometimes that ten minutes it just it you know perpetuates on itself it because we're outside anyway. And we think well you know I feel okay now that I'm out here.

I've said to myself, all you have to do is ten minutes. But now that I'm out and I'm dressed, I could go for another 5

or 10, right? So you you do get that opportunity to do a little bit more, you know, if the brain rallies and if you're those emotions and feelings rally, then, you know, you're able to continue, which is great as well.

So what do you recommend for someone who's dealing with anxiety or scattered or depression as far as like a movement prescription, is it better to walk?

Is it better we we know, and I'd love for you to talk about because I don't think you can hear it enough, the importance of lifting and supporting your muscle.

But is there certain things like if you're anxious, you're better off doing this, or if you're depressed, you're better off doing that? Or is it just like it doesn't matter?

Yeah, that's a good question. I think we all have seasons right there. There's seasons where we know that we feel really low or we'll feel really anxious and in.

But we also know that that season can pass. We've probably all experienced it. You know, where we've been in the low lows. And then we can come out of it and we see the light at the end of the tunnel.

And and so I think you've said it already, but to have compassion for yourself while you're in those seasons, and why you are, I think it's really important to do workouts that are more restorative, right?

We don't want to beat the body down anymore. You don't want to give yourself an out and say, oh, I don't have to do anything. But you also want to be gentle with your body, right?

And so doing things that are more restorative. So maybe you're focused on doing a lot more walking. So you're getting outside, you're in nature, you're getting sunlight in your eyes. So you're getting the benefits of that.

Maybe you're going with a friend. So you have that connection with, you know, someone and, and you feel like you can talk through your, your emotions and feelings.

So, yeah, starting something with really light. Maybe it's yoga, maybe it's doing some mobility practice and, and just again, getting a little bit of movement.

And so you get a little dose of serotonin after the workout I think is, is really helpful. In terms of what to do if you're depressed or anxious.

Choosing restorative exercise in anxious or depressed seasons

Again, anxiety can cause a lot of cortisol in the bloodstream. So we get anxious. We think our worst case scenario, we have an increase of or a flight of cortisol in our system.

You now don't want to go into your workout and go do a heavy hit workout or some, you know, intense strength and cardio workout that is only going to increase your cortisol more.

Those are the seasons, I believe that is more wise to do something that's a little bit more restorative. Now, resistance training can also be that you could do, something a little bit lighter.

You don't have to go maybe as heavy, maybe not as long it's still again good to move the body. But I really want people to think about what season am I in right now?

Do I see the light at the end of the tunnel? Is it time to be restorative? But still do some movement? Or is it time to say, okay, you know what part of what's going to help me get through this right now is really committing myself to something, to have something to focus on.

And so again, I'm going to get out of my head, get into my body, anchor myself inside my body and go and do

some some good training sessions. But I think when cortisol is high, especially through anxious symptoms and anxious times, we don't also want to stress the body physiologic when we're stressing internally.

Right. Psychologically. So those seasons you want to be a little bit more restorative, focus a little bit more on walking and gentle movements. And then when you begin to come out of that season, then it's time to go.

Okay, you know what? I know what is going to increase serotonin. That feel good? Chemical in our body is some good exercise. And I really good workout, a good lifting session, a good cardio hit session.

Right. And so seasons for everything. But just to pay attention to what season you're in and have compassion for that. Love that. And I just want to circle back because you said mobility training.

And I think we hear about aerobics. We hear about resistance training. Maybe you could just talk a little bit about what is mobility training. How do you do it?

How do you implement it. Why is it so important? Absolutely. So I I've talked to a lot of people on my podcast already, just like and people like yourself who just are saying how important it is to stave off the loss of bone mineral density to, you know, lift heavy weights so that your increasing lean muscle as we lose it as we age.

And one of the things that is going to help a lot with balance and and stability is ensuring that those ligaments and joints are mobile, so we lose it as we age.

Right. We become a little bit more stiff in our shoulders, our hips, our knees. I'm sure our listeners here are going yes, yes, yes. So these are things that are issues for me.

And it kind of, you know, sits me on the sidelines and I don't want that for myself. So we think, you know, increasing lean muscle, staving off the loss of bone mineral density are really, really important.

So in order to be able to do those things well, we want to make sure that we have a good range of motion, good stability, good balance and good mobility.

I know those are a lot of things right here, but let's break it down a bit. So mobility really is again, looking at those ligaments and joints and ensuring that they have full range of motion.

Now, I'm sure a lot of people have one shoulder or one hip or one knee that doesn't quite stretch the same way as maybe the other side does. And so we begin to compensate a little bit.

And that is such an easy recipe for injury. When we start to compensate and use other muscles, you know, that aren't intended for a specific exercise.

And so if you don't practice mobility, that full range of motion with your ligaments and joints and, muscles oftentimes it begins to decrease. Right. And we can sometimes lose that full range of motion.

So setting up a protocol where you're practicing shoulder or mobility, thoracic spine mobility hip mobility, ankle mobility. These are going to ensure that you have that full range and that you're using the muscles appropriately.

Now balance, of course, is another thing that you want to focus on because we don't want to fall. That's a really big thing. So balance exercises where you're standing in that stoic pose maybe on one foot, right?

You can even try closing your eyes and trying to balance as long as you're safe, you know, in a safe environment, you're not going to fall and hit anything.

But that is something else that's so crucial. And yet I think we just kind of put it at the wayside and don't practice it as much.

Mobility, balance, and staying strong with age

But these are things I think, you know, even if we do have some deep depressive feelings, emotions at the moment or we're experiencing those anxious symptoms, these are little things that we can tag on to existing habits that we can do without much friction.

Right. We all rub up against that moment when there's friction of what we say we want to do and what we actually feel like doing. So if you said to yourself, oh, I want to do a 45 minute workout today and but you're feeling depressed, well, there's a lot of friction in between there. Right?

There's the rub. It's like, I can't rally myself. I don't want to do it. Whereas with some of these mobility or balance exercises, maybe you're just going to percolate your coffee or run a Nespresso or, Keurig and, let it drip and, you know, you've got a minute 30 while it drips.

Well, why not practice some balance moves while you're standing stork pose on one foot, or you're doing a tandem walk where you're walking front and back.

So again, it's little things tagged on maybe to existing habits that you have already, but that are going to move your body. Right. And that you feel like, okay, I'm doing something to enhance myself, to optimize my health.

And I think that can give us a little bit of a home run, which feels good, and it perpetuates self-efficacy, which is this, you know, belief that change is possible.

Yeah, it definitely when we do something we say we're going to do or we want to do it definitely. It gives us a hit of dopamine and feel good like I did it okay I can do this.

So I was going to ask you started to but I'm going to ask if you have other ideas because your whole thing is move daily. And so we talked about walking.

You talked about standing on one leg while you're I do that all the time, like brushing my teeth on one leg. Right. Because I'm standing there anyway.

So like, why not? What are other ways that the women listening can implement moving daily like little, little tidbits that you can just sneak into or even if it's what can you do while you're you're sitting on the couch, right?

If you're having a day where you are there things you could be doing while you're sitting there? Absolutely. All right. I grabbed a couple things for you.

So, one thing, exercise, snacks. So if you think, oh, I'm going to go for a snack, why not include an exercise snack at the same time? So this can be something really simple.

Really little. It's just little intermittent bursts of activity, and you can pick things like some squats, even sit squats, like standing up and down from a chair, jumping jacks.

Maybe you're going to run up 1 or 2 flights of stairs. Maybe it is doing, you know, five push ups or 20 jumping jacks, but intermittently throughout your day you could set an alarm.

Or like I said, link it to something that you're already doing. So you're like, oh, it's time to do ten squats or it's time to run up the stairs. Second idea is willpower.

I learned this off of Doctor Ronda Patrick's podcast, and she she refers to it as, vigorous, intermittent lifestyle, physical activity, willpower, and really, what it is, is you're you're taking your daily actions that you're going to do anyway.

You're going up the stairs, you're going from the grocery store to your car, right? You're walking around the block,

but now you're going to do it with just a little bit more vigor, right?

So, about a year and a half ago, I started doing this, and I have my studio here is down in the basement. Then we have a main floor and my office is at the top floor.

So I go up and down the stairs a lot, and every time I do, I've committed to doing it with vigor. So it's a sprint up the stairs, right? If I go from the grocery store to the car, you know, it's, a vigorous walk instead of just lollygag.

So adding things like that can be super helpful, too. Again, just giving us a little burst of oxygen and, increased, blood flow to the brain. So that can help, clear, you know, fog in the head.

But yeah, those are some great ideas just to get the body moving a little bit every day. I love that. I love the I never heard that. I never heard either of those terms actually.

But I love it. Exhale by. Yeah yeah. And yeah like I'll sometimes do that. Like if I'm at the kitchen counter I'm like, oh I might as well do some push ups.

Even if it's just on the counter or do some ice to dry my hair a lot. When I lived where it was cold, you know, so might as well do some squats while I'm drying my hair.

And so there's lots of great ways to sneak it in. So even if you don't have an actual exercise moment or hour, you could still be, like you say, moving daily.

So in what you teach, I'd love, because I don't want anyone listening to, you know, anxiety, depression can be very debilitating. And we're not necessarily saying, take a walk and it's going to go away.

You know, we're saying this is a really important piece. It could really change things for you. And it's certainly not going to hurt. It's only going to help.

But what are some of the other things in like your three prong that you talk about that you you'd like to share with the listeners? Yeah. I think, well, one thing I just wanted to say about that, my husband works for the Health Commission of Canada, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and teaches a mental health first aid course, which is very cool that they have this in the workplace now.

So normally lots of workplaces would have just, first aid, but now they're offering in lots of major workplaces here in Canada anyway, this mental health first aid.

And I took his course and in the big binder that they have, like one of the primary, ways to work with our are symptoms of depression, anxiety that is completely free is exercise.

Easy ways to move daily throughout the day

And there's a huge write up on it right with them, managing our mental health. So it's a wonderful thing that exercise, you know, is noted and studied as being incredibly beneficial to our depressive and anxious symptoms.

So, yeah, I think for everyone who who suffers from that exercise, however you can incorporate it, it would be lovely if you could, if you could add that to your protocol daily.

In terms of other elements, you know, we think about fitness, wellness and nutrition and wellness. Piece is so big, as I said at the very beginning, you know, just knowing thyself. Right.

So that's a whole journey in and of itself. And, I don't know if you listening, have, you know, gone down that path of having a therapist or seeing a therapist, but having those conversations with someone that can listen and hear you and see you is so crucial.

But also having a community that that you know, is going through some of those things as well, or maybe who has who have been through those things, and maybe they're on the other side and they can lean some, you know, give some insight and, lend a listening ear.

So I think having community around us is so crucial as you struggle through, you know, I just I had one of, one of our members today just, say that she's going through a very deep period of grief, and she feels bad that she can't exercise.

But the people that rallied around her in the comments to just say, you know what, you are where you're at right now and it's okay. And when you can, you know, we're here to, you know, go through this with you as well.

So it's community, it's nutrition as well. Right? You know, our nutrition is going to play a big part on how we feel. What micronutrients we're getting, if it's balanced in terms of, you know, some of the macronutrients, are we giving ourselves that healthy, complex carbohydrates and protein and healthy fat?

I know sometimes that's like the last thing on our mind, and we just want what's easy. But there will be moments and there will be seasons, because depressive and anxious symptoms are often undulating, right?

So they come and they go. So when they're not as severe in those moments, maybe that's the time to do some meal prep for yourself so that you know, you can you can feed yourself wholesome and good foods that will help you feel better when the season is a little bit lower.

So really looking at all of those elements and thinking to yourself throughout the day, what have I done to move daily in my fitness, in my wellness and wellness again, maybe could be, you know, just a moment of meditation, some deep breathing protocols and then also in my nutrition and it doesn't have to be much can be just a little something.

But at the end of the day, you'll lay your head down on the pillow saying, okay, I gave to myself today what I could and let's just get up tomorrow and do it again.

You know. I love that. I love community is so important, and I love that you brought out a therapist because I think I credit my therapist with a lot of my sanity.

Same Sharon, same spot. And I think there's still, like, a stigma. Oh. You see a therapist and I'll see my therapist even when everything is great. Right?

It's just good how you said it. To see you, to witness you. There's nothing wrong. And getting someone who's a professional. And not all therapists, like anything, are created equal.

And you may have to shop around a little or try them on until you find the right one for you. But a good therapist is invaluable. There's so many different ways.

There's talk therapy, which is great, but there's also so many important body centered therapies, whether it's somatic release work or family constellation therapy or eMDR or trauma processing, that it's good to kind of like you're saying, you know, you take one from fitness and one from home wellness and one from nutrition.

Fitness, wellness, nutrition, and community support

It's like your your journey can include different things. It doesn't have to just be I just see a talk therapist. You can find what works for you. And that's a really important part.

And I think of when you said you need to know yourself. And I think about Socrates who said, what did he say? The unexamined life is not worth living.

Is that right? Yeah. It's a little. Harsh, right? Like, you know, but it is harsh. But I think you like. You do I. That is

how we grow as women. That's how we move forward in our lives.

It really is opening up Pandora's box. It's taking the deep dive inside and saying, what am I here for? Right. And sometimes that's really scary, given our past or our history.

And this is why we want that community, or we want that safe place like a therapist to land. And I know not everyone can afford that. I know it's pricey, and I hate that it's expensive, but there are lots of resources in terms of podcasts and books and different things that we can begin to, you know, take a look at and take a listen to so that we can know ourselves better.

And I think, I think that's just so important for growth as women. Right? I agree, I think that we are here to really learn and grow and discover and to me as, natural Catholic physician, it's always multifactorial and digging deeper.

And why am I not nurturing or nourishing my body? Why am I not wanting to move? Or why am I not feeding it healthy food? And then there can be there's layers low thyroid can definitely contribute to depression, low sex hormones at this time and perimenopause, low iron, low vitamin D, low.

I mean, I can go on and on from the physiological and I think it's really important. And I hope what you take from this is that it's it's multifactorial.

It's your wellness, it's your nutrition, it's your movement. It's all of these things. And the answers usually are not just in one column. They're they're global.

And we do a little bit of everything. And so I love what you said. At the end of the day, it's like, what did I do in this area? And not beating ourselves up.

So maybe maybe I didn't move my body today. That's okay. I'm going to have compassion and grace and hopefully tomorrow I'll move a little more. But to really just to be kind and gentle and inquire to get underneath the noise and the calf to see what's going on for us.

And sometimes this is me more than sometimes, actually. But we carry a lot from our childhood and our a lot of it happens in our childhood, but by the age of seven, we have kind of decided our inner voice is formed and we've decided how the world behaves and how it treats us.

And so a lot of times we have to go back and we have to really re pattern re parent. And it's not a half hour journey. It's a it's it takes some time and energy.

But you know I've personally done it. I've helped patients do it. It's a it's a journey worth taking. And at some point you get to where I'm glad I experienced that discomfort or that disease because it it brought me closer to who I am.

It made me aware of why I'm here, made me aware of my gifts. It made me aware of my purpose and so that's just kind of the journey of life. Yeah. And you know, sometimes I, I've, I experienced this myself even when you do open up Pandora's box and you explore that past.

And I totally agree with what you said about our childhood and how those neural pathways develop. And, you know, and even as an adult, you know, so I'm 54 and I still have these moments where it bumps up, I bump up against it, and I'm like, I thought I was over this.

I thought I could fix this, but really, what it is, is learning to work with that part of you and to love that part. And, Doctor Richard Schwartz talks all about our parts in his book.

And I just love, love, love that book. But that's my journey. That's what I'm working at, is loving all of my parts. The depressive part, the anxious part, the scared part, the proud part, right?

And accepting these and leading with curiosity when they rise up. Look at that part of me just, you know, showed

up. Why is she here? I'm curious. But.

And then with compassion after that as well. Exactly. That's, that's the basis of mindfulness and, serving and saying, oh, here I go, being anxious again.

Yeah, look at me. Check me out. But then it's like bing, bang, boom. And of course I am. Yes. Because my, you know, small child would have been at that moment.

And now the same scenario is here and it feels scary and yeah. So I, I do love I just love that work. And I think it's just so important for all of us.

Well, have is a beautiful bow and a beautiful conversation. Is there any last. I feel like that was good. Last words. But if is there any last other tidbits or anything else you want to say before we wrap up?

I think just again, curiosity, compassion.

Self-awareness, therapy, and closing thoughts

But even they'll be they'll be many days. I have many of these days where you just don't feel like moving your body, but they will always reward you. It will always reward you with a better feeling.

So because it will increase serotonin and norepinephrine and adrenaline and oxygen. And you know, after you do it, even if you didn't feel like it, it will make you feel better when.

So true, I, I don't know where I'd be without moving my body and stuff. I'd probably be on an antidepressant, right? I mean, it it really makes a huge difference.

So where can the listeners find you? You hang out in all sorts of cool places for you. Absolutely. Could you just talk a little bit about that? Sure. For sure. Yes.

A YouTube is our fitness channel so you can find us, Tracy Steen move daily over on YouTube. Lots of like thousands of free workouts over there. I'm on Instagram at Mood Daily Fitness on Facebook.

We have a big public Facebook group called Move Daily Hustle. Our podcast is called Move Daily Talks and we have lots of guests, including Doctor Sharon on there and, what else do we have?

Our membership is, place that, is a women only. And I spoke about just how we connect in there. So women definitely are welcome to check that out as well.

I love that my my last I just I had a patient right before we hopped on. And she's in your membership and she's just you know, she's like this picture of she's doing it all.

She's moving daily. She's membership, she's doing her hormones. And she's like, I she got on. I hadn't seen her in a few months. And I was like, I don't know if you have a younger sister, but you look like her.

It's like she just looked like she's 54. And I thought, My God, she looks like she's 39. Like I've seen her age backwards and she looks amazing and she's stronger in this wonderful attitude and just so good to see.

So when you really embrace it, it really does. You do get the fruits like you were saying. So thank you. I appreciate you so much and all that you do.

Go check her out. Her communities are awesome. She's always I follow you mainly on Instagram because that's where I hang out the most. But she's always posting awesome stuff, so go check her out, follow her.

I go to YouTube and Facebook and, you know, just think about how you can do those things. You can start today,

you know, how did I move daily? How did I move my wellness needle?

How did I move my nutrition? And very important words with compassion, with curiosity, with kindness, with grace. No beating ourselves up around here.

So thank you everyone for being here. Thank you Tracy, for thank you. I'm out to share with us. And, can another talk in the summit.