Introduction and personal MS connection

Welcome to another episode of the MS and Autoimmune Summit. I am here with my very good friend Madiha Saeed, but we've known each other for many, many years and she is known as the Holistic Mom.

She has several very energetic kids who are doing really amazing things because their mom has so taught them so well. And with that, I'm going to hand it off, to you, Madiha.

Is there anything else that you'd like to add to your introduction? Just that I'm super passionate about this. I like just to keep your, you know, strap on your belts, because this is going to be a lot of fun because I this is something that I'm truly, truly passionate about because specifically with multiple sclerosis, I myself have had a very personal connection where my uncle had multiple sclerosis and it affected our family tremendously.

We watched him unfortunately pass away, but I was there with him. I used to sit on his bed when he was bedridden. His wife, even even in Pakistan at this time, he was actually one of the very rare cases of multiple sclerosis at that time that according to what my dad had told us, and it affects your families, it really deeply affects families.

You know, watching your loved ones suffer and and watching him personally suffer throughout my entire childhood and even to the point where his wife tried to kill him by pulling by, like, you know, lighting the curtains on fire and running away.

And my grandmother was the one to save them. And we've never seen my aunt. And they took the child, too. But what I'm trying to say is that it really deeply affects families.

And this is where I know what we're going to talk about today is so incredibly, you know, near and dear to my heart how we can work together as a family to create that optimal healing for not just ourselves, but throughout future generations.

You know, I hear many people with M. S. struggle with, you know, I can't deprive my children of these foods that I think are, you know, an important part of our culinary tradition in our household or in our community.

Halloween comes around. Christmas comes around. The holidays that are part of your family's tradition, which often contain a lot of pretty sugary sweet stuff.

And it's hard to not let your kids have that. And so a lot of families don't they? They just let their kids and they don't make changes for themselves because they're feeling like they're depriving their children.

Absolutely.

Why family food habits matter

And I get this a lot, but I really feel that it starts with educating yourself and then educating your families, because this human body is one of life's most greatest miracles.

Right? Every 300 million cells die every minute, our bodies producing 25 million new cells each second, every 10s. We're making millions of new white blood cells, 20 million new red blood cells, 30 million new platelets.

And so we're breathing 20, 20 times a day. But all of these cells need nutrients. And either you're going to put junk in the to feed this nutrient, this salad junk nutrients.

And there's not really no nutrients and then but junk to feed these cells. And then you get junk out. But if you feel nourishing healing foods in and nutrients to the cell, that cell thrives.

And that is I think, what we need to help understand if we can educate our children about these cells. And they all learn that in school, they all learn about, you know, that they have this human body to contains 37.2 trillion cells, and the cell is like a town of its own.

And this is where I usually piggyback off of whatever that they learned in school about, you know, the all the biological units of all these living being, like each cell contains a cytoplasm and cytoskeleton and endoplasmic reticulum, Golgi apparatus, lysosomes and all these things, but really dive into the mitochondria with them.

And that the job of these cells is to like, you know, the importance of it is to support the body to convert these nutrients from food, food into energy, to repair, to replicate DNA, right, to communicate with each other, to transport substances across the cell membrane, to make proteins.

And the list goes on and on and on. And this is we're teaching the child that every second there are trillions and trillions of chemical reactions that are happening in your body.

You know, it's actually 2 billion every second. Yeah, 2 billion every second in every, every one of those cells like, oh my gosh. And that is so dependent on the whole.

Yeah. The nutrients that we're eating. Absolutely. And then talk to them about these mitochondria. Right. Like these mitochondria are sensing and integrating the environment.

They like these little quantum computers in every single cell. That's always trying to take in the signals from your environment, from your experience, and integrate them into action.

Every single mitochondria is always serving the environment, saying, am I safe? Am I unsafe? And each of these mitochondria need these nutrients, right?

They need these healthy fats and these nuts and the wild caught fish and grass that be needs. And they need the vitamins, as in like the greens and the livers.

They need minerals like sea salt and seaweed and bone broth and all of these are building blocks. The mitochondria can, you can use to make this energy that the cell needs to do its job well.

But what happens when we see when we see that junk food and artificial food and fake food and things that really we can't even understand what they actually are in that our cells understand these cells cannot use those food like chemicals.

And, you know, I want to derail the conversation just a bit here. Many of the listeners may not know that the tobacco industry, when they saw their profits declining, they bought up the food industry.

So the tobacco industry, who knows how to make addicting products, bought up the food industry, and they started hiring the food scientist to design compounds that would create craving and addiction to create food addictions.

And then because there's so little regulation of advertising, they advertise those addicting products to our children. Absolutely. And this is no joke.

Ultra-processed foods and food addiction

CNN reported a couple like last year that 12% of nearly the 73 million children and adolescents in the United States today struggle with food addiction, as this fake food makes us crave it.

And they and they do it. It's like these. For decades, these massive food companies like Kraft and Kellogg's have

made trillions through the manipulation of food science and food scientists and their goal is just like the tobacco companies that you've discussed, it is to do whatever and say whatever to get us buy.

Don't get us to buy these products over and over. So it no longer becomes a want, but a need. And that is what's so scary. So like it's it's these big companies that are adding these chemicals that make us crave the food, the food, and the industry uses the science of cravings to make their foods more addictive.

They studied them to the looking for the bliss point of pleasure, driving people to want more and more. And then these ultra processed food companies are trying their ultimate best to get us hooked because our children hooked, our children hooked us hooked because they know that if they can get our kids hooked, they have a customer for life.

They have a customer for life. And this is what. And unfortunately, they've they done it because 70%, almost 70% of the food supply that I mean that we're in for 70% of the foods that we're eating is this ultra processed foods.

And they've spent millions and millions. Let's define ultra processed. Ultra processed food. Is that food like substance that we cannot create in our kitchens?

Let's just, you know, it's the, white sugar, white flour, foods, in food, like, chemicals have been added to that food. So it's the pastas, breads, cereals made with those white flowers, and the sugar sweetened beverages.

And I should also add the artificially sweetened beverages as well. Absolutely. And it's for more than 60% of our calories to 70% of our calories. Now.

And it's basically a chemical experiment. It's a science experiment that they are doing on us. And it's destroying us with like 11 million deaths a year because of our diet.

And what's scary is that it's linked to minimum. This is just what was reported like recently. It was 32 different chronic health conditions and even our children, our children.

A study found that those kids that eight ultra processed foods, they showed 50% more likelihood of developing signs of depression, 10% smaller brains, lower IQ, 10% smaller brain, lower IQ lower.

That's really huge. That is. And so we need to start taking back control and start educating ourselves because, you know, and this is another thing that we need to you're like, okay, where am I going to get this education from?

We have to understand that the some of this research that we see, the ultra processed food companies have actually donated to these large medical organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Diabetes Association.

And those are the same organizations that are making a lot of the recommendations for kids and what they should be eating. And it's a they also make a lot, millions of dollars that they donate to the American Dietetics Association, that is the registered dietitians. So so it's it's a huge problem.

It is a huge problem. But I just want to emphasize, I just want to go through this in a little bit more detail, because the fact that these ultra processed foods, specifically these additives that make us addicted to these foods, that is a global like in 2024, that was a $310.9 billion industry market, and it is forecasted to in and by 2034, it's forecasted to go to 55 or 551.4 billion.

So this is craziness. And we're thinking, okay, you but you know, doctors say they do it and we have this like, you know, this FDA that is supposed to be regulating our foods.

So they regulate about 80% of the American food supply. But a new additive, a new food additive or chemical can only get introduced into the food system by petitioning the FDA.

Right. That's that that was the case. But there was this new and, the problem is, in 1997, the FDA actually loosened the protocol. And that now allows these companies themselves to declare substances as something called grass.

Yeah, generally recognized as safe. And these grass, they could they can declare them as grass without even notifying the FDA. And this is now created a huge loophole that is allowed companies with a green light.

Now there's like thousands of substances that have entered the food system. And it's really nearly, almost impossible for the FDA to go through that.

Food additives, regulation, and industry influence

It's it's craziness. And so approximately 10,000 substances have been entered into the food system. We're only like half of them have only been approved.

And the European Union and now this is really, really crazy. The European Union has only approved like 411 of these additives, and they have no grass equivalent.

So this is it's just their food is much, much, much safer. Their food is much safer. But this is a broken, broken system that is going to kill ourselves and our families to understand this.

So I think we've hopefully convinced all of you that the, food, foods with a label on them are potentially harming your health. So what is the solution that you're going to suggest everyone listening begin to implement?

So the solution is we have to start role modeling these behaviors ourselves because our children and our family don't follow what we say, they follow what we do and with.

Unfortunately, either we can lead or we can be lead. And this is where we need we as parents and caregivers and, you know, grandparents, we need to educate our children about the impact of these foods, helping them first, I used to sort of go through five main steps is to role model these behaviors yourself.

Educate and empower your children, help them be mindful, optimize their decision making capabilities, and focus on a world of gratitude. Because and I'll just quickly just like, you know, go through some of those because role modeling that behavior is huge.

And these are simple things that we can do every day cooking together, gardening, doing family meal time because children and teenagers that see their parents eating fruits and vegetables are more likely to eat fruits and vegetables themselves.

Family meal time has been, you know, associated with so many health benefits, you know, increased risk of decreased risk of substance abuse, higher grades, increased self-esteem, the list goes on and on.

Then also too. But this this is one place that I really want to emphasize to to listeners out there. Doctor Wells, this is one of like my pet peeves. And, you know, it's it's that we have even as functional medicine practitioners, we whenever we are at home, we concentrate about the food quality that we're eating right where, like we were worried about.

The oils are worried about the ingredients. But what happens when we go out? Like for example. Exactly right. Thank you. When do we go? Oh, it's like oh no, when we're going to a restaurant, don't worry about the ingredients.

Don't worry about eat whatever, because we're having fun today when we go to a birthday party, don't worry about the ingredients. Don't worry about the oils. We're having fun today.

When we go to, you know, park or an amusement park. Don't worry about the oils. Don't worry about the ingredients. We're having fun today. So now we have subconsciously told our children that fake food is fun food,

while the real food is boring food.

So how can we change that? Because no kid wants boring food. They always want fun food. So in my house we have connected the joy of eating to real food.

Real food can be fun. Food, right? And so that is where it really makes a huge difference. So when we do go out, we are like in our house, when we go out, we're like, let's go look for the organic, non-GMO treats that we have.

Let's go look at those restaurants. So they are now naturally real food becomes fun food. I even take like, we'll talk about this, but I take an electric skillet everywhere I go.

Like even when we're on vacation, I take a ceramic electric skillet and I will cook the kids food. Even inside of the the, hotel rooms. I'll bring my avocado oil I g or butter, whatever it is.

And I'll even do that like for eggs in the morning time. But the thing is, now when we're out and about, we're still having I tons of vegetables, clean protein, healthy fats that we need for our bodies to function.

Role modeling healthy eating at home and away

And then when we're out and about, we can still look for those real fun foods, but they're still real food. Then we educate the kids. We want to make sure that the kids can read labels, because reading labels, they're not going to learn that in school.

They don't learn any of that stuff. Yeah, they don't learn any of that stuff. But if we start like reading labels and seeing like, oh my gosh, and have the kids.

Okay, what is this? What is that? What is right? Number 40 talk, you know, teach them about fake foods and how food is the number one driver of chronic disease in all of these these ingredients, how do they affect your body.

Right. Like sodium benzoate. What is sodium benzoate too. Right. Things like that. Like what is bad. Have them go research. What is b t b t is a preservative that affects the signaling from your gut to your brain that tells us to stop eating.

But the king also like can linked to cancer an animal to an animal studies. What about tbhq? What is tbhq? That's a synthetic preservative that's linked to behavioral problems and stomach cancer and liver issues and liver enlargement.

It messes with your immune system. What is sodium benzoate? It's a synthetic preservative. When combined with vitamin C produces benzene. That's a known carcinogen.

What about calcium propionate? That's a BAP that produces a neurotoxin that affects your microbiome, that causes autism and ADHD, and sleep disturbances in kids.

And this is on that bread and that like processed stuff, all that processed stuff, that processed stuff. And then teach them about colors like kids love colors like blue.

Number one is like one of the worst artificial colors. All of these colors are linked to hyperactivity and cancer, and kids. And so go with them through them and help them up them.

Understand? What about what about GMOs? Do we know a glyphosate actually can hurt the gut microbiome? You know, and how glyphosate can destroy that? And how do the sugar make a pathway?

It teaching our children and beginning to talk. And we can talk about this as soon as they are. You can talk to them about food when you're talk to them about introducing the first foods that we introduce.

Whole foods, crush berries, avocados, bananas, and that this is why we're having those foods, and this is why we're not having these foods as it go through the food label, because these are things that are going to hurt your little cells, that will hurt, that will make you shorter, that will make your your thinking not as clear.

And then when they get to be older and they could read those food labels and I could have a deeper conversation about why the food dyes are harmful and why these other ingredients are harmful.

And then we can invite them, again, to have deeper conversations as they get older and have a deeper understanding of science. Absolutely. And it is. You can again start I know your daughter has written a beautiful book that you just like having these conversations.

The kids and I have created also a children's book series called Adam's Healing Adventures that you can have these conversations very younger, actually.

Just the other day, my two year old ran out with your book from our playroom and like on our bookshelf. Yeah. So it was like he was loving it, like the pictures.

And then the kids were talking to him about it. So having these conversations early and so I'd start to like, again, this is not a topic that is taboo in our house.

Like we talk about all of it and and we have them ask questions because what and specifically, I think the biggest key thing is that we need to empower our children to be mindful because, yes, to help them educate, empower, to read labels, but then also to understand, like when you ate this food, how did it actually make you feel right?

Like when you eat the bad food versus the good food like like how was your digestion? Right. So my kids now know like when I ate that, oh no, my stomach did not feel good.

Actually, I have a story with this one where my at this time he was like 5 or 6 years old and he's eating a bowl of sauerkraut for breakfast.

Teaching kids labels, ingredients, and body awareness

And I was like, I'm like, I just can't come down the stairs. And he has this bowl of sauerkraut. And I was like, Ahmad, why do you have a bowl of sauerkraut for breakfast?

I just wanted to ask, like, to see what was going on. He was mama. I woke up a little this morning and I felt a little agitated. And I think it was because of the fact that I had the organic sugar and the ketchup and Nana's house yesterday.

So I woke up and I wanted to leave my good bugs in my belly. So I'm coming here and to eat some of the sauerkraut so I can help my good bugs in my belly, and that will then help my brain.

And so these are the conversations you can have with their children, to help them know that even these silent symptoms are actually not. These are just a way that your body is talking to you, telling you that there's something off balance, and to teach our children to be mindfully aware of these symptoms.

And that is one of the probably huge, powerful piece that you can do today to to help them make their decisions on their own, give them the tools that they need, and then have them make that decision.

Likewise, we can make those connections are selves like, okay, you know, I went over to, John's for supper and a what they prepared because I want to be gracious.

And, you know, I'm feeling much worse. I'm having more headaches. I'm had it's lower my face pain. And so what I think happened was what, you know, whenever I think that exposure might have been or that when I went to a scientific meeting and I ended up not being able to follow my diet quite as rigorously, and so I had more symptoms

when I came back, and I'm tying it to whatever I think the links were.

And I talk about it, and I tell them that, you know what I'm going to do a better job of curing to my own food with me so I don't have that problem or whatever the correct action is for you.

But if we could draw the connection of the food that we're eating and how we are feeling and talk to our kids about that and normalize that, it's good to pay attention to how I feel after the food time.

Absolutely, absolutely. And another thing that I have them also be aware of, and something that I've also educated them about is their decision making capabilities, because we know that there's two main pieces of decision making for a child to make or adults to make good decision.

We need these two main critical pieces to be working. It's an entire world called neuro economics. It's a prefrontal cortex and your amygdala and the prefrontal cortex is the more developed part of the brain that is responsible for rational decision making, while the amygdala is the more reactive part of the brain.

That's like the child in the room. Right. And so we need both of these pieces to be working together in unison in order to make a rational decision. But unfortunately it's not.

We're where we're making more limbic system driven decisions, fight and flight to us versus you mentality. And that's because of the fact that it's our lifestyles are out of balance, and the kids know that the what are those main pieces of our lifestyles that outer balance, that it's, you know, our diet, it's the digestive, digestive health, our gut health, our toxin overload stress, the lack of nature, the lack of sleep, negative social life, the lack of play, excessive screen time, negativity, all of these.

Everything that I know you talk about a lot, but all of these things, when we have imbalanced lives, we have imbalanced brains. And that can then lead to decisions that we're that are more emotional, angry, irrational, they're leading to more misbehavior, oppositional defiance, low self-worth, self-doubt.

And so it's very difficult to get to that child. So again, we're not just working on their diet, but then also making sure that we're working on their stress management piece, their sleep peace, their gratitude, their, you know, making a lowering the toxins in their environment, making sure that people that are around them are going to lift them up, not drag them down because all of that, then they can make rational decisions.

And I'd like to start it off with the next piece that we're going to talk about is gratitude, because that is probably the one of the most powerful things that we can do today to get our kids and families on the right track.

Decision-making, gratitude, and closing resources

And it's the power of gratitude, because currently we live in a world where we're negative. The world is telling us we're not good enough. No matter what you're doing is not good enough.

How dare you? Like you know, just like what you started the beginning of a conversation. I'm like, we're going to feel left out. Everybody else is eating that way.

Why can't we? But our subconscious governs about 90% of our thoughts and actions. But we can train our subconscious because our subconscious is just a bunch of neural pathways that can be rerouted to be more positive.

And so if we can look at all the blessings that we have in our lives, that we're not missing out that with, we have hundreds and thousands of edible foods on the planet.

Why are we focused on all the fake stuff when we can be really concentrating on all the things that are nutrient dense, that are going to heal us and empower our microbiome and optimize our mitochondria, and really the best for our brain, body and soul.

And so counting those blessings immediately when you wake up in the morning, say ten things that that you are thankful for every day, that can be really, really powerful.

Because the fact that now you're working with your body to heal, allowing hope to really enter in our cells and that in of itself can create healing and have your children to focus on all of the possibilities instead of the problems.

Because your perspective can either be your pain or your power. And this is where I like to start to help our children and our families, to change our perspective to power.

There's so much that we can do. There's so much hope. Well, media, I could I could talk another hour, but, I feel we should wrap things up because otherwise we will lose folks.

So what what I want you to do is tell people how to find you, and the amazing resources that you have. Media. So on social media. I am a holistic mom, and we've also created a social media page with my mother in a holistic Urdu MD.

Spell that again, holistic you or the Urdu is like you r d u okay, was my mother in law to try to help the or the speaking world? And then my kids have a podcast called the Holistic Kids Show Podcast, and they've done it, you know, over 160 episodes with I think you were one of the first ones that are so thankful for that.

And, I am working on book number nine and ten simultaneously because we have lots of stuff going on the kids are traditionally published their book called The Teen Health Revolution Unlocking Lifestyle Secrets to Optimizing the Mind, Body and Soul.

And, and those experts we've taken, like the experts, from the podcast and really incorporated them into that book. So it's really an amazing resources.

So we got and then I have a children's book series called Adam's Healing Adventures, and then I have my own series for the Muslim world called The Chronic Prescription Unlocking the Secrets to Optimal Health.

So lots of resources, but it's fun. It's doable. I try it on my Instagram stories. I try to also incorporate I mean, you do a such a better job. I try to incorporate what the kids are eating on a daily basis, how they're incorporating these fermented vegetables and, you know, the the organ meats into their regular, everyday, daily routine.

So it's a lot of fun, a lot of fun, a lot of inspiration. And yes, you and your family can radically improve the health of the whole family step by step by step.

Thank you media