Introduction and Guest Background

This is Dr. Greg Hall once again with Better Black Health brought to you by Genetic Sequence Multivitamins, the only multivitamins tailored specifically for African Americans, giving you the appropriate amount of vitamin D, vitamin C, zinc, and leaving out some things that African Americans shouldn't have.

Go to SequenceMultivitamins.com to find out more. Today, we've got another treat. We are welcoming Philippe Douillon, MD. He's a board certified neurologist who completed his residency in neurology at New York University and a fellowship at New York Presbyterian Cornell in clinical neurophysiology.

Wow. He spent the last several years caring for people with neurologic disorders with a special emphasis on people with a history of epilepsy, seizures, and non-epileptic events.

After spending years witnessing the terrible effects of neurologic disorders, Dr. Dujon realized that there were better ways to serve people to prevent the decline of brain health while supporting overall body health.

He's the author of Neuroplasticity, Your Brain Superpower, Dr. Dujan's BrainFit app, the founder of the Inlay BrainFit Institute. He's a motivational speaker and a creator of the Take Charge of Your Brain in 30 Days course, and Lord knows I need to take care, take charge of my brain.

So welcome, welcome, Dr. Dujuan. Thanks so much for joining us. Thank you so much for having me. I'm looking forward to this conversation. Very good. So we'll start.

Why are so many people so helpless when it comes to their own brain? They are just like zombies with their arms walking out. Whatever they do, why are people, or at least they so many feel that they're so help us.

I can't do that. I can't exercise. I can't lose weight. I can't go outside and walk. All those I can'ts, my grandma would say, you never could with all those.

Can't never could, as my grandmother would say. But why is it that that's so prevalent? People just, when it comes to their own brain, they just don't feel like they could take charge.

Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. It's all those limiting beliefs.

Limiting Beliefs and Brain Power

I don't think people realize the power that they actually have when it comes to controlling their health, creating the success that they want for themselves, creating the lives that they want for themselves.

And I think that the reality is that our thoughts are incredibly powerful. And from the moment that we're born, people have been fighting to control the way that we think.

First, it's our parents and our families. Then as we get a little older and we go to school, it becomes teachers and our classmates. As we get older, it becomes colleagues and employees and politicians and churches.

And all of that sort of limits what we think about ourselves. And the reality is that we've got a tremendous amount of control over how our life evolves.

And it first starts by what we think about who we are and what we're capable of. So, and this is, I'm gonna put it out there. You didn't learn this in medical school, did you?

Yeah, no, definitely not in medical school. Maybe neurology fellowship, but it's a different, but learning about the

physiology and how the brain works, like specifically as a neurologist, did that inform your perspective in a way?

Absolutely. I think my knowledge of how the brain works, plus the experiences that I've had growing up, some of my own challenges, You know, I talk a lot about the fact that I'm a two-time kidney transplant recipient and how I've gotten through those tough moments in life.

And a lot of that had to do with what I was thinking about, what I was focusing on. I wasn't always focused on, oh my God, what was me? I've got these health issues.

I, you know, can't do this. I was out there even when I was on dialysis playing basketball with my sons, right? And my sons would be like, what are you doing?

Like you're sick. And I'm like, what are you talking about? I'm not sick. I'm kicking your butts in basketball. Right, and your brain, your perspective changed that because I've got people that drag off to dialysis and they've got to take a two day nap before they're ready to do anything and then it's time for dialysis again, right?

But you can even change your perspective on that. You can even change your perspective on that. When I was doing dialysis, because dialysis is physically and emotionally exhausting.

So what I would do is I would do the late shift. So I would finish up dialysis like around seven o'clock at night, go home, eat, go to sleep, wake up the next morning, felt better.

And then I would kind of go and live my life. I still worked while I was on dialysis. I exercised on dialysis. I had a news agency following me around on dialysis.

I traveled on dialysis. So the thoughts that we have are incredibly important because oftentimes we're the ones putting limits on our own lives. Mm hmm.

Right. And so those limits there are self-imposed, but they're also like you mentioned, the people will say, I mean, I've said a million times, the number of people that told me I would never be a doctor.

Right. And that didn't help. Right. It didn't. It was not. It didn't. It didn't motivate me. It actually took a little bit out of the wind out of my sails each time someone did that.

Right. Even it happened anyway. But but so so. What sort of practical advice, when we're raising children, for example, and we are trying to have them be good people, whatever that means, be respectful, be successful.

If we're deliberate about what we put into our kids' brains, we can change that outcome as well. Absolutely. Not only if we're deliberate about what we're telling our children about what they're capable of, but also getting them to say it to themselves.

Our own voices are incredibly powerful. So for me, I start off every day with affirmations.

Self-Talk, Affirmations, and Repetition

Like, you know, I wash up, I'm looking in the mirror, there are things that I say to myself. I am so happy that I am successful, that I am loved, that I am healthy and fit.

Then, at some point in the morning, I write in my journal 10 things that I'm grateful for. And so I'm constantly reaffirming things in my brain, whether or not they're true in the physical world or not.

Right, right. That doesn't even matter to your brain. The truth doesn't matter to you. Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's that's that's the Trump supporters. I didn't say that.

Truth doesn't matter. I love them no matter what. Right. But that's part of it, though, isn't it? Isn't that like what you

hear and what you, so the people who watch certain, we're not trying, I'm not trying to get political or anything, but the people that watch Fox News and they paint a totally different picture than the people who, people at MSNBC for example.

We've got two ends of the news spectrum and you can watch the same event and turn on Fox News and they've got a totally different take. And does that influence how, It's sort of a stupid question, because I know you're going to say yes.

But that influence is how people think, right? Absolutely. One of the things that I always say, and sometimes people get upset at me for saying this, I always say that if you compare Trump to Democrats, Trump is a brilliant speaker.

And what makes Trump a brilliant speaker and the Democrats not so much is that Trump speaks in short phrases that are highly emotional, that get repeated over and over again, right?

So like a sleepy Joe for Joe Biden. It's an emotional short thing that your brain remembers, sticks to you because it's emotional and everybody repeats it.

The Democrats talk in theory. Nobody has time to take in theory. It's not how the brain works. And so when it comes to the brain, when you're talking about wiring your brain for success, it's really about repetition and using your emotions to help shape the narrative that you want to create.

And you've seen that people re-change their whole lives with that. I had a patient recently tell me he was just fooling around with this girl who was 25 years younger than him, and she got pregnant.

And so he said, you know, I wanted to raise my child. I didn't really think anything of this woman. You know what I'm saying. But he said, I prayed, Lord, help me to love her.

You know what I mean? And he looked at me like, and it worked. You know what I mean? It worked. He said, every day after, please help me love her. And he said, he loved her more and more.

Now they're a happy couple. But isn't that that he was deliberate about mentally saying, I need to love this woman because I want to raise my child. You know, and that was that, I mean, of course, people would say it was the prayer.

But is the prayer, you're also talking to yourself when you're praying, aren't you? Oh, absolutely. Do you know that when you pray or when you meditate that there are changes that are occurring in the brain that we can actually measure?

And so prayer is incredibly important. And here's the other thing that your patient was doing. When you tell yourself something, your brain is always looking to prove you right.

So if you tell yourself, I'm gonna love this woman, I wanna love this woman, right? She could get on your nerves that day, but your brain is gonna take you back to a moment that she was sweet and beautiful and loving and caring and be like, that's why you love her.

So the messages that we tell ourselves are incredibly important. So when you say I'm stupid, I'm not good at multiple choice tests, you know what I mean?

Which I'm not, I've never been good at multiple choice tests and that was what kept me from being a doctor for so long, right? But you can't talk yourself into being better on multiple choice tests, can you?

Of course you can.

Medication, Trust, and Healthy Habits

So like if I tell myself that, oh man, I'm stupid, My brain is going to take me back to when I was in seventh grade and I got a 45 on a math test, even though there were plenty of tests where I got 90s and 100s.

Right. Right. Right. And so even when I was dealing with kidney issues and on dialysis, I wasn't telling myself that I'm sick. Right. Because, yeah, your brain would be like, of course you are.

Look, you need a machine to filter out your blood. You need a transplant. You need this. You need that. But instead, I told myself I am healing. If you're not good at something, just tell yourself, oh, I'm getting better at this.

I'm going to get there. I'm going to be able to do this. I'm going to be able to do it. And when you are convinced of something, that really helps. it come to fruition, doesn't it?

Oh, absolutely. I mean, you've got to use, I always tell people, your emotions are the secret weapon. A lot of people let their emotions use them, right?

They're completely out of control. They don't know why they're acting in certain ways. But if you can have your positive emotions, use them to really help you create whatever circumstances you want, you're going to find that you're going to be powerful.

Wow, that's amazing. So now I have this thing about, and we're both physicians, people taking their blood pressure medicine. A lot of the premature death we see in African-Americans due to heart attack and stroke and whatnot is related to uncontrolled high blood pressure, which at this point, I'd like them to take their medicine.

And they're so focused on side effects that they instantly have side effects. And so I'm like, I researched it and then of course, you know, Afro-American disproportionately worry about side effects and worrying about side effects increases your risk for side effects, right?

If you're looking for a side effect, it happens, right? Right. And so I, you know, My father didn't like doctors. He didn't like medicine. He didn't want to go to the doctor.

And he ended up having stroke and heart attack. All that stuff after 60, right? Open heart surgery. And so I don't want to have open heart surgery. I don't want to have a stroke.

I don't want to have a heart attack. And so I look at the pills that I take for blood pressure and cholesterol. And I just marvel. I think it's amazing.

These little itty bitty things can lower my blood pressure. If you think about it, this little thing is smaller than one hundredth of a meal, right? I can change my blood pressure, lower my risk for stroke, make my end of my last years so much better than my father's.

What a blessing. It's amazing. Then I take my pills, right? And I don't have any side effects that I'm aware of. But if they people say, Oh, man, I hate it as I'm opening each bottle, I just, I hate it, you know, and then that is informing their experience with the pills, isn't it?

Absolutely. The messages that you tell yourself around any situation are going to impact what your experience is. And I think especially when we talk about the relationship between African Americans and our healthcare system, It's one where there's a lot of conflict and mistrust.

And that's why it's so important to have people like me and you in medicine, right? That we can bridge that gap and hopefully people come to us and they trust us a bit.

Because you're right, there are medications that can really help people get their health together. All you have to do is take it maybe once or twice in a day.

It's a marvel to me, but it's a curse to a whole lot of people. A whole lot of people, do I have to take this the rest of

my life? I hope I take it the rest of my long life.

So how do we convince people that they have, or how do you, and you can tell me, how do we convince people that they have more power than they think? Yeah.

So I think two things. One, you have to meet people where they're at. Right. So there's when I'm seeing a patient, if they don't agree with whatever the treatment plan is, it's not for me to force it down their throats because they're just not going to do it.

Right. So I've got to meet them where they're at. And then together we can come up with a plan that they feel really good about. The other thing is I do think it's really important to have a comprehensive approach when working with any patient.

And so I spent a lot of time in Harlem. And one of the things that I often see, so Harlem has been very gentrified, right? So you've got a lot of white people in Harlem, Asian people in Harlem, as well as a good black population in Harlem.

If you go into Harlem without fail, doesn't matter what the temperature is outside, you will see white people running, jogging, They have their running clubs, they go running by themselves, maybe they're on bicycles.

You hardly ever see black people running. Right. Right. And it's like, man, these white people are going to outlive you. They're going to outlive you and they're going to completely take over Harlem.

Right. And all they're doing is using their body the way that their body was meant to be used by exercising. Right. Right. We have to stop living sedentary lifestyles.

We've got to get our bodies moving. We've got to eat healthy. We've got to stay away from toxins like alcohol and cigarettes and drugs, those things that are killing us.

Right. And I see the same thing looking at me. I live in the suburban. My home office is in the front of the house. White people walk and walk and walk.

And I remember this guy looked like he was 120. you know you really looked horrible walking if you know what I mean but every day he was out there every day and and that's what you don't see like you say is is black people being deliberate about walking they're walking their dog but it's like the dog doesn't even look like he wants to be walked that much you know what i'm saying right you know the dog's like again you know i watch our next door neighbor walk the dog The dog looks like, come on now, I'm good.

But they're doing that, right? They know they need to do that. And there is some, I don't know, something in their culture, your micro culture that encourages them to do that.

And so how do we change our culture so that, is it through conversations like this or is it through, what's it through? I think it's through conversations like this, but it's also about what we pass on to our children.

So people always come to us and they're worried about genetics and what their families are passing down to them. Oh, I have diabetes because my mother had diabetes.

I'm going to have heart issues because my mother had heart issues. It's like, no, your mother had heart issues because she never exercised and she ate poorly.

Exercise, Family, and Passing on Habits

She passed that on to you. So your relationship with your body is not a healthy one. You don't exercise. Your relationship with food is not a healthy one.

You're eating all this fast food, all this greasy food. And so I think it starts with, well, what are we teaching our kids? What do they see us doing on a daily basis?

Do they see us exercising? Do they see us making really good choices about the foods that we're putting into our bodies? Are we taking our kids to go play sports, right?

Are we doing that with them? And so, like, on Saturday mornings, I take my two sons, another dad and his son, we rent a basketball court if it's cold out, or if it's warm out, we go to a basketball court, and we play them, those three kids, which they're not kids anymore, they're like all teenagers, against us two, which, you know, used to be fine when they were younger.

Now they're kicking our butts. Right, right, right, right. Yeah, but you have it but it's a routine and that they're gonna do that with their kids. That's right.

And that and then you know, my father got rested. So he never took us anywhere exercising, right? He never took us anywhere. We went to the park and he didn't even go out in the park with us.

We go exploring. You know, that's the older generation. But we can be deliberate, you would say, about changing that scenario and be deliberate about passing on what better habits there are.

I want to spend a little bit of time. You specialize in epilepsy and seizures and whatnot. And I kind of looked that up before the interview. And it talked about African-Americans, wow, two to three times more likely to have epilepsy, to have a seizure disorder compared to whites.

Do you have any idea what's behind this? Yeah, we have higher rates of high blood pressure and diabetes. And what people don't realize is that high blood pressure and diabetes have a negative impact on the brain.

So not only does it lead to potential strokes and a potential bleeding in the brain, but even if you don't have an obvious stroke or any bleeding in the brain, what we do see is that when people have high blood pressure and diabetes, the smallest blood vessels in the brain just don't tolerate that well.

And over time, that causes changes in the brain that can lead to seizures, dizziness, headaches, difficulty walking. And so it's really important that we take care of some of these chronic diseases.

We either minimize our risk of getting them or if we do have them, we're really making sure that these things are under really great control. So it's not like in your idea, if someone has high blood pressure and diabetes and they start having seizures, you're not wondering why are they also having seizures?

You're thinking that's directly related in your mind. to the high blood pressure and the diabetes and what, that inflammation. You read about all the time that black people have more inflammation, right?

And then that causes the pain, the aches, the pain, all the things, the fatigue, all this stuff that we have. And so what's an easy way to start and say, okay, I want my brain, I want to take more charge of my brain.

What's an easy way for me to start taking charge? So it's doing the things that we should be doing to begin with. We talked about we need to be exercising.

We need to get a good night's sleep. We've got to get six to eight hours of sleep per night. Sleep is made for the brain. As we're going throughout our day, toxins are building up in our brain.

And it's the deeper stages of sleep that are helping to clear out those toxins.

Epilepsy, Sleep, and Brain Health

One of the things that we see is people who are sleep deprived in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s are more likely to

get dementias like Alzheimer's later on in life.

The same way that people who have diabetes are more likely to develop Alzheimer's. In fact, a lot of neurologists and neuroscientists will tell you that Alzheimer's disease is really just type 3 diabetes.

So we've got to be sleeping. We've got to be taking care of any chronic diseases that we have. We also have to be making sure that we're eating really healthy.

Stay away from the high carb foods. Stay away from processed foods. Stay away from the fast foods. The other thing I think people don't realize is alcohol is toxic to every part of the body, but especially the brain and people who even if it's whatever moderate drinking is for them, if it's a daily glass of wine, that that has a negative impact on the brain and potentially leads to seizures, can lead to strokes, can lead to dementia.

So it's really just doing the things, the healthy lifestyle things that we should be doing that helps us to take charge of our brains and then also focusing on the thoughts that we're having throughout the day, shifting our thoughts from the negative ones to the positive ones.

That's amazing. So what about the people who have insomnia? Because usually those people who have insomnia also have chronic pain. They've got what they call fibromyalgia.

Everyone with fibromyalgia has insomnia, you know what I'm saying, right? And you would say those two are probably linked. But how do you get someone to sleep?

I think first off, you want to look at their sleep hygiene. So you want to look at how they are preparing themselves, their brains and their bodies to go to sleep, right?

So, you know, as the sun starts to go down, our bodies start to secrete melatonin to tell us, okay, it's time to wind down. But when you look at people's houses, all the lights are on, right?

The TVs are on. all the technology is on. I tell people, you need to get all the technology out of the bedroom. Only two things happen in the bedroom, sleep and sex, get the TV out, get the phones out, get the laptops out.

Right. You know, people should stop eating at least three hours before they go to bed. People shouldn't, their last caffeine intake should be eight hours before they're about to go to bed.

So there are things that we can do in terms of our own behavior, our own lifestyle that will help people fall asleep. And if those things aren't happening, then they see people like us to help them.

Right, right. And it makes makes perfect sense. So I leave my cell phone and stuff downstairs when I when I get up and go and I have a TV in the bedroom, but I don't watch it much, you know, but but the the phone but there are a lot of people that take their phone to bed and they're getting texts and bings and dings.

That's not good, right? That's not good. Even the it's not just the sound, but it's the blue light from the phone that's going to interfere with our ability to fall asleep.

So get all of that out out of the bedroom. Right, right, right. So tell us, if someone wants to learn more or see more about you, where can we go? What can we do?

So they can go to my website, inlebrainfitinstitute.com. So I-N-L-E, brainfitinstitute.com. They can find me on Instagram. My handle is philip.md. They can find me on Facebook and LinkedIn.

So yeah, those are the best places. Are there people you find that you just can't help? Yeah, those people who are not ready to do the things that are going to help them, or people that are not ready to take away the things that have been hurting them this entire time.

So if somebody's not ready to let go of the alcohol, let go of the cigarette smoking, somebody's not ready to exercise, it's impossible to help those people.

Right, right. But if you but if you if you're willing to kind of, you know, like you said, take charge of your brain in 30 days, that's, you know, that's a bold statement, right?

I mean, that's you, you will step them through that, that process. And and how much success do you have with that? Oh my gosh, I've had people who couldn't get pregnant.

I'm not an OBGYN. They couldn't get pregnant and all of a sudden now they've got their family of four. They've got two kids. I had a guy who actually has epilepsy.

Resources and Closing Remarks

He always wanted to do a music album. He finally put out his music album and people that have started their own businesses. So it really changes your life drastically because it's not just about the symptoms.

It's really about the way that you think and the way that you're now going to evolve to create the life that you want for yourself. That's great. And that involves eating right, exercising, doing what you're supposed to do, self-affirmation.

And sometimes you need help with what to say to yourself. Isn't that true? Oh, absolutely. I mean, our brains are always You know, the primary function of the brain is to keep us safe.

And so the brain is always going to tend towards the negative because that's how it keeps us safe. But part of taking charge of your brain is saying, look, I've got this.

I know what we need. I know what my brain and my body needs. I'm going to be the leader that my brain needs me to be. And so I'm going to shift the way that I think.

I'm going to shift the words that I use when it comes to how I speak to others and how I speak to myself. Wow, that's great. That's just outstanding advice.

Dr. Philippe Douillon, what a wonderful, a lot of information, a lot of good life-changing, potentially life-changing information that you have shared with us.

His book, Neuroplasticity, Your Brain Superpower is available on Kindle and on paperback at Amazon. He's got a podcast, Surviving Your Brain with Dr. Philippe Douillon.

Look for that on wherever you listen to podcasts, including here. and his course, Take Charge of Your Brain in 30 Days. You go to felipduyanmd.com and track him down.

Thanks so much for joining us today. Thank you so much for having me. This was great. You take care.