Rebalance Your Brain: The Neuro-Nutrition Approach to a Calmer, Happier You Transcript

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Introduction to Functional Edge and Lori Hammer

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Welcome to the Functional Edge. I'm Dr. Julia Ward and this is where science meets real-world strategies for living healthier, sharper, and stronger. From uncovering hidden environmental toxins to unlocking peak performance and mental clarity, we cover it all.

Ready to take control of your health and thrive? Let's dive in. Okay, welcome to the Functional Edge podcast. I am your host, Dr. Julia Ward, medical director and founder of Balanced Body Functional Medicine.

Today, we're honored to welcome Lori Hammer to our show. Lori is a neuro-nutrition expert and host of Take Back My Brain podcast, where she helps individuals overcome anxiety, depression, overwhelm and chronic fatigue by supporting the brain's biochemistry through targeted amino acids, nutrition and lifestyle.

In this episode, Laurie will be sharing insights on how to reclaim brain health naturally, including practical strategies to stabilize mood, calm the nervous system, and restore mental clarity by working with the body's innate healing design.

Stay tuned for an engaging conversation that promises to empower and inspire your path to wellness. So welcome, Laurie. Thank you so much. Thank you, Dr.

Julia. It's a pleasure to be here. I love your podcast. Thank you. So you've shared that your passion for brain health grew out of your own struggle. Can you take us back to that turning point?

What was happening in your life when you realized something deeper needed to change? Yeah, I was deep into a 12-year battle with an eating disorder. I was bulimic.

I also had a lot of anxiety, depression, a lot of issues going on at that point in time. And I wasn't getting traditional help.

Lori's Personal Healing Journey

It just wasn't working for me at all. And so we were searching for alternative ways. And so I got introduced to functional nutrition and amino acid therapy.

That's great. Was there a moment when you felt a strong internal pull or clarity that this was the direction you were meant to pursue? Oh, for myself as my practice, you mean?

Yeah, I mean, because amino acid therapy, you know, getting into this functional health world literally saved my life. And so there is no greater testimony, there's no greater motivation than you going through your own journey and you're like, okay, I found an answer for people who are looking and I can help people from here on out.

Yeah, yeah, that's amazing. So what are the core pillars or values that the Calm Mom Academy is built on? Well, one, that your body can heal. God created our bodies to heal.

If we remove the interference, we give the body what it needs, we are specifically designed to regenerate and to heal. We just have to have the right tools, right things going on.

And I deal with so many people who are on medications, not just moms and women, but just people in general, and you can't medicate away a nutrient deficiency.

you actually have to go in and fix that nutrient deficiency. And we forget about that with our brain, but when you fix the deficiency in the brain, everything else gets easier to deal with, whether it's your gut or your hormones or digestion, whatever it might be.

You've got to start addressing the brain in a different manner. Yeah, absolutely. Well, you have a huge mission to impact one million moms. What does that vision look like in practical terms?

Like how do you see these women creating ripple effects in their families and communities? Well, my goal is to get amino acid therapy out to the world.

This has been this hidden gem for decades. And every time I get on a podcast or I speak at a conference or something, people are like, I've never heard of amino acid therapy.

And it's like this hidden gem. And when we calm the brain, magic happens. And so my goal is we as mamas are the hearts of the home, right? And so if we can calm our brains and we can get our hearts in alignment with who we're created to be, that ripples out to our kids, that ripples out to our family, our friends, and you know, et cetera.

And so there's so many hurting families out there that just haven't found the right… support for, you know, whether it's autism, whether it's ADD, ADHD, OCD, there's so many kids that have a lot of neurological issues right now.

Calm Mom Academy and the Body's Ability to Heal

And it's so important that we get this word out. And there's so many empowered moms out there who like, I need something for my family. And I really feel like this is a foundational piece for people out there.

Yeah, that's great. What do you think the biggest barrier is keeping moms from seeking and receiving the support they need? I think algorithms are so far behind us.

As I was just traveling with one today, like really, my content is not going out. But I think a lot of it is just so much overwhelm. We're pulled in so many different directions and we're just overwhelmed.

We don't know which way to turn. There's so much information out there. Like, how do you pick the right thing, you know? How do you know if this is what your family actually needs?

And then you get into what I want to say, paralyzation, you know, analyze, you get paralyzed because you're researching too much, then you're just like, fine, I don't know what to do, so I'm not going to do anything.

Yeah, yeah, I can certainly relate to that. Yeah, me too. So amino acid therapy is still new to many people. How do you explain it in a way that helps moms understand how powerful and immediate the results can be?

Yeah. So when I'm dealing with the brain and we're assessing the brain, I don't use blood work. I don't use urine. I just use a form to fill out. It's divided into five different areas, so it makes it very easy to assess.

So first area, Dr. Julia, is serotonin. So serotonin is like our inner sunshine. So there's questions on there that have to do with, are you deficient in serotonin?

And that could be anxiety, depression, perfectionism, hyperactivity. You can't get to sleep at night, have a hard time staying asleep, afternoon, evening cravings, and more.

So there's those. It helps with our inner sunshine. Then there's the endorphins. Our endorphins make us feel just yummy and joyful. It's like putting on that comfy sweater.

And then there's the catecholamines. Those are our drivers. Those are what help us to focus, to help us to have that want to every single day. Not a have to, but a want to.

Like you're just ready to go every single day. And then there's GABA. GABA just lets us take that deep breath and let it out. That's our stress responder.

That's our life's gonna be okay. I can take life on life's terms. And then we have to cap that off with glucose regulation. So just keeping everything grounded so that your brain isn't going, you know, up and down all day long because your glucose is so unstable.

Why Moms Need Amino Acid Therapy

So I focus on those five areas so that we can get all of this well-rounded neurotransmitter support so that you feel well-rounded neurologically, emotionally, your cognition is good, you know, and that's the goal with whether it's a mom, a child, or anyone that I'm working with.

Right. And what types of emotional or neurological symptoms respond best to amino acid support? There are so many. ADD, ADHD, anxiety, depression, OCD, perfectionism.

I work some with pans and pandas kids, autism. There's so many different avenues or so many different options out there for people that have neurological issues.

But I was just working with a woman this morning who came into my office. And literally her nervous system is so on fire all the time where the dog would bark or her phone buzz and she jumps and then she got to the point, you know, she couldn't sit in the chair because it was just too much.

She sat on the floor, got in like a child position in yoga and just started talking to me in that position. and we tried a couple different amino acids with her.

It was tryptophan and DL phenylalanine. By the time the appointment was done, which is like an hour later, she was sitting cross-legged on the floor, looking me in the eye, speaking.

The dog barked and she didn't jump. Yeah, okay. When we're doing the amino acid testing, we're actually opening up the capsules, putting the powder under the tongue, and then just waiting and see what your body does.

And so there's a high absorption rate with the amino acids, so we don't have to wait a long time. And this way, you know, as the person, you know, trialing the amino acids, hey, this actually works for me.

And it gives you so much more hope. How do you tailor amino acid therapy so that it's safe, gentle, and effective for overwhelmed moms? So exactly that.

I do the trialing process. So if you're not in my office, I send you a kit of amino acids. And then we get on a Zoom call like this. And we actually try them together.

So you open up the capsules. You put them under your tongue. We find your starting dose. We find which amino acids are going to work best for you because I send you a kit of nine of them.

And that's where we start. And then we tweak, we add and subtract, then we work on diet, then we work on digestion, and we just kind of take this beautiful dance together for at least 90 days.

That's great. So you weave faith into your approach in a very grounded and supportive way. How did reconnecting with your sense of purpose shape your mental and emotional health?

Oh, we have to know who we were created to be in order to heal, right? I believe the amino acid therapy is a starting point when we're working with brain health and mental health.

I think it opens up doors for us to realize, to understand, to dive deeper into the word of God and to know who he says that we are. And when we're grounded in Christ, when we're grounded in that foundation, that's when deeper magic even happens.

So when you're working with moms who feel disconnected, burnt out, or unsure of who they are anymore, where do you begin? How I begin with the amino acids.

How Amino Acids Support Brain Chemistry

We just start there because 99.9% of all my clients, that is exactly where we start. And then we see what's left over after that. What are some of the most harmful myths you hear around anxiety, depression, or medications?

And why do they persist? I would say that anxiety is your personality and you just have to learn to navigate it. So I think that's a lie. I wouldn't even call it a myth.

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Like I said before, we know we can't medicate away a nutrient deficiency. And I believe that we're trying to over medicate a lot of that, which is nutrition.

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When they first came out. And so these people, they don't know how to function outside of their medication. And so the doctor said, you're just going to have to be on this forever and ever and ever.

And that's a lie. That is a lie. Is that the case in some people? Yeah, I haven't personally seen anybody who has to stay on all their meds, but I know there are some people out there.

I just haven't seen them. But when you start working on the brain and you allow your body to heal, you can get off those medications. Those don't define who you are.

That's great. How do you honor the place of conventional medicine while also helping moms understand when medications may not address the true root cause?

Um, well, we just over their health history, right? We go over where they are, where they want to be, what are their goals in life and how is medication fit into that pathway?

And I never have a person that comes to me and says, gee, I want to stay in my medication forever. Well, you know, how do we design a plan that can help you get off of that medication with your primary practitioner, right?

Who prescribed that medication for you. How do we get off of that? And you function well beyond and so much better than when you're on that medication.

So we make a plan. It's. I guess I've never had anybody that wants to stay on their meds. Yeah, I don't run into that either. They're like, no, not my friend.

In your experience, what's the most overlooked root cause of anxiety that moms never suspect? I think hidden infections, really. Yeah, I see so many, like, I just, again, I tested this woman and she had Epstein-Barr virus.

Most people don't even know what that is, right? And that's a huge trigger. Or maybe a parasitic infection where your iron is completely tanked, you have no ferritin left over, your iron is super low.

That alone will give you anxiety. So it's just diving deeper into, you know, the reasons why it's there in the first place. I know I see a lot of mold, mycotoxin, even Lyme patients, you know, and when your body is like under attack, but you may not know it because mold is one of those sneaky kind of, same with Lyme, mold and Lyme is a sneaky disease.

It's so depleting. Yeah, it depletes everything in your system. Yeah, absolutely. So when you say you can't medicate away a nutrient deficiency, this line has almost become like a trademark for you.

What sparked this realization in your own healing? Well, medications just didn't work, right?

Faith, Purpose, and Root Causes of Anxiety

And as soon as we fixed the nutrient deficiency going on in my brain, the anxiety lifted, the depression lifted, and I stopped binging and purging every single day.

So that was a huge realization. Like, it wasn't a defect in me, it was a deficiency. What are the most common nutrient deficiencies you see that mimic anxiety, depression, or overwhelm?

Um, amino acid deficiencies for sure. Okay. So that's why it's my first line of defense, but even, you know, low in zinc, low in B6 fatty acids. Yeah.

There's just, just your foundational minerals. Anything foundational can trigger anxiety if you don't have enough of it. And how can moms begin to recognize the difference between a chemical imbalance and a nutritional one?

That's such a great question because I don't honestly believe there's many chemical imbalances out there. So I would say if you're questioning it, it's probably a nutritional imbalance.

So when you can test amino acid therapy with someone like myself, you could just start eating more protein. Cut out the garbage foods and stick to more whole foods diet.

See how you feel. Most of the time, probably 80, 90% of the time, you're going to feel a lot better. Then you know it's not a chemical imbalance, it's a nutrition imbalance going on.

So can you share a story without names, of course, of a mom whose transformation surprised even you? Oh, let's see. There's so many. Which one do I pick?

I had a woman come to me who was on a lot of different medications, and it was five of them to be exact. And we worked together about a year now. And she'd been on these medications, different ones, off and on since she was like 12 years old.

And very consistently since her late teens. And she came to see me when she was 37. And her grandma was taking off a lot of her meds. And so we worked on that.

She, you know, she had a primary psychiatrist who she worked with the meds on and thankfully they were on board with everything that we were doing. And she was able to get off all of them.

And she went from being a very forlorn, depressed, anxious, even on five meds, unfocused, you know, mom to she just ran a marathon. And she's super healthy now.

She looks totally different. I wish I could show you a before and after picture of her, but it's amazing to see the transformation. And she deals with life completely differently now.

She's like, it's like anything can be thrown at me. She goes, do I always respond appropriately? No. But most of the time I can look at the situation and look at it objectively and respond appropriately without losing my mind.

And so her approach to life, her family just looks at her and just can't believe the change in her. I mean, it was very profound because she came to me in a very, very bad place.

Most of the women I see, moms I see, they have some anxiety, depression, maybe they're on one or two medications. And within six months, they're normally off those medications and feeling pretty darn good.

Most of them have lost a little bit of weight by that point in time. And they just feel the heaviness lifted off and their brain fog clears up.

Nutrient Deficiencies, Medications, and Hidden Infections

You know where your keys are and nobody's annoying you 24-7. People can breathe next to you and it's not overstimulating. I was going to ask, what do you think the key shifts that she made in her life that opened her up that day?

Yeah, well one, we did the, you know, acid therapy. She totally erratically changed her diet. Like it was all her food. She took out grains. She took out dairy and she, you know, she really was dedicated to that.

She guarded her sleep. which was priority number one. And she really made an effort. I mean, she worked from home, so she could do this pretty easy, you know, get that morning sunlight, midday sunlight, evening sunlight, and really prioritize that.

She didn't make all those changes at once, but over time she was able to incorporate a lot of these. And so she just really worked at regulating her nervous system by, you know, paying attention to her body's natural rhythms.

That's great. That's great. So knowing all the success stories that you've had, what do you think that these stories are teaching us about the resilience and the potential of moms?

Yeah, our bodies are amazing, right? We are so resilient. God has given us this beautiful gift to be resilient. And so I think when we tap into what's missing and fix those deficiencies and then really pay attention to our rhythms as women and not try to mimic a man's rhythm, that's when the beauty happens and that's when we get ourselves back.

That's when our family starts to shift and people around us notice those things and they wanna know, hey, what are you doing? You know, what was that change that just happened?

Yeah. So from a practical point of view, like if a mom could only change one daily habit this week, which one would create the biggest shift in her stress levels?

Go to bed at the same time every single night. Set your alarm to go to bed. That's a great one. And I mean, go to bed like at 10 o'clock. Not set the alarm for, you know, 12, 30. But set your alarm to go at 10. No, no, no, no.

Go to bed at 10 or 10, 30. And then, you know, sleep until you wake up at 6 or 6, 30. That would be the goal. Or even if you wake up during the middle night, don't get up at 3 a.m., you know.

Go back to bed. Get the rest that you actually need. It's so important. We have not treasured sleep in this country

by any way, shape, or form, especially as women were like, oh, you have to go, go, go, go, go, because you have to get her all done.

But we need to prioritize rest. Yeah, absolutely. What are three simple practices any mom can do, like no supplement, no major lifestyle overhaul that can immediately calm the nervous system?

Go to bed. Take your time to go to bed. I would say go out and get the morning sunlight. Just do that for five to 10 minutes as much as you can, and then eat more protein.

Success Stories and Lifestyle Shifts

And then how can moms create micro environments of restoration in a busy home without feeling guilty or selfish? Again, I think it just, you know, restoration starts again, going to bed on time.

I can't like, you know, say that enough. Yeah. Yeah. Make your supper time like a meal priority. Make sure like that if you haven't eaten much all day, that that's your most nutritious meal a day and try to do that with your family.

So create that family rhythm. I think those things are important so that we're calm when we're eating and we're actually enjoying our food. Yeah, absolutely.

You talk about legacy health often. What does this mean to you and how is it different from conventional ideas of wellness? So legacy health is, you know, I look back at my family and my mom was super sick all the time.

She had over 40 surgeries. She was sick my entire life until the day that she died. I look at my grandparents. My great grandma was amazing. She had like a tablespoon of brandy every day and some hot water and she lived to be 101, you know.

So I look at her health and like that's the health that I want to have. She was happy. She was calm. My mom was not. She was super sick. And so I want to leave a different legacy for my kids and to set them up well.

And so that's the goal. Their entire life is to feed them super nutritious food, get them really good sleep. help them to learn at their own pace and their own rhythm, teach them good financial success, all those basic tenants of life who set up that legacy health because it's more than just what you're eating, it's body, mind, and spirit so that they have a grounding in who they are in Christ and that we don't forget how we created our bodies to function either.

Yeah, yeah. In what ways are a mother's thoughts, habits, and emotional patterns passed down to her children? We teach them a lot of habits. So if you're always reacting to the same thing and it's not a very good reaction, your kids are gonna pick that up, right?

And they'll start reacting to those same things. My mom would, she would just kind of like fly off the handle and like everything was a huge deal all the time.

And it took me a long time to unwind it and tell myself, this isn't a big deal. I don't need to be upset about these things. So, you know, kids pick up your habits.

and how you react to things. So we have to be mindful of that. And what do you hope the next generation inherits from the moms who go through your programs?

That they love wellness. They understand what it means to live well, eat well, being well. You know, the famous saying that they learn to guard their health on more of a godly level.

Right. So for the mom who is exhausted, anxious, and doesn't even know where to begin, what's the first step? I would say, you know, guard your sleep, right?

Eat more protein. Schedule a free call with me. Go to my website, loriammer.com. I'd be happy to chat with you,

you know, how to help you overcome anxiety, depression, all those kinds of things for you and your family.

Legacy Health and Practical First Steps

You know, just get a plan. Start making a plan. Like, what's the next step that I need to do? Yeah, yeah. It sounds like there's help out there. There's a lot of help out there, right?

Yeah. Your amazing work, Dr. Julia. There's so much help out there. Yeah. So what does healing typically look like in the first month of your program?

We are honing in on those amino acids. So finding out what your body responds the best to and then starting on that protocol. And then we start changing the diet and figuring out what does your body need and tailoring it to that.

And then we start just working on some basic gut healing and then we go from there. That's awesome. And we're definitely going to put your website, if you can tell us again, it's lorihammer.com.

Yep. And we'll put that and your phone number on the show notes so people can access that. Awesome. Thank you so much for joining us today. That was really super and informative and really glad that we had you on.

Thank you, Dr. Julie. I appreciate you so much. And thanks everyone for joining me on the functional edge. I hope today's episode gave you fresh insights and practical tools to level up your life.

If you found value in what you heard, don't forget to hit the subscribe, share the podcast with someone who needs it and leave a review. It's the best way to support our mission of bringing powerful health solutions to more people.

So for more resources, updates, and behind the scenes content, visit drjuliaward.com. And until next time, stay strong, stay healthy, and keep living on the functional edge.

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