Rebuilding Brain Chemistry: How Amino Acids Restore Calm, Focus, and Memory Transcript

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Lori's Recovery Journey

I struggled with anxiety, depression, OCD, suicidal thoughts, you know, all those things for a long time. I don't think I should be here today because I was on such a path of destruction.

So I binged and purged every single day. Once I got to college, it was the worst. And so I had to drop out of college because it so bad. It was just very dark, dark time in my life.

and I wasn't nursing school at the time and i had dropped out and had a psychiatric nursing professor that kind of took me under her wing and she's like, We're going to figure this out for you." And she ended up getting a random GNC magazine in the mail that her husband had bought something there like two years prior.

And so she gets this magazine and in that magazine is an article about eating disorders and cravings and amino acids and that you are addicted to what your body is sensitive to.

So I called out to this place. It was an outpatient clinic in Mill Valley, California. I said, this is what's going on with me. They're like, come out, we can help you.

Welcome back to this episode of the Think Well, Age Well podcast. I am your host, Dr. Heather Sandison. And today I have the pleasure of welcoming Lori Hammer, a functional medicine nutritional therapy practitioner, excuse me, who specializes in targeted amino acid therapy and foundational nutrition to support specifically brain health, emotional balance, and cognitive longevity.

You can tell already why I've invited her to be here today. Lori's work is rooted in a powerful personal journey. Before discovering nutritional therapy, she spent years navigating anxiety, depression, and disordered eating, struggles that affected every area of her life.

Everything shifted, however, when she began rebuilding her brain chemistry through targeted amino acids. That transformation not only restored her mental well-being, it ignited a passion for helping others experience the same, stability, clarity, Now, Laurie is blending cutting-edge nutritional science with practical individualized strategies to help people strengthen neurotransmitter balance, reduce inflammation, and support healthier, sharper, more adaptable brains as they age.

Her insights are offering a refreshing and empowering approach to emotional regulation and cognitive health no matter what stage of life. Laurie, it's a privilege to have you.

Thanks for joining us. It is such a privilege to be here, Dr. Heather. Thank you so much. I want to start with definitions, basically. amino acids get brought up in that context, but also in kind of the protein craze, right?

Somebody was telling me that whey protein is flying off the shelves. The wholesale producers can't keep it in stock. It's really become a huge trend. But amino assets are the building blocks of all this stuff.

And so will you take us through what's the difference? How do we find these? Where do these come from in our diet? And then Just take us through it. What's what?

Right. So amino acids make up proteins, peptide strains, whatever it might be. Right? So proteins. Amino acids. Peptides. Proteins. And so we get most of our amino acid from our food.

I mean, that's the goal. If our body can break those proteins down correctly, Then it breaks it down into all those

individual amino acids and then our body uses them wherever it needs them.

So it'll target some towards your hormones or your digestive enzymes or hair, skin and nails or organs, whatever it might be. Every single cell in your body needs amino acid in order to function well.

And so the goal is the diet. But unfortunately, because our food system is a mess, people don't eat really well. We have the standard American diet, we have poor digestion, you have hormone imbalances.

What Amino Acids Are

So we a lot of dysregulation going in our body. That amino acid profile gets depleted. And part of what happens is your neurotransmitters in your brain get depleting.

You might end up with anxiety or depression or you know, cognitive decline or whatever that might be, your gut doesn't heal well. You have leaky gut because you don't have the repair mechanisms because your amino acid profile is low.

So amino acids are essential to every aspect of our health. Can you give us some examples of amino-acids? Like are there ones that people, famous ones people might have heard of?

Well, a lot of people use branch chain amino acid, right? So valine, leucine and isoleucin to help you build your muscles. That's really important. A lot people are just like, that's what I use, famous amino acids, and I don't know if people, they think about it because, oh, is that in Turkey?

Would be L-tryptophan, right? But most people don' t realize what L tryptophane does in the body, especially what it does the brain to your serotonin pathways.

So those would be some of probably the more well-known amino acid. And creatine is getting a lot of street cut these days. How can I forget creatines?

We spend a lot of time talking about creatine. So yeah, and connect the dots between amino acids and neurotransmitters for us. Right. So you have neurotransmitters that affect your mood, and those neurotrasmiters depend on specific amino acids.

I mean, they use them all, but there's really a specific amine acid. L-tryptophan is the precursor to serotonin. If your body is low in seratonin, then tryptophane will help your to fix that deficiency.

if that makes sense, or if you're low in GABA, you can actually take the amino acid GABa, and that helps your GAB pathway in your brain. Yeah, there's a bunch of these.

Glutamine also turns into glutamate, which you can take as an amino acid. And so these single amino acids like taurine also is another amino assets that you might see.

Lysine, glycine which can be calming. So do you tend to use these in, of course, tyrosine becomes dopamine. Do you intend to these combination or do use them here and there, like one at a time, in a really precise way, how do you decide which one might benefit you?

Yeah, so I do use them in combination most of the time. So when I'm working with brain health, I concentrate on five different areas. That would be your serotonin, which is like our inner sunshine that helps with anxiety, depression, OCD.

weird kind of phobias, ruminating thoughts, all those kinds of things. And then there's your endorphins. That's like your inner joy. You just feel comfy, you feel grounded.

Life is really, really good. So you're happy, your sun's shiny, and you are joyful. Then the catecholamines, that

gives us our drive, our focus, or mental energy.

Kind of the want to in life, right? Then we have GABA. GABa just lets us take that deep breath. and just let it out. It's so amazing. And then glucose regulation, and that's where the glutamine comes in.

So there's specific amino acids in all five of those categories that I'll focus on to help people balance that brain out and address those neurotransmitter issues.

And how do you know which one you need? Is it just based on symptoms or are there tests that you can do? So I use a symptom questionnaire, so, you, know, an assessment and a really good health history.

And then based those things, I actually send you a kit in the mail, Dr. Heather, of amino acids. And so you get the kid in the mail, we have our first appointment, and then we literally do sublingual testing, you know, via a Zoom call.

So you open up the capsule. We'll say L-tryptophan. Put it underneath your tongue, the powder. And then we wait and see what is your brain going to do?

What's your body feel from this particular amino acid? Because they're absorbed so quickly, especially sublingually into the body and your bodies going have a really fast, you know, response to these.

So it might be you feel the anxiety lift. You feel this like heaviness of your chest lift off. Maybe your shoulders relax. Or maybe the green is greener and the blue is bluer.

But most of the time people have response. To at least one of amino acids, sometimes all of them. Wow, so you're saying that people can see responses within minutes.

Yeah. My goal is by the end of the appointment, you know which amino acids you are going to respond to, and you feel better within that hour and a half appointment.

Wow. That's incredible. How exciting. It is.

Amino Acids and Neurotransmitters

Neurotransmitters, of course, they are these amino acids and plus that help us regulate our focus, our attention, and our mood. potentially neuroplasticity.

So help us understand the connection between, I think a lot of us can understand that there's a connection with our mood and our memory, right? When we're stressed out, it's really hard to remember, this is stage fright.

But there is more to it than that. Connect the dots again between these amino acids, neurotransmitters, and then memory and cognition. Yeah. So when your brain, your nervous system is stuck in overdrive, so you're super tense or you are super anxious, you can't sleep, and you just super sensitive to everything, when we use those amino acids because they are so gentle.

and it starts rebuilding those pathways in the brain, your body calms down, like really from head to toe. It's not just the bring, it's head-to-tow, you're gut starts to calm down.

Your vagal pathway works better, right? When that whole nervous system is calm and then your memory improves. So, once your is out of that fight or flight or stuck in overdrive, whatever you want to call it, Then you're like, oh, I remembered what I just said a minute ago and I can go do that thing or remember that conversation.

Your focus is so much better. I mean, you'll just be able to be more present. And when you are more presence in the moment, then your memory improves, your cognition overall, you're working memory, what am I trying to say, executive function, all those things get better when your brain is nourished and it just shifts everything, Dr.

Heather. Yeah, we've seen this over and over again as well. So what are the early signs that you might see that tell you someone's brain chemistry, one, needs amino acid therapy, and then two, is responding positively to the therapy?

Right. So first, what do you need? So you might, if we're talking about serotonin pathway, you could be anxious, OCD, depressed, ruminating thoughts, hard time getting to sleep, maybe afternoon, evening cravings.

You're just kind of like just stuck, If that makes sense. And so once you start that neurotransmitter pathway, that tryptophan serotonin pathway gets better, you're just calm, relaxed.

Like I said, it's your inner sunshine. You're not negative anymore. So if somebody who is snappy all the time, there could definitely be a seratonin deficiency.

Or your kids come up or your husband is sitting next to you and you can't handle them chewing or breathing. Those things where you are like, oh, I just must be super sensitive to that.

probably a neurotransmitter deficiency, really. And so we can address that. I see that all the time in marriages. We're like, oh, he's not annoying anymore.

He's still the same person. If we're talking with women, your husband's the still same. You're just able to respond differently to him now because the physicality of what was causing those issues is We've remedied that, and so whatever's left over, you have to deal with that emotionally.

But we can help with the neurotransmitter piece on that. Or if you're deficient in GABA, your like super tense and you are responding inappropriately to situations like everything feels overwhelming.

No matter what it is, you have this overwhelming response. Everything is bigger than it should be. And so then your response is inappropriate or bigger then it shouldn't be and you're probably driving people crazy around you because you are constantly trying to micromanage everything because everything is overwhelming.

Right? And so when your GABA is sufficient, you're relaxed. You can let things roll off. Um, You're not micromanaging anymore. And, so, those are a few examples.

I could go a lot more in depth, Dr. Heather, but those, there's some things that would happen. But some things for people to be kind of on the lookout for, particularly in these mood pieces.

And I think for caregivers, this has a role to play because we need to fortified, right? We need have our patients, we to get our sleep. We need to be able to take care of ourselves so that we have the patience to deal with a pretty difficult situation.

You know, as I think through neurochemistry, glutamate to GABA is one of these neurotransmitter pathways that's pretty simple and straightforward. So when we take glutamine, we can absorb that glutamine, it can turn into glutamate, which is a very abundant neurotransmitter in the brain, and then that glutamates can be transformed into GABA.

And when we take oral, I guess your sublingual GABa probably gets absorbed, but GAB, my understanding is it's not meant to cross the blood-brain barrier.

I know some people get benefit from oral GAba, water-soluble GAbA, others don't.

Testing and Personalized Therapy

On the GABE pathways, some of the more aggressive GABA agonists include alcohol and benzodiazepines or Xanax and Valium and those sorts of GABAPenten.

And then this category, the medications and substances that bind GAPA really tightly. Now, water-soluble GABA is a little different and doesn't always cross the blood-brain barrier.

Some people get benefit and others don't. And I know in my circles, we kind of go, oh, if you're getting benefit from GAB, you might have a leaky gut, leakey brain issue going on.

And we should probably address that, but glutamine can be absorbed and then glutamate can turn into GABA in the brain. But you need B6 and zinc to make that happen.

And magnesium is helpful as well. So I'm wondering kind of in that context, how do you support, you know, the co-factors? Like amino acids are one building block, certainly an essential one that many people are deficient in.

but what about the other things that are necessary to Make all this metabolism work in Yeah, so we definitely address those as well. So it's not just amino acids alone, although some people honestly do really well with just the amino acid alone and they don't always need a supplemental co-factor.

If we can get your diet really good and your gut feeling really A lot of times you don't have to take the extra cofactors, but sometimes you do. So making sure people have sufficient B6, B vitamins in general, all of the electrolytes, the minerals, healthy fatty acids, those are all foundational for your body being able to use amino acids effectively and for healing from head to toe.

Great. And is there any risk with amino acid therapy? So we do have to navigate some medications. And so you can take the amino acids, like we'll use SSRIs, for example.

So if you're on an SSRi, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor, you are going to want to take amino acid just tryptophan or 5-HTP, six hours away from that medication, just so there's not a little interaction in that.

Maybe some MAOA inhibitors, there is some navigation there, but most of the time, there's not an interaction issue. And I'd love to hear an example if you've got any clients that stand out where their cognition, you have seen their condition improve with just basically lowering the stress of the brain chemistry and getting in the amino acids that they need.

Yeah, it happens all the time. So I get a lot of perimenopausal, postmenopasal women and cognition is a huge issue, you know, because we start to feel like we're losing our mind and our memory is struggling.

I have a client, her husband wouldn't even let her drive past noon because her cognition declined so much. Once she was so, so tired, but then she just couldn't think straight.

She couldn' t remember really not where she was going, but kind of the purpose of everything. So, you know, and it took us about three months and then her husband was like, okay, go to the grocery store today.

And then, about within six months, she let me know. She's like I drove to Wisconsin, which is like five hours from where we live. Yeah, huge deal. I have a mom that I'm just thinking about right now and she came to me, she's like, I just can't remember.

She's a homeschooling mama and kind of the end stages of that and transitioning into that menopause. area as well. And she's like, I just don't remember anything.

I can't help my kids with their math. Like I, can even think, you know, to get them to help with our math and we started working with amino acid therapy and she was like my kid's, like mom, he got your brain back, so there's a lot of things that happen.

My mom We used amino acid therapy with her for a really long time, and it kind of helps sustain her brain a long. She had a pretty traumatic head injury, so the end stages were not good.

But prior to that, the amino-acid therapy really helped her cognition to keep her sharp so that she didn't decline so fast. Are there simple ways, so you're doing targeted amino acid therapy.

I'm wondering if there are simple nutrition-based steps that kind of foundationally our listeners can take away today to give them the resilience and potentially get some mental clarity and energy with it.

We were just talking about protein, right? So it's just making sure you have enough protein because most of the people that come to me barely eat any protein all day long.

So the worst women with the worse cognition, maybe they have 20 or 30 grams of protein a day.

Brain Health, Memory, and Cognition

That's not enough. I mean, even if we just double that for them, all of a sudden the light bulbs come on. I'll have women that go home and they're more plant-based, rarely eat meat, maybe eat some fish, some eggs.

And I'm like, go, home, let's have a hamburger today. Or let have chicken breast. They literally will tell me their brain tingles. Like it's just getting nourished.

And so just increasing your protein even by a little bit can make a profound difference. You know, really watching those healthy fats and getting those bad fats out, that has a lot to do with your cognition.

If you're not able to utilize the amino acids well in your body, you need those extra fats to help with that for digestion and absorption and conversion and all those things.

And then honestly, like here, I have sitting on my desk, this is so easy. This is salt. Real salt, and so I just take my finger and I dip it in salt all day long.

It's like tiny little spark plugs to your brain, and it makes a profound difference. I had a client text me this morning. She's, like, oh my goodness, you were right about the salt.

before she went to bed, right? And so most people are deficient in minerals and electrolytes too. So those are some easy things to start implementing.

Yeah, I love that. The real salt, that's the one from Utah, the Redmond sea salt. I loved that one too, and I will often tell patients, aim for a teaspoon and a half per day and you can sprinkle it on food.

You can put it in your water. If you put a, like you, you have that little dish and it'll offer Get a little bowl or a dish, a ramekin, whatever you've got in your kitchen and measure out a teaspoon and a half.

Put it on your eggs, put it your salad, or whatever your eating throughout the day. Whatever's left, throw that in some water before you go to bed or in the evening.

I don't want people up all night going to the bathroom. Get those minerals in. You see big differences in energy. It's so easy. And it's inexpensive. Like to buy a bag of salt is nothing.

I mean, because you're only a teaspoon and a half, that thing will last you a very long time. And instead of buying some expensive fancy mineral or even some fancy electrolyte powder, you can just use the sea salt, which is ideally, like the ratios are perfect and designed for our body, right?

That divine design. in concert with the world around us, the natural world, it's like sea salt is what we're meant to be absorbing. So that's really exciting.

I'm glad we are on the same page there. We are, because I get irritated with those electrolyte packets. Oh yeah, they're full of junk and they are so expensive.

They're not balanced. No, it's just potassium and sodium and you're not in maladextrin. It doesn't have the trace minerals. No. There's a lot that's missing from those.

Yeah, I'm so glad we're on the same page. And I think part of what we are doing is we have to unwind these years of people being told salt is bad for you.

Salt is going to give you a heart attack or it's going make you retain water and be all puffy. What you want is a balance, right? A lot of the people I think don't absorb the salt.

They don' absorb water because they're not getting enough salt, yeah. Yeah, I know someone who's been chronically dehydrated for years and it's a challenge.

I think more people are chronical dehydrate than we realize and that will decrease your cognition. Of course. What is it? 2% Dr. Heather? You know, lowered hydration in the body reduces your cognition.

I had a patient yesterday and his wife was telling me, oh yeah, if he drinks enough water, I see the difference, especially in afternoon. If he's dehydrated, he can't remember anything.

And if has enough, water it's like he doesn't even have dementia. So it does. It makes a huge difference. This is so exciting. So I'm wondering, with sleep, sleep is such a big deal when it comes to cognitive function.

We see this. I think that we, you know, as moms, we certainly have experienced the brain effects of sleep deprivation. Yeah, caregivers experience this all the time.

For any of us looking to resolve that waking up tired or being wired in the middle of the night that overwhelm. You kind of mentioned this, but again, I want to connect the dots.

Where do you recommend they start if sleep is one of biggest issues? Yeah, so I mean, L-tryptophan can make a huge difference. So if we're talking amino acids, that's the one that I would start with.

Maybe even tryptophane and GABA together can a profound difference or theanine.

Nutrition Foundations for Better Brain Function

is super helpful. Again, salt at night, maybe even just a little fat or a bit of nut butter before you go to bed, some ghee, something like that, I find makes profound differences for people's ability to sleep.

Do you recommend tryptophan sometimes and 5-hydroxy trypophan other times? How do you differentiate between those two? Honestly, we do the sublingual testing.

Which one do we respond to the best? So if you respond a 5HT to best, that's the one we use. If you're responding to trypsophane the So 5-HTP becomes only serotonin, but tryptophan can become melatonin or seratonine.

And the way I think through it is that melotonine helps you fall asleep and seretonin helps to stay asleep. So sometimes we'll kind of guide people to do more 5HGP if they are waking up in the middle of the night wired and not able to get back to sleep.

Do you find that that can be beneficial? It can definitely be a beneficial. Yeah, and like taking GABA during the middle of the night is helpful too. I have a lot of people that wake up and their mind just starts going, right?

And so the GABa really helps to calm down the mind or maybe just eating some lithium orotate. Lithium or otate is amazing for sleep, staying asleep and just helping your brain feel grounded.

It's so healing to the brain. It's also great for memory. It is amazing for a memory! Five milligrams of lithium orotate is on the typical treatment plan for anybody that we are seeing in the clinic, so I love hearing you say that.

Do you use five milligrams? I know for sleep, I've seen as high as 100 milligrams. I have never gone that high with lithium-orotates. Most people are 20 or under.

For the most part. And it's a good benefit. Sometimes I think a little bit more than that. A lot of people just get a lot agitated with too much lithium nitrate.

Interesting. Okay, good to know. I mean, you have seen clients transform their lives through amino acid therapies. How do you see this being more integrated into integrative approaches, but even beyond integratives approaches?

dementia prevention, cognitive restoration at kind of a bigger impact level. Yeah, it's really taking off in the mental health space, so in this psychiatric world as well, which I think is really, really encouraging.

I just went to a conference in September and it was all integrative mental And they're really opening up to that. So I'm encouraged by that because a lot of people with a cognitive decline end up on medications for the anxiety, the depression, you know, all those things.

And, finally, I've been trying to get this out for so long, they are noticing that those medications cognitive So, you know, if we can find something that will help with those mental health issues, and I don't really think it's a mental-health issue, I think is a deficiency issue.

It's, a lifestyle issue and we've just decided to medicate that. You can't medicare away a nutrient deficiency. Right. Yeah, what do you think about plant-based diets or vegetarian diets?

Are you strongly in favor or strongly against? I think they have their place and like anything, I thing diet variation is the key. We're not meant to eat one way all the time.

I definitely lean towards more of a paleo type diet. So I want something a little more balanced. Less grains, less toxic foods, and get some more protein in, get those healthy fats in.

Let's start just eating whole foods. I don't think there's one I don't subscribe to carnivore. I'm not necessarily subscribed to paleo, you know, vegan, vegetarian.

So I really think we need animal proteins in our diet. We're omnivores, so we're created to eat both, and so I think should. Yeah, I would agree. Do you have any experience with the ketogenic diet?

I do. And it can be profound. It can profound for people with cognitive issues. But again, not a long-term diet that I thing people should stay on. Yeah, I couldn't agree more.

Because we see such profound benefit for cognition, we typically start people on a ketogenic diet, and most people have never been in ketosis. And so the experience of feeling how your brain performs can be so eye-opening.

Then also understanding how you're brain responds to blood sugar spikes and drops. That metabolic flexibility is something that has to happen for people.

We're also metabolically damaged in this country. And that leads to cognitive decline. So if we can help people shift their metabolism. That's why I love glutamine.

We'll go back to glutamine, Dr. Heather, because that's so great for glucose regulation, for healing the gut, or cognition. It turns into GABA.

Sleep, GABA, and Lithium Support

There are so many beautiful qualities. If you were going to try any of the supplements that we're talking about, I would try glutamin. Right with glutamein.

Yeah. When I was just at a school, I worked with a doctor who gave every single patient a tub of glutamine powder. No one got out without a tube of gluten powder with the instructions to have a scoop in water first thing in the morning, right when you wake up on an empty stomach.

So, do you tend to do most of these as powders? I know sometimes we're talking like when we do creatine for memory, we are talking 5 to 20 grams. These are big doses that you probably wouldn't want to put in a capsule.

And then you're also talking about sublingual dosing. So how are you typically dosin' this? Is it, and administering it? Under the tongue? Swallowed in capsule?

Powdered? Combination? Most of the time it's capsules, but I will do combinations because a lot of amino acids taste really bad. Like tryptophan, 5-HTP, they taste horrible.

So we're not going to put those in a powder for people to like put in their drink. It's going taste awful. You can hide it with some chocolate, you know, those kinds of things if you're going, if we are going give these to kids.

But most of time is capsuls. Just use it as a power. Taring tastes good. Glycine tastes fine. If you want to use those and powder form, I think that's great.

So, most people do a combo. Capsules are just easy because you can take them with you, especially when you're taking them multiple times a day. So morning, noon, and night, two to four times per day, I have people take the amino acids when we're working on restoring that brain health.

Yeah. Wow. Okay. Pretty big doses, but they fit in the capsules. Yes. Sometimes it's 500 milligrams of tryptophan four time a days. Other times it is 2,000 to 3, 000 milligrams.

It just depends on the person. Gotcha. And so your personal story, are you comfortable kind of diving into that, your struggle? Absolutely. You can ask me anything.

I'd love to hear, yeah, how you arrived here. We briefly mentioned it in the bio in your introduction, but I really love hear that story. Yeah, so I struggled with anxiety, depression, OCD, suicidal thoughts, you know, all those things for a long time.

So, it kind of started when I was in junior high. I went through my early 20s. And I don't think I should be here today because I'm on such a path of destruction.

So I binged and purged every single day. Once I got to college, I had to drop out of college because it was so bad. It was a very dark, dark time in my life.

And I couldn't get into any eating disorder program. And, I was doing therapy, you know, doing all the things that you're supposed to do. I could not get in the programs because my weight wasn't low enough, and I wasn' t suicidal enough.

You know I answered all of the questions correctly, right? So, i couldn' get the help that I needed. And I was in nursing school at the time and I had dropped out and had a psychiatric nursing professor that kind of took me under her wing and she's like, we're going to figure this out for you.

And she ended up getting a random GNC magazine in the mail that her husband had bought something there like two years prior. So she gets this magazine and in that magazine is an article about eating disorders and cravings and amino acids and that you are addicted to what your body is sensitive to.

And so I called out to this place. It was an outpatient clinic in Mill Valley, California. And I said, this is what's going on with me. They're like, come out.

We can help you. Wow. And so when you got to Mill Valley, what did they do? Well, they tested me for celiac

disease. They tested for other food sensitivities.

I had adrenal fatigue, yeast overgrowth. You know, I've been binging to purging for 12 years on nothing but sugar and gluten. So my body was a wreck. Then they did the amino acid therapy testing on me.

The did symptom questionnaire, the did sublingual testing, and literally within minutes I could feel the anxiety kind of dissipate in my brain. It was crazy, and it stopped the craving cycle.

So I wasn't craving the foods anymore. When your neurotransmitter is depleted, you're depleting amino acids, your going to crave a bunch of garbage because you are wanting that dopamine hit, that endorphin hit.

You want your serotonin to raise. I found out that I had celiac, so I was sensitive to dairy. Everything I binged on was dairy and gluten. And it was crazy.

And so it stopped that crazy cycle for me. Then I was able to see what's left over. What emotional stuff do I still need to work through? And I realized I didn't have as much drama and trauma as I thought.

Once your brain can process things correctly, Like you can take life as life comes to you. It's like, you know, like I said, just taking that deep breath and letting it go.

Not that there weren't things to work through, but it wasn't as big as I thought it was. And then I could like… I can navigate life. I mean, I used my eating disorder to navigate.

Life, if things were stressful, and I binged and purged.

Personal Story and Healing

If things hurt, i benged in purge. You know? It was, it, was my coping mechanism. So I had to learn different coping skills, But it. Wasn't. As hard as i thought.

it Was. and i'm still here. Like I was having seizures because I. Was so depleted. I passed out in the nursing dorm room, in a bathroom, and would have a seizure and end up in an ER.

It was just because my body was so out of balance. Oh, wow. But what an inspiring story to find. I mean, it sounds like meant to be, right? Like this one magazine article in the right place at the time with the information.

And then you were also open to getting help. You were open taking the steps because no one can do it for you. Right? You have to decide that you're ready and then put in Where did you find the conviction and the hope and energy to, and were you already in Northern California?

Were you in the Bay Area? No, I was in Iowa. Oh my gosh. Okay, so the resources, right? You got to buy a plane ticket and go out there. So how did find that?

Where you relying on family and getting support from other people? Or was it like, no, there was just willpower? Yeah, I mean, it was a little of both.

I asked my parents for help to start with because I didn't have the money. And I was in such a state of despair and they were like, okay, yeah. go ahead and go.

They didn't believe in it, and it caused a lot of problems, to be honest with you later, because they really didn' believe the diagnoses and those kind of things, but that's fine.

But they did help me get out there. And then I just, I picked up an extra job so I could pay for supplements. I'd picked an up extra jobs so that I can eat, you know, eat better, And I decided, this is going to work.

Im going live. Ididn't want to die, right? And one of the biggest things was, I grew up in the church, but I didn't have a relationship with Christ and I got saved.

And then this is when my nursing professor, you know, shared everything with me and got to go out there. So I feel like the Lord really orchestrated all of that.

I had a bigger purpose and a better meaning in life because I wanted to serve God, I want to help people. You know I've got that inner sunshine, that joy that I just have been so longing for.

You know that you bring up such a great point here, and this is the importance of purpose and meaning in our lives. And it sounds like you work with a lot of moms, right?

And that there's obvious purpose, meaning, raising kids. But as we grow older and are more at risk for cognitive impairment, I think one of the big things that affects people is this lack of Purpose and Meaning.

Why am I still here? What do I have? to offer? What is God's plan for me in this phase of life? And I'm curious, how did you navigate finding that? Then what do you do to kind of remind yourself of that purpose and meaning?

I just curious. I was just going to open it up to you. But I don't know that I have a specific question. Yeah. In the beginning, I felt like I cried out to God all the time.

What am I supposed to do? I mean, why am, and this was in my early twenties, like I had no idea who I was or who was I in him. You know, Why did he create me?

And so it was just crying out to him and, you know talking to mentors and diving into the word and you all those things. And then sustaining that over the years is just, honestly, just going back to the word, reminding myself all the time who he says I am and why he created me to, you know, to be here right now.

And then you look in the face of your kids and your husband, and then he's blessed me with so many amazing clients and that's my mission. That's. Like when I see somebody light up, after having an amino acid under their tongue for three minutes, I'm like, this is still my purpose.

Right. It's just coming alongside of people and helping them understand, you're not done yet. God still has a plan for you. And all of us have a mission and a purpose in life.

We get so bogged down, things get hard, and we get depleted. It is just helping people to unwind all that is so exciting every single day. Yes. Oh, I love it.

Amazing. It's so inspiring. You know, you are a therapist, a nutrition therapist. Functional Nutrition Therapy Practitioner, but therapy is in that word and the word therapist it reminds me of Theropos is the Greek mythology, right?

Purpose, Joy, and Where to Find Lori

As you said, alongside people and Théropos was, the warriors were going into battle and Theropos handed in the arrows, right, was alongside them, giving them the tools that they needed to be successful on this mission.

And I could just see you doing that, like you're handing people these arrows of amino acids to help them do their work in world, whether it's being a great mom or whatever their purpose and meaning is.

I can really relate to that. I've remembered that Greek mythology story for so long because I hope to embody that, right? Like give people those tools.

So it's really fun and great to hear. And you've sort of alluded to this already, but I ask everyone on the show, what brings you joy at this stage of life?

Oh gosh, just spending time with my family is so amazing. I am a grandma, so our grand baby. Well, you've got to tell us all your anti-aging secrets because I would never have thought you were.

That's your heart, I love you. It's a piece of it, but it's just healthy lifestyle and stuff. But our grandson just turned a year old and we have the second one on the way.

They're due in the end of March. So I loved that. And I love, you know, everybody's like the grandkids are the best and they're amazing. Um, watching your children be parents.

Oh my goodness. It is amazing. I got to be at the birth of our grandson like in the room. To watch my son serve his wife in that aspect. You know, they had a home birth and all this kind of thing.

It was incredible. So my family brings me so much joy. My clients bring me joy I just love the mission God has me on right now. you know, if I start to feel down, I have to like smack myself in the head.

I'm like, oh my goodness, you have so much to be grateful for and thankful for today. So yeah, life is just good right now. Yeah, we're given the gift of life, right?

It's a little bit, I'm still here and breathing. Let's go. Yeah. And you have chosen the gifts of the life too, yeah. I was in a meditation not that long ago and had this experience of like, how could anyone ever be upset when we get to be here in these suits doing this thing of, human interaction and like, what a gift.

It is such a good. And we didn't get into this and we don't have to get in to it, but I was healed from cancer. So that is another motivating factor 18 years ago that I shouldn't be here.

The type of cancer I had, I should not be there. I never want to, and it makes me mad when I'm grumpy in a day and wake myself up, like no, the Lord saved you from not being here, he saved your life.

Yeah, and I think I appreciate that. I need the constant reminders as well. Like things get hard. And I, think especially to people struggling with dementia and Alzheimer's, like it's okay to have ups and downs.

They're going to be days that are hard, they're are going be to days are frustrating. There are tools, there's community, reminders to help us keep it all in perspective.

Laurie, I want everyone to know where they can find out more about you. I know you have a podcast as well. So please tell our listeners where can they find more.

Yes. My podcast is Take Back My Brain. Take back my brain. You can me on all the major podcast platforms. On Instagram, Facebook, everything I'm at, take backmybrain.

Fantastic. Find me there. Send me a message. Laurie, thank you so much for taking us on this compelling tour of how targeted nutrition and amino acid therapies in particular can help reshape our brain.

This has just been a really, I think, eye-opening experience for people to listen because it's so simple for us to restore stability from the inside out and really translate, hopefully help to translate neurobiology into really practical steps for people to feel a bit better.

I really love and appreciate your vulnerability and willingness to share your personal story. And I think hearing how you've transformed your struggles into this very inspiring profession, not only a profession but just the way that you live is an inspiration to serving and supporting others.

And so thank you. Thank you for what you're doing, for you sharing and certainly for sharing your time with us today and being here with this. It's been a pleasure.

If you enjoyed today's conversation, please take a moment to subscribe, leave a review, and share this episode

with someone you care about. It's one of the best ways to help others discover tools and inspiration for aging well.

To stay connected, get bonus resources and never miss an episode, head over to drheathersanderson.com and join my email list. Until next time, keep thinking well and aging on purpose.