Introduction and Terry Wallsu2019 background

Well. Hello, everyone. Welcome back to a very exciting. Anxiety and depression Solutions talk. We have a beloved practitioner or well known to the doctor Talks community Terry Walls.

Now quickly before we get into it Terry. Is an Institute for Functional Medicine certified practitioner. She's a physician, and she conducts, Clinical trials in the setting of multiple sclerosis.

In 2018, she was awarded the Institute for Functional Medicine's Linus Pauling Award for her contributions in research, in clinical care and in patient advocacy.

She's the author of The Walls Protocol A Radical New Way to treat all chronic Autoimmune Conditions. Using paleo principles and the cookbook The Walls Protocol call cooking for life, you can learn more about her current study on the efficacy of diet, on the quality of life in multiple sclerosis, and so much more about her wonderful work or research or clinical care and personal history at her website.

Terry walls.com. Terry, it's such a treat to have you in our, talks here. Thank you so much for joining us. Hey, thanks for having me, Dr.. Well, let's get right into this, Terry, how did you get into researching lifestyle medicine?

Well, you know, it's my own personal journey. Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2000. Experiencing profound disability. Such that I was no longer able to set up, it was a struggle to walk even, a few steps with two walking sticks.

And then to have brain fog. So I was really on the verge of being forced into medical retirement. And that's when, you know, I had been reading the basic science, developing a supplement cocktail, which helped a little bit.

And I discovered a study using electrical stimulation. Muscles and people were paralyzed. And so I convinced my physical therapist to give me a test session.

I discovered the institute for Functional Medicine took their course. And your protection had a longer list of supplements, which I happily added. And then I had this really big.

And of course, drew. I laughed at how long it took to have this. What if I redesigned the paleo diet that had been following for five years? Based on this long list of supplements?

It's like these are the key nutrients. Where are they in the food supply? So I did more research, redesigned my paleo diet now in a very specific way.

And it was magical how rapidly, things began to improve. And, my physical therapist are like, you know, you're definitely getting stronger advances, more exercises.

MS diagnosis and the path to lifestyle medicine

And within a year, I go from being unable to sit up to being able to, you know, walk comfortably without walking sticks and be able to go back to biking, which I had not done, for six years, in fact, is able to do an 18.5 mile bike ride.

So this radically changes how I think about disease and health. It changes the way I practice medicine. And my, chair of medicine at the university, he was the what is it?

You know, call me into his office. Got me to, get a case report, written up on my case, and then, encouraged me to

begin doing clinical trials, seeing could other people do this complicated regimen so others with progressive Ms.

and significant disability, they do this really complicated regimen. And then what happened? And we had remarkable success, and that launched me into this new direction, for research, because I had done other types of research, doing clinical trials in humans was new.

So I had to get mentors to, you know, learn how to do that. And so I've been doing that now for the last 15 years. And, you know, my ideas have gone from clinical, really condemned as dangerous and crazy, you know, roundly condemned in the neurology community to now being heralded as brilliant, visionary, and really the grandmother of doing diet and lifestyle research, in the setting of multiple sclerosis.

Terry, thank you so much for for sharing your story. And we're here to talk about anxiety and depression. And so people might be wondering why. Why have I asked our friend Terry to join us?

And I think it's because as I hear this story, I'm compelled to wonder so much about your mental health, having, you know, being, an active and lively physician, and suddenly you start to get some neurological symptoms.

Neurological symptoms are some of the scariest because we just take it for granted. You know, I say move my fingers and they move. I, you know, we don't.

And so when that starts to, functioning, you begin to have brain fog. It's so hard on the mental health. And, Terry, you're such an inspiration because so much of your story you share, your, reinventing yourself.

You're learning, you're getting new mentors. But at the same time, it is, you know, people were really chastising you. How is your mental health? And can you tell us a little bit how you handle it?

You were super interesting. Drew is, viewed as an adolescent. I struggled with depression, and depression has been with me all of my life now. Fortunately, I also have a certain amount of resilience, like, okay, there are always things that I could be doing to try.

And I figured out, early in college that if I was physically active, running, my mood was much better. So, and then, so I maintained running, biking, skiing.

Then I'm diagnosed with M. S., and within a year, I can't run anymore. I put in a pool, in my home. So I swim. But of course, I'm doing less and less. Yeah.

And I also, I have tried gimbal neuralgia. So I have to deal with, really, difficult, pain. Excruciating pain. Trigeminal neuralgia for everyone who's.

I mean, this is a cranial nerve that's. Like, imagine 10,000V been zapped into your face. And so when it have a flare, very, very intense pain, very difficult for my family to watch.

Of course, difficult for me, to experience. And as I'm going downhill, you know, I'm coming to terms with, probably be bedridden by my illness. You know, very clearly I'm on track for that.

Probably demented by my illness now that I'm having brain fog and probably dying with intractable, horrific face pain, you know, terrible future. But I have two young kids.

How old? How old were your kids at this time? Well, at the time, I'm diagnosed eight and five. At the time, them developing brain fog, you know, 15 and 12.

And I realized that, you know, my kids are watching me, and these are they can watch me give up and give in to the despair that I feel. And I assure you, I'm feeling plenty of despair.

Or they can see that I'm doing what I can. Doing my little exercises every day, going to work, not complaining and

saying, yeah, you know, I can give them chores.

We can, and personal responsibility, and. You know what a super interesting drew is now that I'm on the other side, you know, clearly I'm functional, doing well, and my, two children are now 33 and 30.

They talk about the impact of watching me cope with, my disability. And they're still working out every day, and it's still, staying positive. What an impact that's had on on their lives.

I think that's why I wanted to speak with you. Is just, I met you years ago, and you are so, positive. You're both, like, effusive and stoic in some way.

That is really, I find, rare and consistent. And I think I wanted to speak with you so that everyone watching can be, both inspired and instructed around hearing about these elements of mental fitness and that these essential components we need to keep our mental health intact, especially today.

And then how even in the face of such a debilitating, scary illness and you're, you know, you know about this, your neurologist, right.

Living with depression, pain, and family resilience

You, terrible, you know, and at my worst, like, oh my God, coming to terms with being bedridden. Okay, that's pretty difficult. Demented. That's very difficult.

Intractable pain. That's difficult. And, you know, and when it turns on, it can it can be so severe that you move your tongue, it triggers the pain. So I get to the point where I can no longer communicate during a really bad episode.

That's a very scary future to have to come to terms with. I can't imagine that we're going to unpack, a lot of the nuance of that, but I'm wondering some of the basics that have helped you keep your mental health strong and resilient in the face of mental, challenges of, as you say, a longstanding depression, but also then this really chronic illness and debilitating diagnosis.

You've touched on a lot of them. And I'm going, so you wake up in the morning, how does it look to you? So fortunately, I've always had this, it's imagined Viktor Frankl, that we have the events of our lives that happen, but whether the event is catastrophic or whatever it is, it's my interpretation of the event that's going to determine its impact on me.

And I'm the one who chooses how I interpret that event. And between every event in my life and my reaction, there's a space. And in that space, I get to make the choice of how I'm going to respond.

And I've always also believed that, okay, there's always something I can do to make this circumstance better for me. I may not be able to make it dramatically better, but could make it at least a little bit better.

Depending on Terry. I mean, that that is such a important quality for all of us to hear a little more about. And is it that you, any circumstances you have a hopefulness a little bit you can do to to nudge it in the right direction?

You know, and I think part of that came from, growing up on a small family farm, and that, you know, there's all sorts of circumstances you have to deal with every day in your life.

And I saw my mom, dad have great circumstances and very challenging ones. But they got up and did what they could, and they expected us to get up and do what we could.

And if you complained, you got more chores. So you learn to not complain and you learn to be doing your part. And that, you know, my mom and dad set the stuff that you could be doing to make things better.

And that message, just really, stuck with me. And also, you know, getting up at 530 when I was in college, at

medical school, getting up and doing my chores of, learning.

And I've continue to do that now. Now I get up at 530 and my chores are my self care, because I've figured out if I do my meditation, my work up, my son a and, you know, fortunately, I retired from the VA.

So now I can indulge in two hours of self-care before my day. But what I've discovered through is if I do that two hours of self-care, you know, I'm far more productive the rest of the day because, my mood is much better.

My concentration is better. I have less back pain. So, you know, I intermittently, I feel like, yeah, I don't really feel like doing that self-care. And I realized the end of the day, you know, I.

I did not perform as well. So, I get up at 530 and I do do my routine. So there's a consistency. There's a commitment I hear in you also that, attribute that everyone listening, we hear in so many of the folks who inspire us, right.

This notion of, I have a routine that I'm committed to, and sometimes I don't feel like it. I still go do my routine, you know, and it. Occasionally life happens and I and I can't because I have agreed to, you know, travel or do something.

And so I can tell on the days I don't get my self-care in, I do not feel as well. At the end of the day, Okay. Can we get into a little bit of the nitty gritty of how you deal with depression and also anxiety symptoms?

Just, because one of the things that so many of us are struggling with is how do we combine really be integrative? How do we combine the best of conventional medicine and kind of look through the noise and really see the data?

There are some very effective treatments and, and how do we also utilize and understand the best of functional medicine, that there are also some interventions, supplements that just, you know, have really gotten ignored.

I'm curious, how do you do that? And the nitty gritty of how you take care of your symptoms, if you wouldn't mind? Well. You know, for me, one of the things that has been helpful is to realize that my mood and flows, and. That's such a everybody that's such a big when we just say that again, Terry, it's such something.

That is a cycle. My mood, ebbs and flows. I can feel great joy, happiness, like, okay, that's, you know, and when I'm with my grandson, I definitely have more of that.

But then you'll have days where my mood is not as good. Or I may feel like, you know, I've not been as successful as I want to be in my research program.

Self-care routines, affirmations, and warrior mindset

And I've, letting some negative self-talk, pop in and then, you know, I, stand up, or I might go outside and I will stand up, do these really big, positive affirmations take up a lot of space?

Yeah. And, make declarations. Take up physical space, like, you kind of. Think a physical space to put my arms out. You know, I'm Superman and Batman and Wonder Woman.

And. So this is this is when I was in residency training. I was in New York. And somehow I ended up in the, like, Michael Chekhov acting class. And there were these archetypal stances, and this one was called expansion, you know, and and I remember doing it one day when I was in residency, my mood was a little funky because I was a psychiatry resident.

Right. And I had this experience, you talking about where I just it was just it's like a wonderful thing to do. What do you say? What do you get up big and what do you say?

I am strong, I will not be defeated. So I like to have short declarative statements. I like to another thing, you know,

before medical school, I was a martial artist.

I competed in full contact sparring, I was ferocious, I would, leap out and deck people the first three seconds. It was, like, so much fun. And so. Terrified.

I'm just imagining this is like, you're growing up on a farm. What type of animals did you all have on your farm? Oh, well, we had, you know, cows, pigs.

Then I had a couple of horses, so I rode horses. I trained horses, that was lots of fun. And so, you know, when I'm out there doing my declarative stuff, I'm envisioning the taekwondo expert, the warrior, and that's who I'm calling up saying, you know, I'm invincible.

I'm strong. I will not be defeated. Oh, that's like a warrior into. You know, say. You're expansive and you're ferocious and you're going to win over it.

Do I am I am the warrior Brunhilde. That's another, Tell us about this. Is this a. Brunhilde? Is a Germanic name. My, ancestry is, Northern European, German.

So it's another sort of, you know, and you got it. When you do this stuff, you got to have fun. Yeah. It's helpful to laugh. And so if I'm sort of in a funk, you know, going outside, and being sort of in the warrior pose, and making these, short, loud.

You want to be really loud? Really dramatic. You know, the actor I did, theater in high school and college. So, bring all of that out because you you want, even if you don't, you know, and what I learned is, if I don't feel like it, you you're if you act that way with gusto, your brain will catch up.

The rest of your brain will catch up. Those mirror neurons will catch up. They will be impacted, you know, and one of the things that was very impactful, you know, when I first got my wheelchair and I was the head of inventory care, at the VA, in at that time, I had to make a decision as to either going to retire, or resign from that position, or I was going to convince everyone that everything's going to be fine.

It's not that big a deal. And, so I made the decision that I have to convince everyone that's going to be fine. So as I walked around or rolled around in my wheelchair, everyone's like, oh my God, what happened to you?

I said over and over again in a very positive, upbeat way that things. This is a great tool. I will be fine. It will allow me to do my job more effectively.

And so I that's what I did all day long. Told everyone that again and again and again. And you know what? Through by the end of the day, I felt remarkably better.

And so what I learned was, if we say stuff again and again with confidence and gusto, even though we may have fear in our heart, our brain will catch on.

It's so true. We will be much calmer. And so that I. I continue to do that. And that's why when when the depressed person that that is part of who I am is becoming a little more prominent, it very helpful strategies to go outside or in a room where I can take up a lot of space.

Yeah. Get my, theatrical self out the house while the artist who, the wild martial arts person to declare victory. Is just so wonderful. Everybody feels.

Well. It's so much fun. And I hope everybody feels a real radical permission, because so often we feel a little, constrained, especially in Australia's depression.

If we're anxious, you know, the idea that we're going to go yelp and pound our chest and expand into space and grow, it sounds, you know, we're going to get teased, sounds silly.

So I really I want everyone to hear this encouragement. So on because I do this too, I love this, I love getting out and and and that expression where you feel so alive, you see it in animals, any animal.

That's a lot of time inside you let them outside. Suddenly the racing around, the roaring, they're barking and and there's, there's this, part of ourselves that we can lose.

This very natural part, the playful part. And I teach my patients to do this as a part of the, intake we go through, the process. I do, do that either in clinic or via zoom, where we stand up her chest, and make these, warrior declarations.

And of course, they start off with no small timidity. No, no, no. And then I demonstrate, you know, the, Bruin. Hilda cries, and they sort of laugh, like, okay, come on.

You guys, you know, pick your what? Your name and let's do some warrior cries for you. It's very powerful. It's incredibly powerful. And and it's one of those self-care attributes that you're modeling that I hope everybody is really, you know, taking in because we talk there's a lot of talk about self-care as me, a lot of talk. And, this, series around how we can care for ourself.

But then there's just really the doing it. The rubber hits the road. I wanted to speak with you about, especially in the context of chronic illness, another day to day, that it takes a couple hours.

There's also a way that you have a relationship with yourself today that I think is quite a remarkable that so often we're looking for someone else to listen, to play or to listen to our affirmations.

And, and you really, self-care is something that, there's a lot of depth to it for you that I think everyone listening is appreciating it. For all of you who are listening, keep in mind, for years, had a much smaller dose of self-care in the morning because I was still working.

And so I had to figure out how to get my self-care tucked into my time at the VA. Between patients, between meetings, and gradually increasing the time.

And then, of course, when I retired, I was able to indulge in getting all of that self-care, in the morning. And that was like, oh my goodness, what a treat.

So, which is a very. Good point that you have to build up. So sorry. Don't feel like, oh my God, doctor walls is doing two hours. There's no way I can find two hours in my day.

Don't worry about that.

Balancing conventional treatment with lifestyle medicine

Just do what you can at the pace that you can and be mindful that you could go to the bathroom and, because no one's going to bother you when you're in the bathroom and have your little self-care in the bathroom.

In you can gradually, once you decide to start doing self-care, find the little places where you can find a minute here, five minutes there, and cumulatively, you will find ways to increase that self-care throughout your day.

Terry, thank you so much for all these tips and more than tips. Just sharing your experience. Again, the idea that you know it's not an instruction to go out and start taking care of yourself for two hours every morning.

That's the only way to get through depression and anxiety. In some ways, Terry suggesting that the opposite, but that you build up to things like that.

And if that works for you, great. It doesn't have to be two hours to be 90 minutes. But right now, could it be five minutes today? Is there something that, Terry, this resonated with you that you can take into your day to help you

work through whatever way depression and anxiety is giving you challenges right now?

That's really what we're here to think about. And, Terry, as I'm a little curious of how you combine how you think through, let's say like a new medicine comes out for Ms..

The number of new medicines for autoimmune illnesses, you know, and at the same time, there's all kinds of new research and lifestyle medicine about, you know, saunas or cold plunges.

This how do you kind of balance so to those to the so often. Well, I find just like in politics medicine gets a little polarized. People are you know, they're one camp or the other.

I encourage my, patients to keep working with their specialist, whether it's neurologist, whatever specialist for the FDA approved treatments, in that if you're having active, evidence for disease activity, whether it's Hamas or you, rheumatoid arthritis, you want to turn that off so you may benefit from FDA approved treatments to turn that off.

Meaninglessly in that phase of the disease, where there are some, you know, conventional medicine has some great tools and certain phases. So if you have new enhancing lesions on your brain, I don't want those to happen.

So, disease modifying treatments may be appropriate. And that's a very personal decision, because when you read the side effects that include the risk of death, that's a big decision to make.

However, for everyone, regardless of what you feel about taking disease modifying treatments based on your clinical circumstances, we should all be addressing improving our nutrition, having some sort of stress reduction practice, working to improve our sleep, working to increase our physical activity, to meet our, physical activity goals.

We should all be doing that. And then if you have the resources to investigate the, functional medicine, test, understand your, nutrient levels, toxin exposures, hormonal balance.

That would be helpful. However, I want to point out to everyone who who's listening, I began these concepts of lifestyle medicine at the VA. I could I could not do any advanced functional medicine testing at the time.

It really annoyed me. But what it did teach me was that just by focusing on diet and lifestyle, we could have a radical improvement in the, mood, energy, mental clarity of my patients from a wide variety of disease states and nearly all of them had issues with mood.

Nearly all of them had severe fatigue. Nearly all of them were experiencing brain fog. And most of them, had, obesity, cluster problems. A lot of anxiety, depression, PTSD.

And we get remarkable success. And even people living on food stamps, you know, who had been disabled, not working. So functional medicine is great. The advanced testing is helpful, but it's not a requirement.

We can have wonderful results simply by making, solid step by step improvements to your lifestyle, to your diet. Thank you for that. How do we can really take the best of both worlds? And, and also remember those basics of food as medicine and movement is medicine.

And improving your sleep hygiene to night is is mood medicine and great for anxiety. And so it we and we can do this even if we are living on food stamps.

We have worked with our veterans, which is, you know, a first. Thank you for that service and that work. I mean, it's, the VA system has really been a focus in terms of improving the health care of our veterans.

The mental health care of our veterans is really such a huge topic. The idea that we lose more of our servicemembers to suicide than we do to act, yeah.

It's just one of those startling statistics. I don't mean to mix two questions here, both about budget and about

working with our veterans, but I have questions about both for you, period.

And I guess the first is about budget. Lots of people listening in order, thinking, okay, you know, how do I afford this healthy food? How do I find time in my schedule?

Tell us a little bit about when people are struggling financially, how they can still engage in these aspects of lifestyle. Most. So, you think about things that don't cost money, so you could learn four, seven, eight breathwork, some breathing meditations, the box, breaths.

And so, meditations, the gratitude, meditation before bedtime. So, how do you do that? How does that one work for you, Terry? What do you say? So, well, what I think about as I'm falling asleep, and I go through various aspects in my life where I'm thinking.

Affordable self-care, food planning, and practical tips

So I might visualize myself as an infant and thanking my parents for, caring for me. Or as an adolescent, thanking my parents for letting me have horses even though I was a cranky adolescent, you know, and thanking my parents for giving me all these chores which I did not appreciate as a child.

But as a young adult, I was very grateful that I learned how, to get up at 530 in the morning and do all that work. So, I'll go through various aspects of my life, where I may not have shown gratitude at the time, but I'm now thanking the people in that environment.

And of course, now I'm, Thank you. My son, and my daughter in law for having coming parents and, allowing me to come watch their, son on Fridays. So, it's a wonderful way to fall asleep.

It's a wonderful, practice you can have that doesn't cost any money. Sitting outside in fresh air, assuming you have a space where you could sit outside, get some sunlight.

That. So there are things that we can do that cost us, some attention. And, time, and then looking at, what you could do, in terms of, food, here in Iowa, we have too many deer, and many of our communities have, venison.

That's free in the city. Locker. Just come, come pick it up. So. Or that you have friends and family that, are hunters. And they were happy to share the medicine with you.

So, we talked about that, we talked about growing some of your vegetables in your garden, growing them in pots on your deck, going to, your, local farmers market.

And, you know, it's super interesting as people began spending and I have to point out that your, tobacco, alcohol, sports drinks, fancy coffees are all part of your grocery bill.

Your restaurant. And fast food is part of your grocery bill. So we help people identify the money you're spending for liquid and food, is all part of your groceries.

And, we'd have cooking classes to teach people how to meal plan so that when they buy groceries, they've planned their menus. So, what's really annoying is you buy groceries, don't get around to cooking it.

Right? And you're like, oh, my God, I spent all this money and I didn't consume it. So you have to teach people how to meal plan, how to how to cook using recipes, and how to plan for leftovers because so many folks haven't learned how to meal plan, haven't learned how to, shop and consume all of the food, all of the groceries that they've eaten.

So I'm not so good at that myself, too. There. And I think everybody listening, you know, that that's something we all hate very well. We're throwing out especially something nice that we bought, and we were intentional about it.

Then life happened and, oh, whatever it was wild salmon or, you know, beautiful vegetables or some eight years of corn on the cob in the back of the produce.

Right. I just forgotten about it. And so. Yeah. So it's helpful if you, will, even for two days. Three days, identify what your protein is going to be, what your vegetables are, and that you can decide.

Am I going to, you know, grow. So we had we had, steak, last night, some cooked greens and mushrooms. So really quite lovely. But but we grilled, two extra steaks, which I then sliced and that's, in our refrigerator so that you could have that tonight.

With the salad. So. But doing those kinds of things requires a little bit of planning. And many of us, we don't take the time to plan, a couple days worth of eating in terms of what your protein and your vegetables will be.

It's something you can do, at your meal, like. Okay, so what what are we going to have, the next couple days and just make a few notes? It'll make it easier to plan, for your grocery shopping.

And it will decrease the probability of food waste. So I hope everyone here is just a tremendous amount of helpful information. And that's what I hear.

I think about all the little tips we've gotten from someone who really knows how to walk the talk. If you don't follow me on Instagram or on social or get her newsletter, I really encourage you to sign up.

I do, and I'll be really frank. I do it for the inspiration I find to be really inspiring. From the very first time I met you way back in the day at vine, Buddy Green revitalized together.

You had kale on the back of your business card and I was a little nervous. I hadn't even I could just came out and I just thought, this is there's a kindred spirit tree was it's such a treat to hear from you, to specifically hear all of your tips around depression and anxiety.

There's so much more that you could share with us, and so much more that you do share about how to help. Especially for those of you who are thinking about depression and anxiety in the context of autoimmune illness or chronic illness.

It's such a specific issue or specific set of circumstances around these symptoms. Really? I'm so grateful that we've had you join us, everyone. I'm Doctor Drew Ramsey.

Thank you so much for another wonderful talk here. For the anxiety and depression solutions. We'll be back with another wonderful guest here really soon.

Terry, thank you so much. Thank you.