Rewiring the Brain, Reclaiming Your Life: Dr. Nathan's Wisdom on Aging Well Transcript

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Opening on Aging and Healing

The key thing I want to communicate is you can choose how whatever you're experiencing is affecting you, that we have a choice for. This is Doctor Talks, real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most.

Welcome back. In today's conversation, I'm joined by the deeply compassionate and wise Dr. Neal Nathan. He's a pioneer in integrative medicine and someone who has been kind enough to mentor me over the past decade.

Together, we explore the rich and layered themes of aging, chronic illness, emotional healing, and the powerful role the limbic system plays in our health.

Dr. Nathan brings decades of clinical experience and deep empathy, also a unique ability to connect the science of medicine with the soul of healing. He also gets vulnerable here and shares his personal health journey navigating the healthcare system and just getting older.

You'll hear about the power of mentorship, both giving and receiving, The value of intergenerational wisdom and how tools like limbic retraining can rewire not only our brain, but our beliefs about what is possible.

This conversation is an invitation to reframe how we think about aging. for it to be an opportunity for growth, an opportunity for healing, and an opportunity for deeper connection with ourselves, with others, and with what gives our lives meaning.

Let's dive in. Dr. Nathan, it is great to see you as always. You and I have been chatting a little bit about aging in general, and you have some inspiration from Anumkara.

Would you mind starting with just sharing that? Anumkara is a book by an Irish poet. He actually began his career as a priest, fell in love and left the priesthood, and then is a philosopher-poet, and he has written profoundly about a lot of spiritual issues.

But the word anumkara, kara, refers to heart, and Anam refers to soul. So Anamkara is a little bit like a soulmate. Throughout the book, he talks about the seasons of our lives and what kinds of ways of thinking we should approach it with.

There's a whole beautiful chapter on old age in which he views that as the opportunity to reflect using the wisdom of what we've learned over the years on our lives on the choices we've made, on the decisions we've made, and to essentially heal ourselves from beating ourselves up about, well, I didn't do this right and I didn't make that decision right, but I knew now then I wouldn't have done it this way.

Rather than do that, which has negative. It's not a healing process. He looks at old age as an opportunity to really settle into our wisdom and to simply enjoy it, reflecting on the good things we've done and to appreciate what we have done in this lifetime.

And so I think that's beautiful.

Anamkara and the Wisdom of Old Age

And we were talking before, at the end of each little section in this book, there's a blessing, and he's got one here, which is simply called, I think, a blessing for old age.

It's fairly short, and I would read it with an Irish accent, except I don't want to offend those whose accent is infinitely better than mine. But imagine that I am reading this with an Irish accent because that's how it would go.

A blessing for old age. May the light of your soul mind you. May all your worry and anxiousness about your age Be transfigured. May you be given wisdom for the eyes of your soul to see this as a time of gracious harvesting.

May you have the passion to heal what has hurt you and allow it to become closer and one with you. May you have great dignity, sense how free you are.

Above all, may you be given the wonderful gift of meeting the eternal light that is within you. May you be blessed and may you find a wonderful love in yourself for yourself.

How beautiful. Yeah. You know, Dr. Nathan, you are an example of this. You are creating intergenerational wisdom transfer. I will take some credit for taking that, extracting that wisdom out of you.

You are one of the elders in our community who I look to for guidance because of your many years of experience. and the immense amount of value in that.

I'm curious what sort of value you've gotten from the elders who you've worked with, either as a mentee, as looking to older providers and doctors in the community, or to patients who have been older than you that might have passed on some wisdom.

Gosh, that is such a comprehensive group of people I owe so much to. So first of all, I've been blessed with having more mentors than is fair for one human being to have.

I probably started even in medical school with Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. who was, I was at the University of Chicago Medical School, and she was one of the only people whose information resonated for me.

She would have a class, it was an hour and a half class, once a week, it was an elective, and back then there weren't cameras or videos or things like that.

There was a two-way mirror in the room so we could hear and see what she was doing with a patient. and she would simply interview patients, many of whom were dying or had cancer, but not all.

And watching her, the way she listened to people, the way she talked to people was a uniquely respectful process that my other attendings at medical school didn't quite have.

They were sort of the white coat I know what everything is and I know what to teach it. And she didn't come to the table that way at all. She came to the table with, I'm just another human being on this planet talking to you as a human being.

Tell me about what's going on. So she taught me how to talk to people and how to listen to them, really listen. That was one of my first major mentors, but I've had so many, so many others.

I think of Sid Baker has been a fabulous mentor to me. He's a poet in his own right. I used to say that Sid Baker could give a lecture reading the telephone book and it would somehow find spiritual meaning in it when he would talk just the way he would do it.

He brought this sort of a sense of humanity to everything that he touched. And again, I have so many that I, that classical Oscar speech, there are too many to think you all know who you are kind of thing.

Are there any patients who stand out? Well, one cute story, one of my favorites, is I used to have this cartoon that I was very fond of. I had it up in my office.

It was about an 80-year-old fellow who goes to the doctor. I'm sorry, it was a hundred-year-old patient who goes to

the doctor and he said, doctor, my right knee is really hurting me.

And some physicians think, well, you're old, what do you expect kind of thing. But so he gets that kind of a doctor who says, well, he says, you're old, what do you expect?

You have hundred-year-old knees. said, you don't understand, doctor, my left knee is 100 years old and it's just fine, so I need help with my right knee.

And it just so happens that in my practice I had a 101-year-old patient who had a swollen, effused right knee and his left knee was fine. And so I was amused by that, that I had the opportunity to go, this is a being who has a very severe inflammatory arthritis and I know how to fix it.

So I could, you know, put a needle in that joint and pull that effusion out and see what it was causing it and then we can treat it. So I felt like I was able to take that cartoon and make a real life process out of it.

I have this respect for the human in front of you who was saying, hey, I need a little bit of help.

Mentors, Patients, and Respectful Medicine

And instead of writing them off because they were old, really digging in, getting to the bottom of the root cause of their issue. We have worked together to help many people who are suffering with complex chronic illness, many of them suffering with exposure to toxic mold, some of them Lyme.

And I'm wondering in your area of expertise, this chronic complex illness space, is there anything that stands out as really impacting how quickly we age, right?

How quickly people meet their demise and kind of sucking the joy out of life and the energy from life. And have you seen any ways to really have an impact on that so that people can get the most out of those golden years?

that could go in so many different directions. I first wanted to start with a line that George Burns used to say, I don't know if you know George Burns, he's an old comedian.

He had a show with, he and his life partner, Gracie, had this comedy show that they did for a long time. And as he got older, he did a lot of, skits on television about how getting older was.

And one of the most profound things he talked about was He felt that a lot of people as they got older began to behave like they were older. They started to walk more slowly, more carefully, more gingerly, and more stiffly.

What he observed, he was well over 100 when he made these observations, and he was very spry and kind of running all over the place, was said, you're just, taking on the role of an older person, and that may not be necessary.

Maybe you shouldn't think of yourself as any given age, but rather, you know, I'm an alive, vital being, and I choose not to live like I'm disabled. And I always thought, even years ago when I heard that comment, that that was pretty profound, that I think a lot of people kind of did George was an actor, so he said people would act like they were old, but maybe that's not necessary for a lot of people.

That's not to trivialize that some people do have arthritis or COPD or have trouble breathing or heart issues. I think we can exacerbate that by kind of sinking into that role rather than embracing a role that we don't see embodied that often, which is an older person who is vital and alive and, you know, in there kicking.

Yeah, this gives us some agency, right? I remember hearing a story of someone going to see the Dalai Lama speak, and he had a question. He raised his hand or stood in line and said, Dalai Lama, you know, I want to be as compassionate as you are.

How can I, my mortal soul, but the human person walking around in everyday life, not the Dalai Lama, how can I be as compassionate and openhearted as you are?

And the Dalai Lama's response was, act as if you are. Just pretend that you are, right? And it gives us a sense that, hey, we have a choice. We can choose to act young.

And you see that, right? We see that in the different models of aging, right? I always think of Betty White. Like, just act as if you're Betty White and embrace the aging and enjoy it.

And yet there are these afflictions, right? There are these things that come up, and it does feel like it takes longer to heal from an injury as we age.

We might feel kind of beaten down by the things that happen throughout life. And so it's a little bit of both and. And then there's also this external view of us, right, which particularly providers, whether it's physical therapists or an occupational therapist or even your personal trainer or your provider, your physician or nurse practitioner, And their view of you is going to have an impact sometimes on how you're treated.

I mean, not just by providers. This can be when you walk into the store, when you interface with anyone out in the world, when you are behaving old or when you appear old to them, they might they might not expect you to get better as quickly.

They might not raise the bar as high because they're expecting you to be going downhill rather than getting better. And so there's almost like an act of resistance in society that we have to show up with when we are acting as if we are young, right?

We want other people to engage with us in that way as well, potentially. And there's a spectrum of this, right? It's an invitation. It's an opening to say, oh, maybe there's a different way to act, behave, and be in the world.

I completely agree. I know you asked me to use my own life as many times as possible as an example. So I've had several life-threatening illnesses in the past, I don't know, six, seven years.

And just for the audience to know, I'm currently 78. So that's, call me old or you can call me a young 78, which would be my way of looking at it. And so twice, I was so sick that I had lost a profound amount of weight.

I could barely go from my chair to the bathroom and back. I lost my appetite. Food didn't taste good to me. On one occasion, I was septic from erectile abscess.

On another occasion, I had a rare form of colitis in which I had both ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. And it took me a while longer than you might think in the medical system that currently exists, especially with my connections.

It still took me way longer to find the right doctor who knew what my diagnosis was and how to treat it. So in that time period, I mean, I really got sick, but the way I think about myself is I'm not willing to be sick.

Now, I was. I was not in denial. I could accept this is where I am for right now. I am not going to stay here. I mean, this is nothing. I am not going to be in this place and I'm not going to keep going this way.

Now one of the many things I did in addition to having what most people would say is a good attitude is I wrote affirmations on a regular basis in each of the different times that I was really sick for my healing process.

So for example, when I had the colitis, After months of being incredibly ill and getting sicker and sicker and sicker, I finally found a gastroenterologist who had seen the kind of thing I had who was able to get me on medication.

Choosing Vitality While Aging

But even though I am a doctor and I work in the system, it still was going to take me six weeks to get my first dose of Remicade to turn my colitis around.

The world in which we work has changed greatly in that it is incredibly harder than ever to have anything done in a prompt way in medicine. I'm going to digress for just a moment.

One of the most florid examples of that I know is my dear friend Bob Navio, who is a physician at UC San Diego. He's a brilliant, brilliant researcher, pediatrician, geneticist, who's put some incredible work forward.

Bob had a mild heart attack several years ago, and he couldn't get into rehab in his own hospital for six weeks. And he and I shared, what has this world come to that an attending physician in a medical hospital can't get into the rehab program for cardiac rehabilitation?

So I'm not sure if this makes everybody else who isn't in the medical system feel any better, but you're not alone. Everybody who works in the system has to wait just as hard.

I'm not sure. Right. So I'm sorry I digressed, but I'm trying to tell the universe that we no longer live in a world where you can get what you need immediately.

And I don't think that we've woken up as a medical profession to that. And so, so many people out there are frustrated by My doctor tells me I need this, but I can't get this until my insurance decides that I'm worthy of it or however you want to phrase it.

So I'm going to leave that digression alone and come back to affirmations. Just wanted to use that as an example. So I started to write I, Neil, am responding quickly and comfortably to my Remicade infusions with complete remission of my colitis.

And then when you write affirmations, you do it in several tenses. So I'd also write, you, Neil, are responding quickly and he, Neil, is. And I would write that.

Now, technically, you're supposed to write affirmations 10 times in each tense. Now I was so weak that I could barely write it three times in each sense.

And it was so scrawled, it was so unreadable. Now I'm a doctor, can't read my handwriting anyway, but this was absolutely scrawled, weak, illegible. I wrote that out every single day until I got actually my first dose of Remicade.

And within three days I was starting to get better and I knew it. And my doctor said, that's impossible. Nobody gets better from Remicade in three days.

In fact, most people don't get better until their third infusion and you're not even close to that. And so he did not accept my belief system, which was I'm convinced that I was programming my body and my spirit, my energy to respond in a particular way before I even had my first dose.

And to the best of my knowledge, I'm still in remission. So I'm using that as an example of my spirit refused to accept that I was going to be an invalid or have a medical condition that would put me under.

I have I think too much to give to the world and I have a phenomenal wife and family. My wife is the love of my life. My kids are fabulous. I have two fabulous puppies who shower me with unconditional love.

I have a lot to live for. I'm not leaving until my maker decides it's time, Neil. When that is, then so be it. But until that moment, I want to live as vitally as humanly possible because why not?

And I think for all people listening to this, what you may not understand is you have a choice. You may not have a choice of what condition you have. I assure you, I did not choose to become septic from erectile abscess.

I can assure you, it was the furthest thing from my mind that I would ever have a severe, weird case of colitis. I didn't choose that, to my knowledge.

Things I did in my life may have predisposed to that. Guess I'm responsible for that. But the attitude that I ask all beings that I work with to have is don't accept it.

Own it. Live it. It's not like denial. Denying it doesn't work. That's not what we're talking about. But it's like, today I have severe colitis, but tomorrow is another day and I don't have to have it tomorrow.

And I don't know when that tomorrow will be exactly, but I'm going to live my life as if I am going to be completely well and be able to do That's 78, what I want to do.

So I'm no longer running 10Ks. I mean, there are things I don't do that I used to do. But I can walk four or five miles at a stretch and I can do Tai Chi and yoga and Pilates and I do what I can do.

But the key thing I want to communicate is you can choose how whatever you're experiencing is affecting you. That we have a choice for. I couldn't agree more.

You have lots more to give, and so we're so grateful to have you around. You talked about belief systems, and you talked about using Remicade personally, and I think that might surprise some people out there, right?

You have, as a medical doctor, you definitely are more open to integrative medicine and natural therapies than other medical doctors, conventional medical doctors typically.

And you have this very unique way of blending conventional Western allopathic medicine with some alternative therapies. Can you talk about sort of how you've navigated that throughout your career?

It's very simple, actually. For example, you know that I've treated Lyme disease for 25 plus years. Getting on 30 now, I lose track of time. Now, that often requires the use of high dose antibiotics and lots of them for longer than I've never been comfortable.

And I've been also known to be a holistic physician for my whole life. And my patients would sometimes say, now, Neil, how do you reconcile giving long-term antibiotics and being holistic?

And my answer was, I use the most effective, safest whatever for treating any condition I have. I have a whole lot of tools, I'll use the safest ones.

Sometimes it's herbal, sometimes it's high-powered medications, Remicade, for those who know me. You let them give you Remicade, really?

Personal Illness, Affirmations, and Recovery

It's a biological modifying agent, it's pretty potent. I said, yeah, I did, and it saved my life. So I am grateful that it exists. I'm not opposed to anything that works.

And as you know Heather, sometimes people come into our treatment orbits and go, I only take these things, or I'll only do this, or I will only do that.

And one of the first things I need to address with them is to open their heart and mind to what their body might need. This is not a cerebral thing going, no, I only do this.

It's your body might want something else. And that can be a tricky place to navigate because some people are really attached. to whatever concept it is.

I'm vegan. I never touch meat or protein in any other form. And in linemen and treating mold toxicity, you need a

high protein diet. And the vegan diet isn't always capable of giving you all of that.

And so it kind of boils down to a question of, you want to be well, or do you want to stick with being a vegan? That's kind of your call. Do you want to be well, or do you want the Revocade?

So I embraced the Remicade. I put it into my visualizations. It was like, no, it wasn't a negative at all. It was God bless that we have Remicade on the planet.

And I had that as a tool. Now what my GI specialist did not know was I was also changing my diet to a autoimmune paleo diet. I was doing LDI. I was doing gemotherapy, which is a type of an herbal therapy.

I was doing LDN and my affirmations and visualizations. I was probably doing 20 things, all of which were in the service of healing my immune system. So I wasn't limited to the visualization of my GI specialist who correctly put me on what healed me.

But I started in that field, their concept was, you're going to be on it for the rest of your life. God bless, it's working. And my concept was, I don't think I'm going to be on this the rest of my life, and I'll find other ways to augment this and get into a healing state, which I believe I have done.

I imagine that those alternative, maybe quote unquote alternative, those additional therapies probably potentiated the benefit of the Remicade and reduced the potential side effects of the Remicade.

Yeah, absolutely. But again, since we're exploring consciousness in a certain way here, it's the consciousness of realizing you have a choice. And I had a patient recently who has been, I don't know, doing yoga and Tai Chi and meditating for 30 years.

And that she came to me the other day and after reading something particular that we were writing about the limbic system and the vagal system and how you can reboot parts of the nervous system that way, she said, I never realized I had a choice.

It's like, with all the things you've studied and done, that particular concept eluded her. Just missed the fact, and she was excited by it. It was like, this is so cool.

I have a choice. I'm not stuck with anything. I can choose to respond to something or to put into my consciousness that I'm going to respond to something.

And that is one of the most powerful healing tools we have. You and I have both seen that in clinical practice, that the shifting of the autonomic nervous system and that limbic retraining, this kind of brain retraining where we can get out of the looping that doesn't serve us, can be one of the most profoundly impactful interventions that we use.

And this isn't saying that, oh, your illness, your diagnosis, your symptoms are in your head. It's saying how do we use your brain to our benefit, to the benefit of your cells so that your brain is working with us in the in the project that is your healing, your full recovery.

And so I feel like this harkens back to the blessing of old age, right? How do we make peace? How do we heal some of the wounds that we've collected on the path of our lives?

And so would you dive into a little bit more of what this limbic retraining looks like, who's offering it, what you refer people to, and how they can potentially get the benefit?

Sure. Well, first of all, the limbic system for listeners, a part of the brain, that its job is to keep you safe. Its job is to protect you. And the way it does that neurologically, is that it's scrutinizing the stimuli you're being exposed to.

And those stimuli are external, sound, light, chemicals, smells, food, and internal feelings and perceptions you have inside. It's scrutinizing those from the perception of safety.

And if the limbic system doesn't think you're safe, it's going to shut you down and give you symptoms. not to make you miserable, but to get your attention so that you'll understand that from the limbic system's perspective, you're doing things that are not safe and it really just doesn't think you should be doing that.

The symptoms that the limbic system gives are in two main categories. in motion and sensitivity. So if you have developed any increased sensitivity to light, sound, touch, EMF, chemicals, smells, food, that's limbic by definition.

If you have a new or exacerbated anxiety, depression, OCD, mood swings, depersonalization, derealization, limbic. So we live in a world right now that is so anxiety-ridden and out of balance from that perspective that most people are just taking it as, oh, this is just the world that I live in, without, here we go to choice, without recognizing I don't have to be as affected by these things as everyone else is.

I don't have to let it keep me from sleeping. I don't have to let it keep me up at night worrying. I don't have to let it make my immune system get weaker.

I can actually reverse that by actually, as you're suggesting, taking part in limbic retraining. I can allow my limbic system to heal. And just to comment, We've always lived in stress.

These are very stressful times.

Integrative Medicine and Using Every Tool

The COVID pandemic put several quantum units of extra anxiety into everyone's life. It began with this shocking revelation that there was this virus that was lethal with, and as the news portrayed it, and God bless it, stop listening to the news if you don't want this information.

But they portrayed emergency rooms in San Francisco and Boston and New York overflowing and healthcare providers burning out and not enough resources and the world freaked.

And I mean the entire known world freaked. But it was what we all did. No one really realized the toll it was taking on our emotional psyches. It was literally making many of us sick.

And we added to that isolation, being away from our families, our loved ones, that exacerbated that even more. We have recent elections where our country is polarized about who leads us and the choices that they're making.

And are we safe? And so we're living right now in some of the most difficult times that I can recall as a human being on this planet. So to merely accept it, is not doing yourself any favor.

I believe that literally every man, woman, and child in this world needs to be doing limbic retraiting at this moment. We need to be quieting that limbic system and going, it's okay, it's okay.

It's safer than you fear it is, and let's let go of this. Yeah, I see that with dementia, Often I ask all patients if they experience childhood trauma or any trauma in life, but you can imagine that a brain who's going through its formative years under threat, not having safety, feeling like they are constantly needing to protect themselves that that brain is going to be at risk for dementia later because it's so bathed in cortisol.

And we know that cortisol, that stress hormone, has a direct impact on how quickly the hippocampus shrinks or the memory center of our brain shrinks as we age.

And I've been surprised by how many people with Alzheimer's or dementia who are on their way in that direction. say yes to having adverse childhood events.

They lost a parent, they had an alcoholic parent, they suffered from abuse. There's some sort of childhood trauma that sets their brain up for this loop that I'm not safe, I'm not okay.

And I think that what we are sharing in our clinical experience, both you and I have found is that once we're aware of these looping patterns that don't serve us as we grow into adulthood and beyond, we can then make this choice to rewire the brain.

So we don't have to loop on these patterns that no longer serve us. We can choose a different loop, an I'm okay loop, and I'm getting better loop, and I'm already better loop, right?

That we can choose something that does serve us. And wow, what a mind-blowing moment. I remember realizing that myself, and I was like, yes, every man, woman, and child on the planet should know that they have access to this.

And you can, of course, pay for additional coaching, but really this concept, I think, you see this in lots of free resources, right, in prayer, in meditation, in lots of practices that exist throughout the world.

What are some of your favorite ways to guide people in taking advantage of this opportunity for neurological rewiring? Gosh, there are so many. The most direct methods for the limbic system are there's some programs that you can all access over the internet.

There's Annie Hopper's DNRS program, dynamic neural retraining systems. There's Ashok Gupta's amygdala retraining program. There's Kat King's Primal Trust.

Those are three of my favorites. Those are really more specifically limbic, I really like them, but anything that increases the parasympathetic tone of our nervous system, deep breathing, meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, anything that gets you to relax.

In fact, I'm going to take that a couple of steps further. The most important things a human being can do are to do things that are spiritually meaningful for them.

And I would suggest that our birthright as human beings are to be in a natural setting and to let that natural setting heal us just by our taking the time to be in it.

Whether you're walking in the forest or in a park or down by the ocean or however. I mean, you're in San Diego and I'm up in southern Oregon and I'm right by the ocean.

I can literally see the ocean from my window here. It's chosen because I allow myself to bathe in the natural world, which I believe is one of the most powerful healing tools we have, and most people don't take the time to avail themselves of that.

We get into, oh, I'm so busy. I've got this to do. I've got that to do. I've got that to do. And here we get into the stress and here we get into so many things to do that we don't take care of our own needs.

So a couple of examples or one just off the top of my head. When I was working in a cancer clinic, I had a particular patient with advanced prostate cancer and He stayed alive for 10 years after the rest of the world told him he should have left.

And what he did is his love was fly fishing. Every morning got up and went out into the natural environment and sat in the stream. cast and didn't care if he caught anything or not, didn't matter.

Limbic Retraining and Nervous System Healing

It was he believed, and I agree with him, that that kept him alive because every morning he got up with the joy of, oh, I get a chance to be in a beautiful environment again today.

And If you've lost that, and unfortunately I ask almost every patient I have, what gives your life meaning and purpose? And so many say, I don't know.

when I hear that, my first thought is, uh-oh, we have some work to do because we need a spiritual root to work from that is one of the most important healing components that we have.

It's that is what gives us the healing energy. So for that individual, He found that it nourished him in ways in the rest of the world. Another example comes to mind.

My grandfather, at the age of about 80, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. It was a clear diagnosis. They went to the operating room. They opened him up.

It was too widespread. They closed him back up. They did not remove anything. And so I was just starting medical school at the time, and he was my favorite relative.

So I would fly home from the University of Chicago every chance I had to see my grandfather again before he died, except he didn't. He stayed alive healthy and well for five years before he did die at the age of 85. Now, his spiritual road was he was an Orthodox devout Jew, and he went to the synagogue and prayed every morning.

That was his spiritual path. He would take me when I was a little child to his little synagogue, and at his knee, I would sit and watch all the old men bowing and praying and singing the ancient chants, and it had kind of a magic to it.

So I know that for my grandfather, that was his path. But in the stories I'm telling, each human being has to find their own path. There's not my path.

I wouldn't judge anyone's path because that's not my business. It's not my story. It's their path. But I guess my point is so many people have lost their path and aren't even looking for it and hence their health begins to decline because literally the spiritual energy that feeds us and creates health isn't coming into the body.

That purpose and meaning is what gets us up out of bed in the morning. It's the reason we want to stay youthful and it's the reason we don't want to go in the direction of our demise, right?

There's a reason to stick around when we have that purpose and that meaning. We talk a lot about stress and how stress is on this teeter-totter, right?

You don't want too much and you don't want too little. and those good stressors of, oh, I've got to pick my grandkids up from school. That's a great stressor because it gets us up and it gives us some routine to our day, a reason to be somewhere, a reason to make sure that we can walk or we can run and keep up with them.

And so it's this balance of making sure it's not so much stress of financial worries or of illness, of doctor, just doctor's visits day after day, but of really enjoying life.

So Dr. Nathan, I'm wondering from your experience at 78, what brings you the most joy as you look towards your 80s? Well, right off the top of my head answer is my wife.

There's no question about it. She is a radiant being and I am the luckiest man in the world to have her. We give each other unconditional love and that is a gift beyond measuring.

But I have lots of other stuff too. I'm really blessed. I mean, I've got my kids, my grandchildren, my puppies. unconditional love. One thing about dogs is if one doesn't have them or hasn't had experience with them, they are capable of giving unconditional love in a way that few beings can.

I have my work. I absolutely love helping people. I spend my life work and get up in the morning. I have books to write. I have people I can help. This is, I mean, I have this phenomenal life.

I live in this beautiful place. I can bask in nature. So I have lots of answers to that question. Beautiful. And you have this very unique perspective when it comes to treating chronic complex illness.

And we barely scratched the surface on that today. You and I have other recorded conversations elsewhere where people can dive deeper into understanding your perspective on mold, on Lyme.

And other things that I think are unique and that keep people from finding, certainly finding resolution in a conventional setting. And so I want to really encourage people to dig into those resources.

But Dr. Nathan, can you tell them where they can find out more about you, the names of your books? and other things that can help people learn more about aging gracefully, aging with youth and enthusiasm and joy, and putting some of your tools into practice in service of that.

So let's start this part of the conversation with whatever condition you've been told you have. I don't care what the name is. Conventional medicine, of which I am trained and which I am certified, has a limited vision about what's possible.

I shared earlier that my gastroenterologist believed that once you had colitis, you always had colitis, that it couldn't be cured. I didn't happen to have that same vision or expectation.

And I want to use that as an example of no matter what you've been told you have, arthritis, COPD, cardiovascular disease, cancer, dementia, don't care.

There are lots and lots and lots and lots of things that are known in what we call integrative medicine or functional medicine that can make a huge difference.

So please don't buy into other people's visualizations or expectations of what is possible. No matter what it is you have, Other people are not going to do the work for you.

You need to do some of your own research. You need to find podcasts, like with Heather. One of my favorites is Scott Forsgren, who's known as the Better Health Guy, has 220 plus interviews with integrative practitioners in every walk and size that is an incredible in-depth exploration of what's possible.

If you even explore the headings of his different podcasts, you can begin to get a glimpse of what's possible. So number one, look deeper. From my own perspective, I've had the joy and privilege of writing a bunch of books, which hopefully might do that for you.

One book which covers a lot of ground is called Toxic, Sounds terrible as a name, but it gets people's attention. that's subtitled, Heal Your Body, from mold toxicity, Lyme disease, multiple chemical sensitivities, and other environmental illness.

So the intent of that has a healing nature to it.

Purpose, Nature, and Meaning in Later Life

I have a book that's still available called Healing is Possible, where we talk about a wide variety of chronic conditions and what kinds of tests you ought to have in order to get it checked out.

There's a wonderful book by cardiologist named Dr. Bales called Healthy Heart, Healthy Brain, in which he goes over tests that you should have run to know how your blood vessels are being inflamed, which is the cause of all cardiovascular illness, and what you can do about it preventatively so you can heal that.

And he has hundreds and hundreds of patients with supposedly end-stage cardiovascular disease that are now well. And Heather and her work and I've done some similar work in patients who have Alzheimer's disease have found, again, inflammation is the trigger for that.

If we find the causes of that inflammation, we can treat them. And people can get well and they can recover from anywhere from somewhat to completely.

And so if your doctor has said, you have named the condition, I don't care what it is, and sorry, you're stuck with it, arthritis, for example, oh, you've got arthritis.

The picture that people have is of a damaged joint and it can't do anything with it. Okay, I'm stuck with that. And most people don't know that, again, inflammation is a play here.

Food allergy is an incredibly common component with people with arthritis. Can't count the number of people who have healed, meaning no pain, once they find out what they've been eating is bothering them.

And there's a type of treatment called prolotherapy in which you can inject the ligaments around the joint and strengthen them and tighten them so that again can remove the pain.

So even if you've been told you have arthritis and it's in your mind that, okay, I guess I'm decrepit and I'm going to go away and crawl and I'll drag myself out of bed and do this.

doesn't have to be that way. There are many, many, many things you can do for any condition that I can think of. So please do the research. Please dig into the integrative medical field because there are many, many answers that are simply not appreciated by conventional medicine.

As always, Dr. Nathan, you're opening up the realm of possibility, and there is so much hope in that. There's purpose and meaning and this directionality towards a better future, regardless of your diagnosis.

This in and of itself can be so healing for people, and yet there's work to be done, right? One of my favorite lines is from Suzuki Roshi, who wrote, You are perfect right now as you are, and there is room for improvement.

We can hold both, right? And it's the grace with which we do that that I think has a big impact on how much we, the quality of what we experience, right?

Yeah. such an invitation. Thank you so much for your time and always for sharing the wisdom that you have accumulated over the decades of experience that you've gathered.

It is so, so incredibly valuable. Your work has had a ripple effect. I am one of many doctors who have learned a lot from you and every person that you've healed, I know you've taken that you've learned from it.

There is no patient that you will turn away. You are always looking to help people, even those who other doctors have said that there's no hope for. And that is just that in and of itself is such an inspiring ideal to live up to.

Resources, Books, and Closing Reflections

And then your work has had this incredible ripple effect because you've helped other doctors at scale help other patients, right? And that is just this really beautiful example, again, of this intergenerational wisdom transfer that it can be not just in our families but also within our professional communities.

And I'm just so grateful to you because I know that it takes work and energy and time And you are someone who has been tireless, even through your own illness, you've been tireless in passing down that wisdom so that other people can benefit.

Thank you. My pleasure. Always fun to hang out with you, Heather. Thank you so much for listening to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. 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. Thank you for tuning into Dr. Talks. We hope today's

episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health.

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