The Deeper Causes of Hormone Imbalance in Midlife Women Transcript

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Introduction to Hormone Heroines

We have probably two generations of doctors who were not trained in hormones because we thought that they were highly dangerous for women, right? Based on flawed data, the medical system needs to play catch up very, very quickly.

I think I had read a statistic not that long ago that out of all of conventional OBGYNs, only 20 to 25% are actually trained menopause medicine. And that's only because they sought it out themselves.

That's startling. Do you feel like your hormones have turned against you? Trust us, you're not alone. We're Dr. Serena and Dr Heidi and on Hormone Heroines we explore all the root causes that are behind hormone imbalances and we teach you how to thrive through them.

Join us for real talk, expert tips and even a few laughs. Hello and welcome back to Hormone Heroines. Today we are going to be talking about when your body stops listening, the real root of hormone imbalance.

today we're going be to talking to Jenna Richardson, who is the founder of Princeton Integrative Health, co-host of the podcast Smoke, Mirrors and Menopause, and the creator of Energy-Led Leadership, a powerful approach that bridges neuroscience, physiology and identity to help women create real lasting changes.

Welcome, Jenna. We're so excited to have you here today. Thank you, I'm so happy to be here. Can you just because not everybody knows who you are, would you mind telling our audience kind of who are and how you got on the path that you were on today?

Yeah, so the first thing I say is I am not a doctor. Come from a medical family, my father's a physician, and my mom is a nurse. And I thought that I was going to be a Doctor.

Jenna Richardsonu2019s Background and Path to Integrative Health

I went off to Cornell University and pre-med and realized really quickly in my first semester that, I couldn't stand this, the sight of blood, this smell of formaldehyde.

and I got a D minus in Chem 101. So I, was like, okay, This is probably not my path. so I ended up with a degree in communications and business, And, went out into the world of international business and management consulting for about 15 years.

And it wasn't until I had my son, Carter, who's now 12, that I fell back into the world of health and medicine, because he had some health challenges when he was a baby, which took us through what I now call the revolving door of healthcare.

Coming from a background in management consulting, we weren't getting the answers we were seeking, and he actually was prescribed a medication that could have caused respiratory failure when was six months old.

So I was working mostly in the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry, diagnosing root cause issues. for very, very large organizations to save them millions, millions if not billions of dollars.

And I was like, why is our healthcare system not doing this? So that's kind of how I found like functional medicine and integrative health to start and co-founded alongside my father, Princeton Integrative Health here in Princeton, New Jersey.

Yeah, and from there just, you know, the evolution and growth and learning different aspects about not just

physical health, but also physiologic health and emotional health an energetic health.

And how those things are all woven together has really kind of carved my path over the last decade. That's how I got here. Okay, great. That is such a beautiful story.

But given all your experiences, it sounds like you work with so many women who feel like they're doing everything right, but still feeling off. What are you seeing that's being missed most commonly?

That's a loaded question. Yeah, I was just thinking the same thing. You know, it's a really interesting situation, especially, so I'm 48, almost, I'll be 49 this year.

And I didn't pay a lot of attention to midlife and hormone health until you're in it, right? And up until I was probably like 46, because I try to do all the right things.

I, was healthy, and I felt fine. Then all of a sudden, literally like overnight, the symptoms started kicking in and was like, what is going on here? I've always said in our practice, especially for women, because the majority of the patients, despite not intentionally marketing to this segment, but they tend to be women in middle age.

And I think what happens with women is we do such a great job of trying to do it all, have it, all and be at all for everyone up until a certain point where you can no longer fool your physiology.

And then stuff hits the fan, right? And that tends to happen right around that same time that hormones start to decline. It's been an interesting last several years because we went from kind of not talking about hormones and midlife and perimenopause and menopaus to the kind-of overturning of the WHI study 20 some years ago, to now everyone and their mother talking But I feel like it's become the wild, wild west.

And no one really has, I mean, can't say no-one. I think some people do have a handle on it. But there's just so much out there.

What Women Are Missing in Midlife Hormone Health

There's so many misinformation. It's like you're hearing from doctors, but you are also hearing it from online influencers. What's the truth here? What is really the true for women?

And there can be various versions of the truths I don't think one thing is right for everybody. But, you know, I just think women went from being kind of ostracized and not heard, not seen, and understood to now there being this overabundance of information and it just being overwhelming and confusing to navigate.

Yeah, definitely. And that's kind of why we formed our podcast, because we work in it. We're naturopathic doctors, so we've been working with natural hormones for years, even though, you know, cause we know how to read studies and we knew the WHI was not a great study in the first place.

So we'd been doing this for a years and now that everybody's starting to actually prescribe hormones, we're getting a lot of people come to us because they're feeling like crap because their prescribing it in wrong forms.

They're doing it wrong. It's a lotta stuff. Wild, Wild West. Exactly, exactly. And yes, there are TikTok trends for your hormones and I'm just like, oh my gosh, you guys, that is not going to work.

But you know, it is what it. So we just try to educate on what is true. Yeah. When somebody comes to you and says, I think my hormones are off. What's your lens?

What do you start with? Yeah. So I conceptualized this concept of like a health pyramid, which I came up with probably a few years ago, because what we do here in Princeton Integrative Health is it's root cause resolution, right?

We're fully functional. We are driving at the root causes of disease and dysfunction so that we can restore optimal health and well-being. Are hormones a thing and an issue for women?

Absolutely. But the thing that I always say is when hormones drop, the truth rises. So again, all the things that were lurking beneath the surface that you did such a great job at keeping under control for so long because estrogen is anti-inflammatory now hits the fan.

What we do differently is we take a full holistic picture, right? The intricacies with gut health. with brain health. You can't evaluate a woman's hormone health if you're not taking all of these other facets into consideration.

And not just that, establishing what I refer to as the foundations of health, number one. Hormones, whatever you are prescribing, whether it's synthetic, BHRT, some other type of natural compound, it is not a magic bullet.

There's no magic bullet, right? And so we have to do all the right things. And I think a big challenge, because when I view this pyramid, it's like physical health is the bottom.

Then you have physiologic health as the next level, then you emotional health, and then, you energetic health. Even though I viewed it as a pyramid because oftentimes, I feel like it is an ascension.

You have the physical before you can establish the others. They all cycle back into one another. So I think one of the challenges that we're facing is really just having midlife health being managed as like.

like a diagnosis, because that's not all it is, right? It's like an awakening. It a version 2.0, it's an evolution. So I think we have to take all these other things into consideration by peeling back that onion.

What is going on physically, but also what's going physically? What's gonna on emotionally, what going energetically? Do you like the person that you are now?

Root Cause Medicine and the Three Tu2019s

Because so often we become somebody that the world told us we should be and all of a sudden you wake up one day and you're like, wait a minute. Who am I?

What is this life? And is really where I want to be? So it's just so multifaceted. Yeah. I mean, like I said, we're naturopathic doctors. So we actually do have a pyramid and the foundations of health are on the bottom.

And so it all goes like that. With natriopathic medicine, it is integrative medicine. That's the OG of integrated medicine and so we know exactly what you're talking about because we constantly are dealing with gut health because gut help affects hormones.

And it affects the brain and it's like you have to do all of the things to get everything in homeostasis. So that's the point of naturopathic medicine and root cause medicine is getting back to homeo stasis, you know, so on that note of it all being interconnected.

You know, a lot of times when we're working with people and other doctors are working on people, we'll get everyone on the right protocol and the supplements and diet and they still, the workouts, all those types of things.

And they're still feeling stuck. I know what we start to address, but what's the next step that you go to when that's happening? So this has been my evolution in functional integrative medicine.

As I mentioned, you know, when we kind of founded Princeton Integrative Health, which we've, we're in our 10th year now, I really categorize the root cause health challenges into three key categories, what I call the three T's, triggers, toxins, and traumas.

Triggers and toxins where triggers are like viruses, bacteria, pathogens, kind the stealth stuff that lurks beneath the

surface that keeps you stuck from a health perspective.

Toxins, we all know, right? Like, unfortunately, evolution hasn't cut up with industrialization. So here we are. Um, and, but it was the last component.

It was that kind of trauma piece. And trauma can be a big T or a little T. Doesn't really matter. it's your perception of it. Right. I realized we were really good at the first two and not so great at last one.

So rather than going back and studying psychology, getting my PhD, I actually looked at some alternative options and I came upon clinical hypnotherapy and rapid transformational therapy.

Rapid transformatonal therapy is a modality that was coined by Marisa Peer 30 some years ago. She started as a hypnotherapist, but it basically combines hypno therapy with neuro-linguistic programming, with psychotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and neuroscience.

So it's a very effective methodology and a rapid, it helps people to move past kind of stuck stories and stuck feelings very, very quickly. So that's kind my area of expertise now is bringing that to the table.

To your point, we can do all of the physical and the physiologic stuff, but sometimes people just stay stuck. And what I find is that they stay in their stories.

They're stuck in an identity that was created well before they hit this point in their life. And again, they wake up and go, wait a minute, what? So there's, there is this aspect of almost like energetics that has to be brought into the conversation.

An aspect identity, that had to brought it into conversation, an aspect purpose and passion and potential. and next version of like who you want to be.

So I prefer to look at this phase in life, this midlife segment as like again, an awakening, right? An opportunity, a clean slate to really become the people that we desire to and who we're meant to, as opposed to like, who the world told us we should be Right.

That is beautiful. On that note, I just had some follow-up questions regarding the type of therapy that you're doing.

Nervous System Stress and Hormone Regulation

Yeah. You said that it can process things rather quickly and rapidly. Do you ever feel like sometimes things are processed too quickly or is there like things that come up in that realm?

I think there's so much that comes up that women just don't understand about themselves or how those things impact them. So I will say, I don' know that I would say too quickly, but maybe a slightly overwhelmingly like, oh my gosh, i can't believe that was stuck in my subconscious mind for four decades, right?

Or like five decades. And that's why I am the way that i am. Why I show up in marriage the I way I why am who I with my children or at work, So I think it can sometimes be a little bit surprising and overwhelming, but I don't know that the pace of it is necessarily the issue.

And then it's just the integration and the untangling of those discoveries that can be sometimes a bit complicated and complex. Right. And I mean, for our audience, we're basically talking about our nervous system right now.

Yes, exactly. How the nervous systems impacts kind of everything, like the body keeps the score, right? So your mind will keep it in your body and your bodies just hold it down.

So can you kind explain to our listeners how the system actually impacts hormones in a real like day-to-day way? Yeah, I mean, the nervous system impacts everything.

So we're going back earlier to gut health, but I think the thing most people don't realize is that we have this massive nervous that literally controls everything in our body from how we breathe to how blink our eyes to just our state of stress versus state well-being.

And when your body is in a state stress, chronic stress which many people experience now, I think it's probably the norm rather than the exception, unfortunately.

You know, back in the day, we used to experience stress as a survival mechanism because we were out hunting and something jumped out from a bear, jumped up from behind the tree or whatever, and you needed the fight or flight to get away.

But now it' like, you know the bad boss or, the rush hour traffic that you have to drive in every single day or the mortgage that have you to pay, right?

So it just, it chronic for all of us. And a chronic state of stress. doesn't allow the body to function in the way that it needs to. You know, hormone production can't happen when your body is in a chronic state of stress, which is why stress is a big contributor to things like infertility.

Women can get pregnant when their body's just chronically stressed because the last thing the bodies thinking about doing is procreating. It's thinking of survival.

Same thing happens in midlife. All of a sudden your ability to manage stress decreases. Because you had hormones during a period of time that were kind of allowing you to regulate a little bit better.

And as those hormones drop, you're less able to do that. My partner on the podcast, Smoked Mirrors and Menopause, we call it the I don't give an F era.

Because… Constantly say that, I tell my patients on, and I was like, here is my F basket, And I'm all out of them to give. So I am sorry, it's empty.

Yes. Yeah. So we're like, you're stepping into your, I don't give an F era because you know, your ability to like deal with nonsense, it goes out the window because just don t have the capacity anymore.

And the other thing that happens as you guys know probably better than, than I is physiologically, You know you have your adrenals and your your Adrenales actually are the backup mechanism for when your ovaries stop producing hormones.

so if you re already adrinally depleted, And your adrenals are like your major stress glands, I guess, right? They produce cortisol and all the other things that rev us up.

Once the ovaries stop producing, you fall back on the adranals, and the adrenal, if they're shot, they are shot. So, it's just, everything is interconnected.

And the nervous system is the foundation really of everything. One of the things we recognize and why I got into doing the work that I do is, When your body is in a state of stress, it can't heal.

It can heal, so we need to address the nervous system as the foundation of everything before we, It's as important as sleep. it's important, as poop. You know, the fundamental things that we talk about each and every day.

So I do a lot of work as well on nervous, system regulation. So you were mentioning within your work of like the hypnotherapy and all of that, that there's patterns.

So what are some of the subconscious patterns that you see that are connected to something as physical as hormone imbalance? Yeah. I mean, the patterns I see most frequently, especially with women are, I'm not enough.

Mm-hmm. And what I desire is not available to me. Yeah, I also like I'm in perimenopause. I am 47. Yeah. So I looked in the mirror and I didn't know who I was.

And I just like, is this what life is now? Okay. So it's, yeah, I definitely, definitely feel that for sure.

Subconscious Patterns and Identity Shifts

Yeah. And I think, you know, we, go through, a lot of us go though our life, especially as women, Especially as Gen X women. I don't know if you're Gen-X or Millennial.

Or right on the cusp. She's a Millenial. Okay. But I think as women, and it's interesting for me because I have a son who's 12 and I've a daughter who is eight, had kids a little later in life, but it is really interesting to watch their progression.

And especially with my daughter, because for so many of us of this generation, our worth was predicated upon what I refer to as performing, proving and pleasing.

And then again, you get to this, I don't give enough era and like all that, it goes out the window. So you're like, but who am I without that? So what we're talking about, the subconscious stuff and the nervous system regulation stuff, like the bigger evolution of that.

And it's a program and a brand that I'm launching now called the identity illusion, which is like if I was this person up until this point, There's a lot of work that has to go into that, all the unraveling, right?

All the coming to terms with like, oh my gosh, I did this thing for four to five decades, and that's not really authentically who I ever desire to be.

And now who do I desire it to moving forward? So it's very deep work. Yeah. Well, what's one thing that women are doing right now that's actually keeping them stuck without them realizing it?

Because they have to move through all this stuff, but I don't think we know that that is what is holding us back. We just know we feel different and we just that something is off.

Yeah, I think it's not looking at, like, the intricacies of everything. You know, it is just believing it about hormone shifting, that that's all it. I, think a lot of women lose themselves during this time, but also many women find themselves because they start answering the right questions.

I think just assuming, I mean, we have women who show up in our practice all the time, and I'm sure you do as well, where, you know, they went to their OB-GYN and complained about their symptoms or how they were feeling.

I just don't feel like myself. And a woman who was sitting in front of me who's crying told me that their female OBGYN told them to, that it's just menopause, suck it up.

Like those three words suck, it, up, which is just mind blowing to me. Probably a younger OB-GYN who hasn't gone through it yet. Exactly. We say the same thing.

Yeah. So, you know, I don't know if that entirely answers your question. I think what we can be doing better is obviously supporting women, asking the right questions.

My podcast partner, Dr. Liana Rodriguez, and I are actually launching something new called the Medio Movement, which is really predicated upon the fact that, for decades, women's midlife was really treated as like a private issue rather than something that we all evolve through, an evolutionary issue, right?

And I hesitate to call it an issue and opportunity, but we have, I think there's a billion plus women globally who are entering menopause right now, and most report feeling under-informed and unsupported and navigating it.

So we just need to empower women. We need the right resources. we need them to feel not so alone, because I think that that's a big feeling that we experience in this time is just this feeling of alone of like out of almost feeling out-of-control of our bodies.

And we needs to realize that, that is not the case. There are solutions and there is support. Yeah, I, it definitely is. And I think there's a lot of information out there now, like we talked about earlier.

I. One of the other problems going back to that OBJ one who just said, Oh, just suck it up.

Why Women Stay Stuck and Need Better Support

The other thing that needs to happen is there needs. A call to, you know, require C E's in new hormone research or require CE's and new BHRT or HRT, whatever it is, but I feel like We went to med school and we went into naturopathic med schools.

So we learned a lot about hormones. We learned lot more than normal, but I still feel like we were not prepared. Like when I started going through perimenopause, I didn't know what was really going on.

I did not take it apart. It took her looking from the outside to see, luckily she had more training in it. It needs more training in the doctor realm because people go to doctors to get help and if the doctors don't know what to do or what look for or expect or tell them to expect, it's not really doing that much good.

It's a call to arms that we need to learn more. Absolutely. We have probably two generations of doctors who were not trained in hormones because we thought that they were highly dangerous for women, right, based on flawed data.

I think, you know, the medical system needs to play catch up very, very quickly. And I had read a statistic not that long ago that out of all of conventional OBGYNs, only 20 to 25% are actually trained menopause medicine, and that's only because they sought it out themselves.

That's startling. Yeah, well, and we had an opportunity to speak with the Surgeon General last year at the New York Academy of Medicine. And we talked to her about it and she's like, yeah, we didn't learn hardly any of it.

She said that it's going to take female doctors to push for all doctors, to get more educated on all of this. Because not that male doctors don't care or don t want to understand, but they don s understand how huge of a life issue all of this transition and rebirth is.

And so she basically kind of told, she called us out and said, okay, you guys need to go out there and make sure everybody's learning and making sure that everybody is going to actually learn how to treat these women because we're not taught very well in medical school about menopause and perimenopausal and all the things that come with it.

Yeah, you're right. And I mean, speaking to the impact of that, the effect on the workforce and the economic aspect of life. We have some statistics based on this, on The Medio Movement, which state that there's $1.8 billion lost annually in workplace productivity due to unmanaged menopause symptoms.

75% of women experience menoppause with 25% reporting impact on their daily life and daily functions. you know, 60 to 70% reporting that it impacts their work.

And then a statistic, which I think is probably lower than reported one in 10 actually leaving the workforce based upon that. So as women have evolved and worked so hard through their careers, they get to a certain point where they're probably at the peak of performance, like ready to move into leadership positions and they can't.

They don't have the capacity. They leave. I can say from personal experience with patients, there's quite a few women who are considering leaving their job or feel like they just can't do their jobs anymore because of the

impacts of perimenopause and menopausal.

Yeah. We see that all the time. And I don't know about you ladies, but I always feel like if we had more women leadership, not just in like the corporate world, politics and everywhere else, like we would be a much more humane society.

So I think we need to go in the opposite direction. Yes. Well, just to wrap up for today for our listeners.

Closing Advice and Advocacy for Womenu2019s Health

primarily the women listeners out there who might feel overwhelmed and just don't know where to start. What would you want her to understand first on this journey?

That you're not alone. That what you are dealing with is not atypical. You know, there's many women, as we said, a billion women entering menopause. To be your own advocate.

to be your own advocate. You have to, you have have advocate for yourself, find the right people, your community, tribe, the practitioners who are willing to listen, to treat you as an individual and to see the big picture.

And I always tell people too, it's okay to get a second opinion, even if you love your primary care physician or your OBGYN, if your not getting help in the way that you need help, its okay, they're not going to be offended.

Yeah, or a third opinion or fourth opinion. That's their problem. All right, well, thank you so much for being on today. I think this has been another great conversation, especially in this much needed area.

So that has another episode. Thank you for bein' on and we will see you next time. Bye everybody. You know how us women are always just pushing through it and then when we go to find help, we're often not taken seriously or told, oh, that's just part of being a woman.

Yeah, We've lived through prioritizing everybody else and our own health falls to the wayside. That's why we started blossoming longevity by women or women.

We created programs that meet women where they are, addressing the root causes and all of the struggles that come with every stage of life. Like our vitality program.

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