Podcast Introduction and Guest Preview

Welcome to Hotness, the podcast that brings you practical tools to balance your hormones and rekindle connection, confidence, and desire in midlife and beyond.

I'm your host, Dr. Liz Lister. Hotiness is a safe space for honest conversations about menopause, sex, identity, love, loss, reinvention, and desire, because you can embrace your hotness at every age.

Welcome to Hotness, the podcast that brings your hormones, confidence, and desire back online. I am so happy today to share with you my conversation with Stefania Humphrey, osteopath based in the San Francisco Bay area.

She is a gifted healer. She's a British-trained medical osteopath. she treats complex presentations of various conditions, autonomic, immunological, nervous system disorders.

Her method is gentle hands-on approach of palpation and treatment. I have had personal experience of being healed by her wonderful hands. She cleared up hip pain that I went to orthopedists, pain management, chiropractic, physical therapy.

None of them made a lasting impact. And finally, I worked with Stefania and got incredible relief, it was really a mental relief. We talked a lot about the connection between stress and hormones and the nervous system and I am very delighted to share with you my dear friend and colleague, Stefania Humphrey.

Enjoy. Hi Stefana, welcome to Hotness. Hi, good morning. So delighted to have you here for this super fun conversation.

How Osteopathic Treatment Works

I want to start off by sharing with our listeners that you helped me after I spent probably about two years, I had a hip, really bad hip pain during the pandemic.

And it really made no significant dent and I finally made my way to you. I went outside my medical insurance and went to your and you quickly, within a few weeks, got me feeling dramatically better.

Can you talk a little bit about what it is that you do that's different than other type of body work? You can describe the osteopathic work that If you remember what you specifically did for me, I know it was a few years ago now, but it's been a lasting, huge healing for my.

Well, I'm so, so glad to hear that you're still feeling so much better with just, it was a couple of sessions I think that we did. To answer your question, i am privileged and so honored to be an osteopath.

I Think our profession is really beautiful. You know, just a quick background, we spend years feeling and palpating, meaning we learn medicine, We learn pathology, learn to diagnose, but we use our hands for all of those things.

And so if you can imagine, If you spend even just five, six, seven years, and at this point I'm 16 years in, using your hands to feel how the body is moving or where it's restricted, you can develop this kind of superpower, I would say, because that's all you do.

And I think that goes the same for any specialist in any field, right? So my specialty is that it is the hands-on manual osteopathic medicine, my way of being able to feel, understand what might be happening in that person's body.

So for you with the hip pain, there's a few different structural elements that played a role in I think you mentioned to

me once before, it's very subtle and gentle.

So as I'm looking at the body, I am looking subtleties in the way that you move, in way you stand, and the gravity is dispersed through your body whether you're standing or laying down.

And then taking all of that information and using my hands to gently move your bodies in a way it releases it is how we get those. subtle changes, very effective long term.

Absolutely different than chiropractic. Chiropractic is frequently more of the forced types of adjustments, which can have their role, but what you do is totally different from that.

It's not forced at all, I believe. Is that correct? That's one of the principles I would say that I work by and that my profession also strives for, which is we don't need a lot of force to get things to move in the position that we want them to, or we're more aligning with what the body wants and what intelligence of body is dictating.

And I agree there's a, there is a room for adjustments or more forceful things that need to do to the bodies. There are times when a rib is out or when we have a dislocation, so we are definitely in need of that.

So it's combination of those things. You talk about the root cause of pain and I know that you talk About stress as it goes into the body. This is something that I definitely have in common.

I've been sort of an avid reader of this Louise Hay her books on the metaphysical causes of dis-ease and illness So how do you incorporate that into your work?

If you can think of an example, someone who you know that stress is just playing an incredibly huge role in how she's feeling. How do approach that? What do what do do differently?

Yeah, I mean, you are asking a really beautiful question here, because this I think is the reason why most patients come to see me.

Stress, Nervous System, and Root Causes of Pain

They are a combination of stressed out, maybe an accumulation of stress has hit a point in their life where they're broken down, whether it's more physical or mental, a combination thereof.

So treatment wise, one is acknowledgement. I think sometimes patients, all of us, we go through our life not really understanding how much we're taking or holding.

And when you walk into the room with a practitioner like myself, you suddenly have space to reflect and go, Oh my gosh, I haven't processed a loss that I went through.

I have not had time to spend enough quality time with my kids in the last six months because I've been so distracted or busy, or I had an injury and I'm working through it and pushing through, and so all of that creates strength in our body and in nervous system.

So one is just acknowledging what a person has been through I think empathy plays a huge role in just being able to unravel And then acknowledge our strength, too, and our courage to come in to look for change or try something we haven't tried before.

To your point earlier, you tried everything that was recommended to you. You were like, yep, now I'm going to try to something that's foreign to me, right?

And take a risk there. common in both of our practices. People do as much as they can inside their insurance world and finally they just need to get the actual help they need and then actually get better.

Exactly and I do think that in time insurance can catch up to some of the modalities that we're doing but we might be on the more of a forefront edge of things changing or receiving patients in a way that they want to be received and the insurance system is just a little outdated still but it's catching up.

at least trying to. So, you know, I think back to the nervous system, one of the kind of terms I like to use is tired and wired. You can come in just frazzled, exhausted at the end of their hope maybe for something that will help them with their pain or discomfort.

And so treatment wise, you know, as we said before, it's very subtle, very gentle and just acknowledging the nervous system being in a state of fight or flight.

It's not had an opportunity yet to completely let go. Again, there's some vulnerability there too, right? Absolutely. It's being brave, allowing yourself to feel vulnerable in a safe container with a practitioner you trust, whether it's me or a different osteopath or with you, Dr.

Liz, and allowing for that starting point of healing to occur. Yes, because it's embedded in the body. I talk about that with my patients a lot, which is my practice is primarily really busy midlife women.

And so we handle things, we can handle it. We cope, We have all these coping strategies and mechanisms, but the bodies still absorbs it, the bodys still takes the stress on.

Right? And that's probably what I end up referring people to you. is because we're doing a lot of good work and she's feeling better, but we know that something still, I mean, the words that's coming to my mind is lodged.

Lodged in the body. Does that resonate for you? Totally. It's lodging and you're sort of dislodging. Totally. And it's synergistic, right? There's a symbiotic relationship between you and I and some other practitioners, too, play a massive role in helping a person heal and recover from something, specifically around the nervous system.

So when we are kind of run down and depleted, I can sometimes feel it in the body physiologically. There is a vitality to the And there is sometimes either, like again, the kind of frazzled energy that a person can hold when they're running on empty or they are just performative, high producing type A types.

They have a different type of energy in their body and another type might be more subdued, heavy, perhaps in a state of grief or depression. And neither of those match the sort of healthy vitality that we want.

In either of these extremes, because they can become very extreme, The physiology needs some support. And so that's where I, you know, often will work with you and have people and, there's patients with all kinds of conditions, laxity issues, compression, tension issues arthritic pains, and they all need a slightly different combination of care and support physiologically, which could be hormonal to help them find that inner balance again.

Training, Background, and Manual Osteopathy

My angle on all of it is the hormonal environment to optimize the cell function and muscle function. So that, of course, the work you and I do is definitely very symbiotic.

People might hear your lovely accent. I adore your accent from Europe. Do you feel you can say whatever you would like about being from there? But I'd like to ask you about how that influenced your training and what differences you see between your trading and people maybe expect in the US.

A little bit more about you for us. Yeah. So I was born and raised in Belgium and my father was from the US and he ended up in London. And so I grew up and London, so my accent is this kind of blend from different parts of the world.

I feel American, Belgian, and a little bit of British kind all sprinkled together. The education in the UK is really good. It's high quality and I am very grateful for having studied osteopathic medicine over there.

Fundamentally, we're very traditional in training medicine through the hands-on approach, which is the original idea behind osteopathic medicine. In the US today, the DO degree is not dissimilar, but it's definitely become very, very medical.

I think, to be honest, it always was, that there was a heavy emphasis on the hands-on medicine, which is seemingly becoming a little bit less than it was before.

And so a lot of DOs now graduate college in the U. S. and will specialize as surgeons, oftentimes going to repetitive medicine. Same as MD. Yeah, you'll have a primary care studio who may or may not do any kind of hands-on osteopathic work.

And so the distinction to be made is if anybody were to see a manual osteopath who's European trained like myself, we wouldn't be doing any primary or any prescriptions for the patient.

We would focus exclusively on our skill set to manually treat the body and then guide them with what we're listening or what were finding in the person.

I love that. That's amazing. Let's say a little bit more. We've been mentioned our clientele that we have in common. Of course, my main clientel are women in midlife, and I know there are some men as well.

And I have a wide variety. You basically take care of all ages. I believe, right? Yep. So I have another osteopath in my practice who likes to work with women's health and children.

Kind of a slightly more pediatric focus and another Osteopath who works with us likes surgical care, pre-post-surgery. I'm sure, Liz, you see as well a lot of women who've gone through, breast cancer, mastectomies or hysterectomie, all kinds of gynecological issues there.

And I see a wide mix, mostly, I would say, 30s to 60s. I love working with transitions. I loved working the transition of the different stages of being a man, the difference stages being woman.

Menopause has a big, big attraction right now because women do experience these cliff changes that happen in their bodies and their minds. And so I love to work with all people kind of going through those big life changes.

Yeah, that is great. I would like to talk a little bit more about that. So women in midlife, hormonal changes, stress stored in the body, chronic tension, big life changes.

Job changes family household changes just all sorts of things going on. How Do you specifically work with women going through all of that to help release what they're holding in their bodies to release that?

Say a little bit more about what you do in that particular environment. Yeah, the first thing that comes to mind when you ask me that question is With any change, we're contracted.

Womenu2019s Health, Menopause, and Life Transitions

We don't want to let go. I think this is a huge lesson in life for all human beings is embracing, accepting, and letting go, And it is so scary. A small child who has to- I'm painful.

It can be painful, yeah. Very. a small child who has to learn to stand or walk when it was comfortable, he, she was, comfortable being tended to. That's analogous for all the changes that we go through as adults too.

So specifically with menopause, I see women who were influenced by what we think beauty is and what believe attraction is, and where our worth is. And often our work is in our fertility years or fertile years.

Most according to society. Then we integrate that in our own minds. Exactly right. And you and I can intellectualize that and say it's not true and we can be different.

But still, I think we're all living with a degree of perception of what we think success, beauty, or thriving means. And there's a perception that with menopause, we just go downhill.

So what I see a lot of is women coming into my practice. confused, frightened, contracting, holding onto an idea of what their body wants was exactly like really tight.

Just picturing it. Exactly. And you can imagine when we're gripping tight and our muscles are tight, and we are frowning in our face, we don't feel good.

We develop nerve pain. we have multiple joint issues. I was speaking with someone not so long ago who said she's scared to move now because she is aching more since she started her menopause years.

And so she said, now I'm worried my life is going to start shrinking because I am feeling less capable and less confident. I get emotional because that's the whole point of my world.

This podcast is for women to know that that is not necessarily our destiny. I agree. And I do want more women to hear this message, to know that one, we're living longer.

We have access to more healthy things than ever before. So we can take advantage of more things like that, whether it's diet or the way we care for ourselves, the ways we speak to ourselves and taking advantage supplements, hormone therapy, you know, these are all the things in your realm of support that we can rely on and make us feel really good.

And then there's the sort of perhaps more spiritual shift that happens where we let go of our childbearing years of our youthfulness to some extent. I was also reading recently that we tend to be a little more go-getters in our younger years, in 20s, 30s or 40s even.

You know, we're holding families together or we are working full-time or doing both of those things. And then come menopause, our kids are older or if we don't have kids we have different responsibilities.

This is a time in a woman's life I really believe we can shine. Right? I totally agree. Yeah. And so how do we now reframe menopause into a completely different phase of our life where we are perhaps even more giving, more sharing, and more confident than we were even before?

I love that so much, that is just beautiful. I'm really taken by something you said earlier about the vitality that you can feel in the body, you're saying that can you feel it in someone else's body.

That's how I understood it and from having worked with you, so I just want to clarify. I mean, that's just so incredible. And that, what I am here for.

I'm here, for people to be able to reconnect with themselves and reconnect, with that experience. So that is absolutely amazing. Anything else that you want to say about the work that do?

What's different and unique? Your practice is very unique. You have different practitioners as part of another osteopath, but you also have other angles that are part, of your practice.

Yeah, correct. Yeah. I'll speak a little bit more to kind of individual and personalized care, because in the realm of feeling vitality, it is different for every single person.

Some patients have very high energy and they perform well at that level, and some patients are just more chill. You know, some people are more like, I don't have a lot of ambition and I do not want to necessarily do certain things.

And so vital is also on a continuum of Everyone is different. And that also goes to say with, I have some women who come in and you can feel if their estrogen or progesterone is too high or too low, they don't feel well.

There's a quality in the tissues that you pick up on that is not aligning with their best self. whereas there are some women who do really well maybe with higher estrogen levels, and you can speak to that Dr.

Liz Moore, right, is like, oh, you know, maybe testosterone works for some people really in higher levels and yet in some woman they're like no, that's too much for me.

So it's really being able to fine tune what is feeling your best and what vitality for the individual. I love that. That's like my whole reason for being, I'm so excited.

And I already knew that I loved you, so, with that, it was already established. In regards to my practice, just to answer that question, I really value the mind as well as the body.

I think those of us who suffer with deep opinions or right and wrong or judgments about life often suffer quite a bit, you know, and it can manifest as physical pain or a closed posture or isolation withdrawal.

Personalized Care and Building a Support Team

And so I really value working with psychiatrists, psychologists, different forms of somatic body workers, therapists. I did a lot of training in that field and in in the realm combining kind of mind, body, emotional pain, And so, you know, there's various people and specialists as well as orthopedists, physiatrists.

Primary care providers who I collaborate with and my whole team here collaborates with a nice village, including you. Right, exactly. It's a gorgeous village.

Who else is on your team? So I right now have a strength and mobility coach and I'm hiring for more of those. So we really focus on once the body feels aligned and you're healthy, you know, get strong, lift weights, learn how to move well so that you don't have any injuries.

any more moving forward. And it's now just the team of osteopaths that we're focusing the practice exclusively on osteopathy. Then we have our URLs very close by.

So in the same location, within just a few mile radius, we a team psychologists and some body workers and somatic coaches too. Beautiful. That's absolutely amazing.

And it's an integrative model that I hopefully will become more, it becoming more popular, but it really needs to get covered by people's insurance. But for now, we're going to focus on helping the people that we help, because we know that do it more quickly than the regular medical world that's out there.

If someone wants to reach you to work with you, what is the best way to connect with Yeah, the best way would be through email. So the practice email is contact at b-wellcollective.com and our phone number as well.

You can call or text us. Wonderful. Yeah, that's on the San Francisco Bay Area. And I will make sure that that is in the show notes so that people have those.

Connecting to Inner Hotness

I want to wrap up with a question that I always ask each of my guests, which is personal. What is one way that you personally connect to your own hotness?

Your own personality? That's a great question. There is, so I have a very spiritual practice and so through meditation and through being by myself, I get to change my posture in the abundant being that I believe we all have access to.

And you can tell I'm smiling as I am doing it. Yeah, absolutely. Meditation. Like radiant. You're radiant, yes. Changing my posture, meditation, and you know, just making this internal shift from being critical to being self-

loving.

So it's a daily practice. But that's how I connect with my internal hotness. I love that so much. That is absolutely beautiful. You are beautiful inside and out.

Thank you so. Of course, I knew I was going to enjoy our conversation and I will look forward to getting to see you again soon. Yes, me too. Thanks for listening to Hotness.

Help more women find these practical tools by liking, sharing, and following the show, as well as leaving a review. As a gift for listening, go to drlizmd.com forward slash hotness for your free midlife guide filled with powerful support for you mind, body and soul because you can embrace your hotnes at every age.