Introduction and Guest Background

– Hello. Hello everyone and welcome back to the medicine of Mindset summit. I am your host, Dr. Anita Jackson and I am so honored to bring to you, another amazing expert to talk to you about everything that has to do with your mindset. And so joining me today is Dr. Jamie Kunkel who is a amazing doctor when it comes to understanding Lyme disease, the placebo effect, everything you need to know in that area.

And so Dr. Kunkel, thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to spend time with me today. So we have a fantastic conversation. – I'm excited, it's a pleasure. Thank you for having me.

– My pleasure. So would you do me a favor instead of me just reading your bio? I always want people to hear it from you to connect to you. Would you talk a little bit about who you are and how you show up in the world?

– Yeah, no, I appreciate that. I know I always feel like I need to like continually update my bio, you know, whatever my identity is, I feel like it changes and you know, evolves over time, so to speak, so. But yeah, a little bit about me, you know, I'm about 10 years a decade now and into practicing medicine, I specialize a lot in complex chronic disease syndromes.

I didn't start out there entirely, I ended up there, you know, for various reasons, I went to school, medical school to be a naturopathic physician uh and I also ended up learning Chinese medicine, traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese herbal medicine as well. I've always had a fascination with natural therapies. I went to school, I got my bachelor's of Science and neuroscience so study the brain a lot um and a lot of it's you know it's just an interesting thing to study the brain, you know, kind of right off before I even entered medical school, you know, I just realized there's just so much we don't understand about the human body and its complexities and is a good catalyst I think a good foundation so to speak to enter the you know the field even of natural medicine and just you know understanding there's more, you know the the science is so important but there's just more to the world and just the science and there's like a relative art to medicine and how you work with people and how you talk to them and how you help to heal them and everything, you know it doesn't mean I was like you know just learning you know how to manipulate them with their brain or something but you know just how to how to be present with them, how to listen to them and how to how to learn from them and how to help you know have them help me help them and everything as well.

Understanding the Placebo Effect

So anyway it was really cool to study a lot of the traditional medicine systems too because you know a lot of that was very present about treating the whole person, understanding the connectedness between the different systems, you know, mind and body, you know, everything, environment, emotions, all of it, So yeah, so I just, you know, kinda went on that path and it's been exciting and you know, I wouldn't have it any other way, it's, it's been a wonderful experience and I've just been learning more and more and um you know, I consider myself, you know, partially integrative too, I do, you know, a lot of work with conventional medicine when I need to, but you know, I just, you know, try to know when people try to know what people need at any given time and just have a lot of ways in which I can work with them, you know, depending on who they are, what, what works best for them, you know. So that's kind of a little bit about me kind of in a nutshell, I suppose. So, although, you know, we can move on, yeah, and I'll be, I'll love to talk more about it as we go, – I love this because you have a real holistic approach to really helping someone be whole, be healthy and be well and since we're talking about mindset, I know that you're gonna go rich into the brain aspect, the Chinese medicine, this is gonna be phenomenal. I'm excited to actually learn more from you.

So let's have this conversation and you know, you have a lot of expertise around the placebo effect, what is that and why is this important for us to understand?

– Yeah, placebo is an interesting thing because I feel like, you know, people think about, they're like, oh, that's just,

you know, sort of fake, feel good medicine, like, you know, my naturopathic medicine and even Chinese medicine has been, you know, called placebo sort of in a negative connotation so many times, you know, so a lot of people are like, well, does it really mean?

And if you're a researcher, you're like, oh, I know placebo is good, it's a it's a control, it's a way to sort of understand how the therapy, you know, works and how the intention of the therapy works sort of on the other end, like if you tell somebody that you're going to give them something for pain, Just telling them that they're gonna get something for pain actually works, you know, in some ways and but you're trying to actually evaluate a chemical.

But anyway, to go back further, the term placebo, I guess, you know, the earliest, you know, history of it is probably about the 13th or 14th century and originally it's, it had a whole different meaning, you know, it had a little bit of, and I won't get into that meaning kind of with the catholic church and sort of, you know, some of the semantics of that, you know, that gets into a lot more in depth, you know, concepts and Catholicism and I'm not personally catholic, but I won't when I'm here to talk about Catholicism, but later it kind of started to be associated with more of a flattery or flattering effect, you know, like somebody that was really yeah, I mean kind of kind of not necessarily in a negative spin, but you know, there was sort of a power in being a Flatterer being somebody that was like, you know, suggestive in a in a positive way I think, you know, and you know, that that could have, you know, beneficial effects, it didn't have necessarily negative connotation, but it was kind of just, you know, sort of an interesting piece. So it wasn't until like the 18th or 19th centuries, probably closer to the 19th century that it started to kind of come into science and therapy and therapeutics and you know, whatever the, you know, drugs and and chemicals and whatever else.

And that's when they were just sort of, you know, they also realize because everybody sort of realize too that you could give somebody some substance with, you know, little to no inherent, you know, value sugar pills or whatever homeopathy started, you know around those times too, and I'll I'm not, you know, I'll get into homeopathy later because it's not entirely placebo as it stands by definition, although many people see it that way.

But let's just say, you know, yeah, we realize that certain things just through the power of suggestion um would work really well like for pain especially, you know, so that's that's kind of you know, evolved later into sort of the standard of scientific evaluation, the double blind placebo controlled trial, you know, like just you know, just not trying to take the once again separate the medicine from other aspects of the therapy and that kind of, you know, where it brings us today, so, you know, so most of the time, whenever you talk about placebo these days in conventional medicine, you really mostly talking about research unless once again you're trying to label something that you don't, you know, think does anything or you know or know SIBO, which which is like another term that that sort of suggests that there's maybe like some harm in it as well, like it either you know, it does nothing and it may also like have a negative effect on the person or something like that, so most people say placebo, they don't say no SIBO, but whatever. So yeah, so as it stands right now, like from my perspective, you know, maybe I'll get it if it's okay to get into that or yeah, placebo can be very valuable uh for for my medical practice to and just you know, helping helping people heal because you know there is a lot of science in understanding people's conditions evaluating them treating them, but then there's this other stuff that we don't always fully understand and uh basically if you just, you know, run a patient through the ringer, you know, four or 56 patients an hour spending five minutes each with them. You know, you could give them the most magical, you know, fairy dust drug treatment that you could possibly think of and you're not necessarily going to have as much success as when you, you know, spend time really talking to them about the treatment and and you know, sort of, you're, you're in a sense sort of like, you know, potentizing the treatment through that and it's not that you're necessarily lying to them or like saying, oh yeah, my treatment's gonna cure your cancer or something like it's not, it's not so much like that, it's it's kind of more like you're telling, you know, you're getting them into agreement with your treatment to some extent, you're educating them, you're kind of telling them that the treatment is going to be helpful for them and you're, you're sort of once again meeting the treatment to something that they are, you know, interested in our agreement with, you know, not you're not just like forcing something on them and through the process of like it starts with the doctor, it starts with the doctor patient relationship, the practitioner patient relationship and you know, just creating a very um you know sort of positive rapport trust trust, you know, stuff like this and then then then, you know, when you're giving them a therapy, you know, you might might be really telling them like, hey, this this therapy is going to help your body, it's going to help, you know, balance these these particular, you know, symptoms or emotions or other things like this and, you know, there's there's sometimes even like, there's a lot that we don't understand

about, about these therapies, you know, but there's a, there's a lot of, there can be a lot of power in them and, you know, maybe I say my other patients have seen, you know, benefits here, that has a very strong tradition in the Chinese medicine system, it has a story sometimes and all that sort of in a sense, potenties is the treatment. So you can see um and I don't, I don't technically give people the sugar pills, I mean, I don't do that really. It's like, it's just sort of in a sense, helping to the patient to accept the treatment that you're suggesting to them and that could be any, any number of things.

Using Placebo Principles in Practice

It doesn't have to be a particular substance, like an herb or, you know, a pill or even a drug, It's just the process of, you know, um working with the patient learning who the patient is meeting them, where they are in their healing process and tailoring treatments to in a way that they understand and that they accept in their body to the best extent you can, so that's that's the general overview and I probably drove deeper into it than I should have. But you know, we'll come back to more of those concepts as we go. – Actually, the psychologist in me absolutely loves this because it kind of relates to what happens in the therapy room when I'm working with the client years ago. And sometimes just the idea of having someone else who really understand the body, soul and spirit too agree or to just hear them see them understand that automatically starts to change how their brain functions, how their body functions. And so that could be the placebo effect you're talking about as well, correct? – Yes, that could be part of it.

Yes. So yeah, so we're doing it all the time. I think a lot of us are and you know, I don't try to pick on, you know, the conventional model of like I said, the four or five patients now so much because there's plenty of people that in that time to can be very personal and very present with an individual and uh I think you know when you trust that person, if it's kind of the classic like you know, family doctor type experience, like I trust going to my doctor, I think he's a great person, I think you know, he you know, even if he doesn't have all the time in the world, he explains things to me and you know, I feel like I know that he's going to help me or he's at least having a strong intention of helping me and you know, we're all doing it all the time whether we believe, whether we call it that or not, but so you know, so what I was trying to say is that you know, the term placebo, we are all participating in it, I think if we work in this field in some capacity or another, but we don't have to think of, it always has such a you know, negative negative thing or that we're doing something fake or that we're leading the patient too much in a sense because yeah, I mean I suppose you could try to put a salesperson like snake oil sort of, you know, you know, connotation on it or something like that like yeah, sure, I think, I think intention is very important, like if you're just trying to sell somebody something, you might be using placebo and they may be feeling better, but you're actually like the intention is not there, that you know, you're just trying to maybe take take money from them or get them to buy into something and that's not what I'm really talking about. Be clear, it's, it has to do with the intention of the practitioner as well and so yeah, there are probably still like negative aspects of placebo even in this day and age because everybody, you know, a lot of people know that, you know, working in psychology um a lot a lot of people that take advantage of people know a lot about psychology, they're very good at manipulation and stuff like this, so you know, but you know, I don't think it has to always be seen that way, It doesn't have to be seen as black and white. That's really what what I'm getting at is that you know these these types of experiences are not black and white but they are very powerful and they do help us help us all heal and you know, I have a lot of benefits in the world as it stands. – So I'm a little curious, so this is a psychologist to me kind of listening to what you're sharing in regards to the medical aspect, whether it's Chinese medicine or the general idea of conventional idea of medicine, how does the placebo effect impact someone's mindset and how they live their life on a daily basis. So let's say you've got that person who has this medical issue cancer and their mind is now overwhelmed there and how how do we use this as a part of their life and how does it show up in your practice when you're working with your clients on a regular basis?

– Yeah, that's a good, that's a good question and and and maybe I can clarify what what you're asking specifically, but.. – It may be a part of question, how is showing up in your practice, because obviously there's a huge phenomenal, how are you using this on a regular basis in your practice and then when you're using this, how do you see it change this person's thought patterns, emotional patterns, their sense of how they're going to deal with this issue if they don't know what the next steps are. – Yeah, sure.

No, that's fair because it's complicated and I do treat a lot of complex crime diseases. I don't do as much work with

cancer specifically, but you can use any of these other examples just as well. It's like when you come in so overwhelmed with your diagnosis, whatever it may be or diagnoses in a lot of these cases, you've been through the wringer, maybe seen several doctors, there's a lot of medical trauma and various things.

It's almost like a negative, you know, the trauma response if you want to call it, that is like the opposite of what the placebo piece really is, is that you don't think anything is going to work for you anymore, you know, and it's a sense of hopelessness kind of coming into that experience.

And I think all of us have our own way of maybe navigating this and I think this is why some of us are drawn to, you know, complex crime disease treatments and or other, you know, even mental health, you know, it's very difficult for a lot of reasons for a lot, you know, it's not for everybody, like not everybody wants to, you know, deal with that, but to create a very safe space, you know, for those people to come in, you know, to kind of um start that process at a place of, you know, trust and you know, and giving them the space and everything like this that they need uh can, you know, in educating them once again, I think it's very important to to spend the time really listening to their story entirely and going through that whole process and, you know, starting to educate them about their illness and really give them a better understanding of their body and everything. And so it's hard for me to articulate specifically, but there's a process where you can kind of start to change that thinking, you know, even in that first visit and you can tell how the affect of the person is coming in and how they leave if you've succeeded with that.

And some of us, I don't know, like I said once again, I don't, I don't know if they want to form, it's not a formula, I don't think about it, it's just, you know, it's once again it's just all these different moving parts like being present, listening to people, you know, engaging with them, you know making eye contact with them, which I'm always great at, but you know, being present at the moment. And and just, you know, feeling like there's somebody there that's that's listening to them and you're kind of unraveling some of those blockages, those those those traumas and stuff like that as you go and you're not healing that completely, but you're just reframing their experience and you're kind of opening them up.

So yeah, that's the best way I can say it. It's a process as it stands it. – Same thing with me when I'm working or when I was working with any kind of client who's dealing with some sort of emotional mental health relationship trauma sometimes. Just just being able to say, I I understand that this is hard, I recognize that this is painful and I know that you talked to all the people you talk to, but let's see if I can bring a different approach.

I love that. You said the word refrain, That's a psychologist favorites words, Let's reframe everything so that helps to move into the next level. I think that's amazing how can we be more successful and balancing standard um evidence based practice in our individual living systems.

Reframing Illness and Restoring Hope

– Yeah, that's a good question because the standard as it stands standard is that they want those, you know, fancy studies before things, you know, are implemented fully into conventional medicine and into conventional practice and the standards of practice, which, you know, I'll get into that sometime with standards of practice, how it's shifting from community standards to sort of like these broad standards, but a lot of it is based on these, you know, peer review, double blind placebo controlled trials.

And not of it all of it is not the history of medicine, a lot more of it was based on patterns, observational pieces maybe what we call anecdote now, which isn't, you know, maybe another conversation for another time, anecdotes not always evil either. It's like placebo, you know, like it's okay to talk to other doctors that are in your field, like right now we're learning about long covid and it's okay to to talk to them and understand what's working and what's not within their patient populations and then to use that information, to you know, better your practice and better the formula.

And in traditional Chinese medicine, it was kind of much the same way. It was pattern differentiation and observing patterns and involving patterns of understanding over 3000 plus years and really just trying to to see humans kind of at a basic level and how they operate and where their imbalances lie and you know, using that to to better our understanding of, of what therapies are good and what therapies are not so not so awesome. And so, you know, on

that, on that note, it's kind of a tough tough game because once again, they want that standard of, you know, does does this compare?

Does this you know, does this look does this look different than placebo? But I feel like we need to kind of think of it a little deeper than just that.

Whenever we're trying to really validate medicine and validate, you know, scientific understanding and everything, so I think that's what I was trying to get at with that with that sort of arrangement is, you know, placebo is not bad. And beyond that, there's other ways in which we can operate within a living system to succeed in practice and we don't need to just, you know, separate placebo from the entire therapeutic process as it stands. I guess that's kind of what I'm trying to get at. – It sounds like what you're doing is reframing it. Totally reframe the whole entire idea of it and how it applies to us medically and how it applies to our own life and the way we feel, think and live our lives?

– Yeah. Yes. – God, I love it. All right, so I'm asking, here's my final question for you. Is there anything else you feel that really needs to be said in regards to the medicine of mindset and what you teach and what you talk about and what you do, anything else you feel you need to just make sure everybody needs to hear before we finish our conversation together? – Yeah, it's a good question.

What's said that hasn't been said as it said, I'm sure there's something my mindset is just so incredibly important, you know, and I think I just try to empower, you know, patients out there may be listening to people out there, like, you know, whether they're doctors or not, you know, we all have, we all need help from time to time. You know, none of us are immune from that, find a practitioner, find a person, find a clinic, find a community, you know, that that really resonates with you, that really, you know, supports you or hears you or you know, and it's not always easy. So you have to sometimes, you know, kind of shop around for that too as it stands.

But your mindset of medicine and wellness and self care and everything is just so important and it doesn't all have to be bad, like even if you've been burned 1000 times, you can once again reframe that experience and in turn a new, you know, like don't lose hope, I think in in that arrangement because you can find people that can help you that can hear you, that can work through your illness and work through your, you know, your ailments that whatever they may be and help improve your quality of life.

And so it's just such a foundational thing. And I think, you know, the negative mindset as it stands, you know, like, either it's like I said, the hopelessness or it's the, you know, I don't trust doctors, or I don't trust people like, you know, or, you know, nothing is going to work for me anymore.

I've tried everything. It's not easy to take that on alone. So, you know, don't don't give up, because if you're just gonna, you know, because if you just want to, like, I'm just gonna do this all myself now, we're humans, we're we can't do things alone entirely.

I mean, we can try, but not the only way, like I said, you know, find your people, you know, and and once once you can get into a better, you know, mindset, there anything can happen still.

Like, it's, you know. – What I love about what you just said is in a lot of ways, you're giving people the opportunity to take their power back. You know, if they've talked from what they've gone through one experience to the other, they've talked from one person to another, you're basically saying, you get to make the decision on what happens next.

And if you're saying in that arena of positivity and not giving up hope, and even if it's really difficult go find your people go find your community will find the doctor, there's a doctor out there who wants to help you get, well keep pushing towards that, that's giving them their power back and that's a huge part of their minds, right? – Well said yes definitely.

That's what I'm saying. Yeah, we need to take our power back. You know, we do as individuals as you know, community, everything, you know, we have the ability to do that.

So don't give up but it's very important you know, you will get better with if you can get that foundation that you know, your ability to heal is amplified. It won't take time but it's just you know, and it's healing of the spirit too. It's not just, you know, not just the physical body.

Taking Back Power and Finding Support

– What you're landing on now I think with everything that we've gone through over the past 2.5, almost three years if there's ever a time to really focus on how you're thinking, how you're feeling, where your power is who you're connected to now.

It's like for such a time as this now, is the time to make this a non negotiable and really understanding and taking your power back and how you live your life and how you're doing wellness and your money and your relationship, all that stuff comes together.

– Yeah, totally. It's true. Yeah, it's one piece of a bigger possible of finding balance, you know? And you know, that's what we always talked about in the traditional Chinese medicine system.

I really love that. everything's just about balance. It's all broken down into yin and yang, you know, all day long. But you know, just founded by imbalance, you know, by you know, one thing being too excessive for one thing being too deficient, you know, and all of our systems need to need to find that place and I think our mind is is one of the more difficult ones to work with were just we were over thinkers too.

We you know, our human brain is a, you know, it's just it's a hard one sometimes to crack. And there's a lot of distractions and as I said trauma, like even just collective trauma right now pandemic and everything inclusive.

That is I think kind of setting us back a little bit. So yeah, it's not an easy work, but you know, don't give up, like I said. – I love it, don't give up. Well Dr. Kunkle, thank you so much for taking time out of your schedule and being here with me today.

And if people wanted to get in contact with you, how would they go about doing that? – Oh yeah, you can find me, I'm working with Gordon Medical Associates in San Rafael California. So you can find us on the web, I think it's GordonMedical.com I believe. And yeah, I'm still, you know, taking new patients, you know, I'm quite busy, I still find time to try to, you know, get people in if they need help.

And yeah, you can find us online easily. I'm Jamie Kunkle and yeah, that's where you find me. – Awesome. I love it. Thank you. And I know everyone was able to receive some amazing information that supports the medicine of their mindset.

So thank you for your time. Thank you Everybody for watching. Have a great evening.