Heart Rate Variability and the Opening

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So that tells you some information, but that's like saying the Average Note in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, is la. There's not really no music there.

The real story happens from beat to beat, to be to, be, To beat, to beat. And that is the rhythm, that's the heart rate variability. Hi, and welcome to The Balancing Point.

I'm Dr. John Needers and I am here to make traditional Chinese medicine, functional medicine and integrative health simple, practical and fun. So you can restore balance, boost vitality and enjoy a healthier life every single day.

Hi, this is Dr. John. I want to welcome you to another episode of The Balancing Point. Today I'm really looking forward to interviewing Yolanda Calderon for many reasons.

One, I feel very, very highly about her work, but also we've known each other for almost two decades, somewhere around there.

Introducing Yolanda Calderon

And so it's been quite a ride. And, so I can personally vouch for what Yolanda does. She's a board certified health and wellness coach. doing this is really important.

You know, health coaching has become a very hot thing these days. If you go outside, walk down the street and throw a rock, you'll hit three health coaches.

But, right, is it someone that really has the background and the experience to really move you forward. So I really like Yolanda's work. She also does body-centered therapies, functional medicine coaching.

And what I find really important is nervous system regulation practices. That's one of the big things that we see in our practice is massive nervous-system dysregulation.

so she practices that to help people embody resilience and purpose in all areas of life. Uh, she helps individuals access calm clarity under stress, build enduring habits for physical and emotional wellbeing, and step into leadership from a grounded coherent state with decades of experience and a warm personal coaching style.

And I can vouch for that. Yolanda works with clients and navigating health goals, life transition, uh, demands of high stakes decision-making. So thanks for being here YOLANDA.

Oh my God, I'm so honored to be with you today, John. Well, thank you. That's very sweet. that's really awesome. And I think the topic that you're going to talk about today is staying resilient when life heats up.

and boy, do we need that. Yeah, life is heating up in so many ways these days.

What Resilience Means

You know, and I tell a lot of people will come in and they watch too much news and are really stressed out about it. But even if I told them not to watch the news, they don't.

Still, there are around hundreds of other people that are stressed. And all you have to do is drive through Alameda and see the insanity of the way people drive.

I mean, it's crazy out there. If I was out on Sunday yesterday, a beautiful day. driving through town and three or four people just couldn't wait their turn and would cut in in front of people.

And they probably didn't even have anywhere to go. It's just that stress that builds up and they just don't know what to do with it. So help us. Help us Yolanda.

Absolutely. That stress is keeping us from our higher thinking. In so many ways, I'm going to talk about resilience, which is what I consider to be that inner battery that we all have.

And when your battery is full, you have patience, You can listen better. You have higher cortical thinking, higher processing, but When your battery is empty, that's when you're strung out and stressed out, and you are running a stoplight and don't even know why, right?

And so what I help people do is recharge that battery and help them regain resilience. And in the leaders that I coach, resilience shows up as the ability to stay grounded under pressure.

to recover quickly when things do go sideways, and also just to stay calm and focused when you could be reactive. So that's what I teach. That's awesome.

Yeah, that resilience is so critical. You know, I'm reminded of firemen. When they're going to a rescue, they don't run into the house, right? And they are not crazed like running around.

It's very calm. Everybody knows their job. They're very calmed. they go in and handle it professionally. And, They are very successful at it. So the frenzy around things certainly doesn't help.

There was a movie called Bridge of Spies, and it was fascinating movie. I can't remember the main actor's name. Tom Hanks played his attorney, but he was the first major Russian spy that was caught in the U S and he.

And so Tom hanks comes in and tells him, you know, he could be executed. You know he's going to be tried for all these, uh, treason and other crimes. and Tom Hank's looks at him and says, You don't look anxious at all." And the guy goes, oh, would that help?

HeartMath and Coherence

Right? I just love, and there are about five times during the movie where something happens that a lot of people would have just lost it. And he just goes with that, help.

and of course the answer is no. Right. So I think what you're talking about is what we call coherence in heart math. It's when all of your systems are working together, your autonomic nervous system, your brain and your hormonal systems are all working together to be in that state of balance.

And that's trainable. That's not just a gift that some people have and some don't. So I like to joke that the math in heart math is life is going to throw challenges at you, situations at, you can't do much about that.

But how you respond can make all the difference. So the equation would be life throws you a stimulus, a situation, plus how your respond or react equals the outcome, right?

And because how do you response can often just determine that outcome. That's my very simplistic equation of how heart math can help you. Can you speak a little more about what heart math is and what's the process or the, et cetera?

Yeah. Heart math. Is not only a way to measure, um, what going on in your autonomic nervous system, but it also

trains, helps you train the autonomia nervous.

And especially the parasympathetic system. So that's. The counter to fight or fight. So that's not only relaxation, but it's a calm state of awareness.

And so what we teach in HeartMath is that state-of-coherence when things are in balance, right? And with Heartmath, you have a device that measures your heart rate variability, and it is a really simple device.

This is called the inner balance. It hooks up to your phone and tells you what's going on with your heart rate variability. And can I talk about heartrate variability?

Absolutely. I hate to talk to you about pulses, Dr. John, but so when a Western practitioner takes your pulse, They give you the average times your heart is beating in a minute, right?

So say your pulse is 60 beats per minute. So that tells you some information, but that's like saying, The average note in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, for example, is la, right?

There's not really, there's no music there, so the real story happens from beat to beat, to And that is the rhythm, that's the heart rate variability.

And you want variability in your heartrate because that shows you how flexible your nervous system is, your autonomic nervous. But when you're stressed out, that rhythm is very jagged.

When you map it out it's jaged. It can go up to 85 and then down to 59 and all over the place, right? And that is correlated with stress hormones flowing through your body.

And cortisol is a great thing and we need it. We definitely need especially to get up in the morning, to start our day. But we don't want that flowing through our bodies all the time.

Heart Rate Variability Explained

And those people that you were running into in, well, not running in to, but encountering on the road, they probably had a lot of cortisol flowing though the systems when they really didn't need it in that moment.

new patients that haven't had acupuncture before, particularly if they're very stressed. We actually only do about half a treatment, right? We don't do as much as we would with someone that's returning because when you take, so what the acupunture is going to do is help turn off those stress hormones.

It's going allow them to sink into a much deeper state. Well, if you do that, too far, they freak out because they don't know how to function unless they're full of stress hormones.

So we let them keep a little bit, right? And then the second time we'll go a little deeper, but they really freak out if you take all their stress hormones away too quickly.

So I totally believe that because it becomes habitual then, right? Yeah. And so we, um, so the wonderful thing about this is that we not only measure our heart rate variability, we can train our heartbeat variability.

and so, and we train systems into that state of coherence where we get the good stuff flowing through our systems, right? And so where get those regenerative hormones flowing and not only relaxation response, but also a calm state of awareness.

And what I like to think of with coherence is like a ninja. I know you did martial arts at one point or you still do, so a Ninja has to be completely unaware and ready to pounce at the slightest provocation, right?

However, they have to also remain still and calm. And the training for a ninja, or one of the final tests for ninja is the

student will be sitting there in a seated position and the master will standing behind them ready whack them with a stick.

I don't, do you know this? Have you heard this before? Yes, but it's been decades. So I'd forgotten about it. Yeah, so that is one of the final exams that they have to do.

And the student doesn't know when the teacher is going to that, when a master is gonna do that. but he's ready to whack them and the student has to roll out of the way at just the right time.

So you're in that state of coherence and your senses are heightened and also your intuition is heightened. The master is about to strike, student rolls out the the passes, right?

But if you roll on the weight too soon, you fail, go again. If you roll out of the way too late, then actually you do get whacked on the head with a stick and they will whack you.

So it's, it not the kindest training, but it definitely a good test. That's that reminds me. This is, this is a total, not a segue, But it has nothing to do with this, except that you reminded me, I was once teaching a weekend Tai Chi retreat and my wife was there.

And she was assisting me. And so I handed her a sword, because I wanted to show people how to get out of the way of a particular type of stroke, just like you're saying.

Training Coherence with HeartMath

Yeah. I said, so in a minute, go ahead and strike at me, but I turned back around to talk to the students and turned around just as the sword was coming down on top of my head.

That's my wife, right? I told her, she's going to do it. So then I had to what I was going do. but it was quite an effective demonstration. But I just remembered that I have to go thank her today for the training.

We had ninja training and you didn't even know it. I appreciate so much that you talked about heart rate variability. The majority of my patients that come in have either an aura ring or some type of smartwatch that measures their heartrate variability, but most of them have no idea what that really means or why it's so significant.

And what will happen is when we do the podcast, we'll get some shorts and we will probably have one on heart-rate-variability. So what I'll just do is direct people to your explaining it to them.

So thank you. Great. Yeah, exactly. And so you talked about working with leaders and how do you help people become better leaders, stronger leaders? So first of all, we talk, I'm a wellness coach.

We talk about the basics. Are you feeding your body properly? Are giving yourself the proper nourishment? Eating lots of plants and alive things. and not too much processed stuff.

Are you staying hydrated? Are moving your body in a way that is fun for you, in way is enjoyable? And are you getting enough rest, right? Those are just the basics.

And beyond that, I teach resilience. That's where we get into training coherence. So people can learn to regulate their autonomic nervous system to stay in that wonderful state of where the heart is sending more messages to the brain than the brains sending to heart.

You know, we're always busy, busy busy up in our heads and heart math really helps you make that 18 inch journey or whatever that, you know however that distance is down into your heart so that You can employ the intelligence and the wisdom of the heart.

Our hearts have neurons in them, brain cells in, them and when those are activated, then you're coming more as a

whole person. You're approaching life more, as whole-person and not just as, a brain that's very busy.

There's a character in Chinese that is, it's called xin, X-I-N is the Western spelling, and it is translated as heart. Like we're talking about the various organs, the heart is xing, but the actual term means heart-mind.

They're inseparable, absolutely inseperable. Yes. Just like octopuses have brain cells in all of their tentacles, right? We also have brains cells and other parts of our body.

That's awesome. Yeah. And we could talk for a couple hours on the gut brain issues, I'm sure, but we'll do that another time. So how does chronic stress, we're a culture that is just really gung-ho on staying young, on looking young on being attractive.

How does Chronic Stress affect the way we age? So I remember you saying once that A Stanford study showed that up to 90 of doctor visits were initiated from stress or had their origins in stress, right?

Leadership, Heart-Mind, and Stress Aging

And so basically what you're saying is nine out of 10 times when you go to the doctor, it's because there's some kind of stress in your life, so all those things that send us to doctors, high blood sugar, diabetes, heart problems, high cholesterol, sleeplessness, all those things age us faster.

And you know, you could probably talk way more about the length of your telomeres and how that can determine aging and the rate at which our cells regenerate or repair themselves, right?

So all of those thing play a part in how quickly we age. One study that really had an impact on me, talking about telomeres, which are the ends of the chromosomes, and as they fray, they stop producing accurate reproductions, right?

That's why old guys will get these huge, you know, foot-long hairs coming out of their ears. You know it's just, the replication isn't happening properly.

And so telomer length is one of key ways they can measure biological aging. Right. And they took a group of people whose significant other had just been diagnosed with dementia, Alzheimer's usually, or some other very serious condition.

And then they had a control group, the same age, also with a significant that wasn't ill. They measured all their telomere length, and they were about the the average was consistent in both groups.

Ten years later, the control group, their telomeres had aged about 10 years. In the care group their Telomere's had age 20 years, they age twice as fast from having to give and give that attention and having that stress.

So that had a huge impact on me when I read that story. Oh yeah. And that's what we're talking about. That is draining that battery. You're always running on fumes, right?

That will age you more quickly. So what we can do is we regenerate that battery. We can load that batter up again with some simple exercises. And if you want, I can walk you through a heart math exercise.

Are you ready now? Yeah. Okay, great. So you can you do this in 30 seconds by yourself, or you could do it in as little as five minutes and they've already noticed differences, right?

So first what we do in HeartMath is we start by focusing on the area around our hearts. And sometimes you can touch your heart if you want, and that helps to bring the focus there.

Now take a longer, deeper, slower breath in and out. Five seconds in, five seconds out is a good place to start, but obviously do what's comfortable to you.

And now breathe as if the air is coming in and out through your heart area. And as you're doing this, I'm gonna ask you to think of a regenerative feeling.

So something that gives you, makes you feel compassion or love or just a calm ease. And that's your regenerative feeling and settle that into your heart.

And now as it's settled into heart, you can send that regenerate feeling out to someone or something and some to yourself as well. and send it out into the world.

And that exercise is called the heart lock-in. They did a very intriguing study where they took salivary swabs, right? They swabbed, they took cheek swab and as a baseline, and then they swab the participants' cheeks again after this short exercise, five minutes.

And the difference in secretory IGA, which is one of your immune markers, it's kind of a first line defense, was tremendous. The average increase in that secretory IGA was 45%. And some people went as high as 240% in five minutes of doing a heart lock-in.

That's amazing. It is amazing, and that's just one thing that they measured. So there are all kinds of other things that are going on in your system as well.

And so if you could do that heart lock-in twice a day or even once a, it's already going to give you a tremendous advantage. And of course you train that kind of thing when things are calm, right?

When things were going really well, you have five minutes to spare, or maybe you're waiting for someone.

Telomeres, Caregiving Stress, and Recharging

You can just do a simple heart-lock- in and that'll already get you into a state of coherence. I can't thank you enough. many decades of martial arts and contemplation, meditation.

And when I was locked in, basically, as a fighter or as meditator, the whole world would get very soft, right? My gaze would be soft and you almost disappeared.

Right? It was just so, so soft. So rather than being locked-in with that tight focus, it allowed me to just open up. Thank you so much. You're welcome.

And when you open up like that, you are so much more effective in your life, whether it's at work or having a conversation with someone or talking with your partner.

You are just so more focused and aware then. It's different from relaxation because there's still a lot of heart rate variability So they've taken graphs of relaxation response versus coherence, right?

And the relaxation narrows your heart rate variability. So there's less of a range of heart rates, versus when you're in a coherent state, you still have a big range, which means your system is still flexible enough.

Like if I need to jump up and, and you know, maybe I left something on the stove, I needed to do that quickly. So I knew that flexibility, right? I don't want to just be in nice, relaxed state.

And, in, a meeting you don' want be just relaxed. You wanta be calm, but present. Yeah. The secretory IgA, I'm really impressed that that's what they measured.

I've been testing secretori IgAs for years, and when you look at it, say, in a stool sample, The people with the lowest secretory IgA levels are the ones that will get traveler's diarrhea if they go to Mexico with 10 people, right?

Because they don't have that ability. But I was fascinated by some studies done on professional football players

who go out on Sunday and they have the most stressful life you can have for about three or four hours.

And then their secretori IgAs levels will drop by 75%. So they all get sick on Monday, They're fine on Saturday and Sunday, but on Monday, that's it. That actually explains a lot.

When I was in college, you ramp up for your finals. And then the next day, you think, when you're training for your finals or you are studying for you finals, You think I'm going to just go party and have the best time.

I going go on vacation after these finals. And, then, the, next, day you wake up and you like, Oh, I am so drained. Yeah. Exactly. You just explained why.

It's quite, quite amazing. you talk a couple of times about energy drains. What are some of the biggest ones that you see that people don't recognize often for themselves?

I think ruminating is a big one, you know, replaying conversations in your head. Or I shouldn't have said that, or why did they say that to me? You know?

Those are the things that get stuck and they, they just turn over and over, and, over in our heads or trying to fix the past. So I've done that myself, trying, to, try to relive the pass so that I do things differently, right?

And you can only go forward. Yeah. But also not doing the things that we feel like we should be doing, right? We have these images or we have goals that want to work toward, but we're not necessarily taking the little steps.

We don't necessarily have the systems in place to get us toward those goals. And so we say, I'll start with that tomorrow. And so I think those are the little things that, you know, drain our energy and that they're like the constant apps running in the background that are running your battery down, and we try to clean those up.

I love it.

Heart Lock-In Exercise

And before the show we were talking and I said, you know, I'm going to be going a reunion of sorts and maybe the only person that's still working out of that group.

I wouldn't have it any other way, at least for me, whatever they're doing is fine. But, the happiest day of the week is Sunday. And part of that is because as I'm driving through town, I see all of these real estate signs out.

I used to own a real-estate company decades ago. And I am so happy that I not the one out putting up the signs because it was really out of alignment for me.

You know, you know I had a family, and I couldn't stop doing it at the time, but it never resonated with me at all. As soon as they got into healing practices.

acupuncture, et cetera, it just resonates all the time, every day. I mean, sometimes it's hard, right? But it is exactly what I want to be doing. Well, and that's exactly, what we talk about.

We talk, about, well, maybe you can't make that shift out of real estate right now, but you could look into other things that you might love doing, or you look in to training, you take one class that moves you toward that other thing that your heart's calling you to do, Right?

And so, and so each little one of those steps gets you closer. And I think taking those step gives you more peace too. Cause then you feel like you're actually doing something, right?

You're acting on that thing that you desire. So kind of putting together several of the things you've said, it would seem like living out of alignment with your values is actually a big energy drain.

Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. So one example is for me personally, I have been mostly vegetarian, somewhat omnivore throughout my life, played with veganism when I was younger.

It was too hard for my. I went back to being an omnivoor, mostly plant-based. And then I, you know, about 10 or 15 years ago, I learned about factory farming, for example.

And, and, And I thought, do I really want those animals suffering so that I can have a hamburger? Right. You know that's gone in 10 minutes after I eat it, the pleasure is gone.

and so there was that moment of. probably several months, of living out of alignment with what I felt like I really should be doing, right? And so as I eased toward that plant-based diet then and I thought, this is not that hard, and so, I used into it and then I was living in a congruent state with my values.

And that recharges your battery when you know you can do something like that. It just is, it's such a boost and it, and I feel so much more energy because of it.

Not only because the diet, but because I'm not, I am not having that inner battle, that inter conflict anymore. Gotcha. Yeah. I was a vegetarian, mostly vegan for about 20 years.

And the first 10 years probably saved my life. But the second 10, 10 10-years I, was running a real estate company and did what a lot of vegetarians do, I became a carbitarian, right?

And so I didn't see any vegetables and that kind of drained my health. And what finally pushed me into being a vegetarian is it was Washington's birthday, the 22nd of February, and Derwiner Schnitzel was selling chili cheese dogs for 22 cents.

I ate six of them and then didn' eat meat for 20 years. I can totally see that. That is wonderful. It's a great story. And so I was pretty ill a few years ago and made a commitment to regain my health and I gave myself 120 days.

Relaxation vs Coherence

but I was very weak, and so I really enlisted the help of some people and started to create rituals for myself, you know, daily activities. And I don't know where I got this, but as a kid, I always hated the word discipline.

I'm fine with the ritual, right? And so now most of my life is really ritualized. So it takes all the stress out of it, it's like what I do at this time is I did this.

Yeah, so I'm loving it. And so daily habits and systems, I am assuming would play a big role in resilience. Yes. So I love James Clear's book, Atomic Habits.

And he talks about habit forming and habit stacking, and in your case, rituals, you know, their habits are really just rituals. Especially if we can ritualize them and make them seem special.

And so that's what I'm talking about, creating, having systems in place. One of his quotes is, I might butcher it, but he says, You don't rise to the level of your loftiest goals.

you fall to the level of your most basic systems, right? So goals are awesome, but if we don't take those little tiny steps to get toward them, then the goal is pretty useless, And so, and so that's where I also talk about habit stacking or creating rituals.

One of the rituals that I have, for example, is I get into my car and as soon as my hands touch the steering wheel, I do some heart focused breaths. That's awesome.

And it doesn't take much time. Maybe one or two breaths while I'm still parked and then I put it in reverse and I am still heart-focused breathing, right?

because it doesn't take away from your awareness to take some breaths in and out through your heart. And then, okay, so I've got that little habit or that ritual, and then on top of that, I think about the path I'm gonna take, the roads that I'll take and I take about sending a little light of safety, a bubble of little safety out ahead of me so that all beings, including me, are safe along that path.

And so that's kind of how I start every drive. That's my driving ritual. Wow, that is phenomenal. I'm going to pick up some of that. Thank you. You're welcome.

And you mentioned small steps. A lot of times people will try to change everything all at once with these big heroic steps and I find it usually works better to kind take small step, right?

Yeah. Yeah, changing my diet, working out. working out. So I was going to say in his book, he actually talks about the example of one of his clients wanted to lose all this weight.

He said, turn yourself into the person who goes to the gym at lunch, right? And so the client started by literally just driving to the gym every lunch, not getting out of the car, staying in the parking lot.

Maybe he would eat his lunch in a parking. And, and then driving back to work, just drive to gym at lunch. do the thing, do whatever you're going to do, and then going back to work.

And then eventually he walked into the gym. You know the story, right? Yeah, I just lived that.

Energy Drains and Living in Alignment

Yeah. He became the person who goes to the Wow, that's fabulous. Yeah, I asked Catherine, co-author of our books and we worked together, if she would work out with me in the morning.

And she said, yeah. At that time I was so weak that getting driving to the gym was hard. Right. But I would go in and I'd sit on a machine. Didn't do anything.

Like I'd sit on the stationary bike and just sit there. And over time it got easier and easier. I started layering things in and I was shocked. Literally, I doubled my strength in four months and was completely different functionally.

And it just started with those baby steps. Just get there. Baby steps is really where it's at. And, you know, I don't want to talk about James Clear too much, but that's why he called his book Atomic Habits because, like an atom bomb is huge, it starts with little atoms of actions, right?

Little tiny atoms. So we stack those little tiny items. Boom, we can become a different person within, like you said, four months or a year, or in five minutes in the heart lock-in situation, right?

Yeah. That's such a great exercise. Do you have one simple practice that listeners can start using today? Feel more resilient, energized? I mean, that heartlock was great.

If you think that's it, then that is great, Yeah, so I would say really start thinking about putting your awareness more in your heart and allowing that sense of intuition to come forth.

And we can do another exercise where Well, actually just give you the exercise and you can practice it yourself. Or you could go to heartmath.org and find all of these exercises online.

They just gave them away free because they really want more people to become coherent, right? And so one of the exercises is just putting your awareness in your heart, breathing as if you're breathing in and out through your hear, and then just quietly asking your What would you have me know right now?

What a great question. Yeah. And that's not necessarily straight up heart math. That's a little bit of me too.

Habits, Rituals, and Small Steps

But using that power of the heart, if you are in a decision point and you really don't know what to do, you're feeling a bit lost, chances are getting into that state of coherence could really help.

Wow. Many years ago, mid-1980s, I did a certification with Tony Robbins. And the thing that I took away that, that most remember is him saying the quality of your life is determined by the quantity of questions.

So what a great thing to ask your heart. Absolutely. Awesome. Anything else you want to conclude with? I think that's a good thing for people to be able to, a, great takeaway I'll say.

Yeah. I would say that for the people who are thinking about getting the aura ring or other things, also, you know, take a look at this inner balance.

And that's also on the heartmath.com website. Because this method actually helps you train your heart rate variability. It's not just watching it. Not just learning from it, it's also helping you to train and it'll help you level up.

So just a suggestion. I love it! So Yolanda, how do people get a hold of you? So you see people in person or on the computer? Yes. I am at herenowwellness.com.

H-E-R- E? Yes, as in here and now. Here and Now is my business name, but it was taken. So my website is here now wellness. Love it, love it. I'm so, so happy that you came on the show today.

Oh, I have admired what you do for, like you said, a couple of decades now. And I am really happy to introduce you to a broader audience.

Daily Heart Practice and Closing

It is my deepest honor that would want me here, John. Thank you. Feeling out of balance? Most approaches just manage symptoms. Here we get to the root.

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