Understanding Stress and Its Impact on Gut Health Transcript

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Hi, everybody. Great to be with you. I have my special guest today, Danna Demetre. She's a registered nurse and has many decades of experience helping people with their health through diet, through reducing stress, using supplements.

And today, we're going to focus on the connection between how you handle stress and gut health. So, Danna. Great to be with you. Great to be back. Mark, good to have time with you and talk about this subject that affects us all.

Stress. Absolutely. Well, tell us what your experience has been in terms of when you're helping people with the effects of stress, how to analyze, or how to cope with it.

What do you see between that connection between gut health and even whole body health? Also, I can speak to it personally and I can speak to it as a, you know, decades of coaching women.

And of course, we're all under stress. Life is not without stress. It's it's how pervasive, how invasive. What's that level? How are we managing it? But it affects.

It affects weight. It affects gut. We know when we get you know, what's the first sensation you often feel if somebody gives gives you some bad news or you're driving it in your car and somebody cuts you off. You feel it in your gut.

You feel your heart rate increase, but you feel something in your gut. And we talk about, you know, my gut just told me not to do that or that makes me sick to my stomach or I've lost my appetite.

We know that, you know, our second brain is in the gut, and there's such a powerful mind body connection, and it is such an important part in the coaching that we do through our live Thrive Academy with women all over.

Not not not just the country, but the world. We talk a lot about the stresses in their lives and managing them so that they can enhance overall health.

And the gut disruption is is so powerful because when we feel that stress and can't, we don't digest as well. It just it diminishes the quality of our microbiome.

And so I have been really focusing on helping women make that shift from that sympathetic nervous system response, fight or flight, which none of us are running from tigers anymore, and we are occasionally getting cut off on the freeway.

That's a true fight or flight moment where you have to react. But the bigger tiger, that's a bigger tiger, by the way. That's right. That's a big old middle tiger.

But we have this fight or flight response all the time to lesser things that aren't true physical threats. And yet our body responds in that way. And so here goes the blood pressure.

Here goes the heart rate. You know, digestion shuts down to allow blood to go to muscles. Well, what's going to happen with that food you just ate? And and the cycle just goes on and on and the parasympathetic is the rest and digest.

I love the fact that that most experts don't just say rest and renewal. They say rest and digest. Parasympathetic is the coming nervous system. But I think in this current day and age, with we're just we're constantly bombarded with stimuli, even good stimuli.

We've got our smartphones and our computers and we've got music going all the time. We are just all the time bombarded. And even if we don't know that, you know, it's stressful.

We have to counteract it. And I think, I don't know. I've not read any stats. Maybe you have of how much of the time the average American is in sympathetic versus parasympathetic.

I'm going to guess it's weighing heavily much more heavily on the sympathetic. Right. I think you're right. I mean, when you're when you're sleeping, if you're sleeping well.

And so we see in our coaching a lot of women because because of my relationship with you and the years of you coaching me as a natural path, when we're encouraging women to get those that blood work done and look at their cortisol levels and all that, so many women's cortisol levels are high.

Well, what does that tell us? They've been probably under that some of that system stress response more than needed. And so we see more belly fat. We see that maybe they were doing great losing weight and now they're just stuck.

And sometimes they're even under eating but they're not losing weight. So it's encouraging them to work on the parasympathetic side of their nervous system, which there's just simple techniques to, you know, to move you into rest and renewal.

It's a lot between, you know, the years. It's a lot. It's an a mental, emotional, spiritual endeavor to calm yourself. And I think it's a skill that we all need to practice and perfect all day long, every day to take those moments, to take a deep breath.

In fact, deep breathing is one of the first and fastest ways to stimulate the vagus nerve, which is in charge of that person. But that nervous system and and it does stimulate the vagus nerve and basically normally just breathe, what, 12 to 16 respirations per minute and slow it down to maybe six or to eight and do that for a minute or two.

And you can notice when I'm talking about this, my voice slows down. I'm an ex labor and delivery nurse, so I know how to get. Yeah I definitely sympathetic not you know, not not being able to manage her contractions too.

We start to calm down. So we start to calm our voice in our head or as we're, you know, talking to ourselves or talking to others, we start to calm our thoughts.

We start to slow our breathing. We start to relax our muscles. I've read numerous times over the years, if you could relax every single muscle in your body, you cannot feel stress.

It's hard to do, right? Yeah. That's good. Now, you also talked a lot of people about you. You delve into how they have a lot of negative self-talk, and that's bringing down their health and their digestive function.

Tell us about that. Well, think about it. We do this in every area of life. In the human brain. The most dominant thought wins. So just consider for a moment.

How do you talk to yourself? I will use myself as a negative example. Back in the day, I came out of my nursing career and for about eight years I went into the corporate world.

And this is what I said to myself all the time. There's not enough time of the day. There's not enough time of day. I'm so stressed. I have so much to do. There's not enough time in the day.

How well do you think that was serving me? Was it bringing my stress down? No. All I was doing was focusing on my stress and I felt stressed all the time.

And what was interesting is I had to live at such a high level of productivity Monday through Friday on the weekends. I felt sick. Every weekend I was exhausted and like on the verge of getting a cold or something because

my body was like, no way, I can't keep up with this.

So I do encourage everybody to take a look at or take a listen to your internal dialog about your life. You know, because truth is, life is hard. There's many beautiful ups, but there's also many, many rocky, challenging downs and how we choose to interpret that and manage that impacts the quality of our life, the quality of our health, the quality of our digestive health.

All of that is so important. And in the research I've done, when we're too much in that sympathetic nervous system, it is not producing or supporting a healthy gut biome.

And you probably know more about what's happening on that nervous system level than I do. But it just you can feel you can literally feel it. And so, you know, a lot of people that have IBS and different things, they get they start to get nervous and they have diarrhea.

It's just so clear the mind body connection. So the self-talk is just a place to start to say, what am I saying to myself? And what power would it have to tell myself, you know, a different message and I'm a Christian woman, so I go to Scripture a lot and I'm also a woman.

Another personal part of my story on On stress. I struggled as a young woman, about 18 years old to 23 with unrelenting panic attacks, and so I thought I was dying.

I thought I was losing my mind. They were just free floating anxiety, never figured out where they came from, but I overcame them with giving myself a message.

It happened to be a scripture because I actually found God around that time, and I realized that he hadn't given me the fear and that I wasn't alone. And so I started telling myself, you never died before.

You haven't lost your mind. God is with you. And I just I would take deep breaths and slow down and say, I'm okay. And I learned the power of rewiring, retaining our neural pathways with the messages we give ourselves.

And in my case, I felt the scripture that really spoke to me literally changed my neuron pathways and on a spiritual basis gave me a truth that so resonated.

It changed. It literally changed my life. I was able to manage my stress. And, you know, I had so many physical manifestations of that high level of anxiety.

It was amazing how I felt when I could slowly it took time, slowly over time, rewire my thoughts, reset and live at peace. And it can be done. And I it wasn't therapy.

I mean, I'm not against good quality therapy, but this is this was just taking those thoughts captive and focusing on the truth. The truth free, right? Yes.

What about I guess we can't underestimate the effects of exercise. What do you coach people on that? Because people can get stressed just thinking. They got to do some elaborate exercise program, but that's not the case.

Exercise is one of the best things to release stress, and it is one of one of the very positive things we can immediately do when we're feeling, you know, schedule permitting, if you are in the you just had a really difficult phone call and you have the liberty to go out and you don't have to go out and kill yourself and run a, you know, six minute mile, but go out for just a nice moderate walk.

It is amazing. The combination of getting out in nature and moving is great. I think as women age and I know we have a mixture of audience here, but as women age, actually the more gentle, consistent, daily but gentler exercise reduces stress on the body.

And I think the spirit and produces that calm. And so it doesn't have to be super hard. But I do believe daily activity

is essential. Yeah. Every once in while, you're going to miss it.

But to adopt a mindset of I move my body every day because God gave me all these moving parts. They need to be used to have optimal health and wellness.

But again, there's so many things we can immediately do physically to address the stress that we're if you're feeling stressed, sometimes we have stress. We don't feel it right.

If you're feeling stressed, take some deep breaths. Get out of nature. If you can, put on some calm music, get up and move around. Sit and do some meditation.

If you're a person of faith, prayer is powerful because it's not just you, it's your you're connecting with your creator. All these things make a big, big difference.

And then you have stuff that takes a little more time like I have. I take Epsom salts fast, probably three times a week. I can feel, I just feel I don't even necessarily feel stress when I get in the bathtub.

At the end of the day, I just know how much it just compresses me. I sleep incredibly well. I have a sauna. I love what that does for me physically. You know, there's many, many things.

Massage, of course, is wonderful. I would love to be able to say every time I'm stressed, you know, I can get a massage, but that's not as practical. So we but we can do stretching and shoulder rolls and these relaxation breathing techniques that actually in the moment make us feel physically better.

Also, I recommend a gratitude journal. Tell us about that. I love that because I think in the midst of these stressful lives we lead, we focus on our problems more than on our blessings.

And if we could sit, you decide when when in the day it most benefits you. But if we could sit with a little journal and just write out the things that we're grateful for, I think it shifts our perspective and in that act alone moves us from that sympathetic nervous system to the parasympathetic, to have a heart of gratefulness kind of paired with a similar activity is, is to do something outside ourselves, whether it's volunteering, you know, if you feel really just entrenched in your own troubles, to call up somebody that has a need greater than yours and, and pour into them, maybe it's just a phone call, maybe it's a letter.

You know how much it means to get a card in the mail these days, and not a text, or to get a phone call and hear somebody voice those kinds of activities.

They're very outward, but they feed your soul as well. And it is amazing, all these little things that we if we can integrate these little things throughout the day, the inward and outward habits of calm and rest and digest, they start to add up and they counteract all this living in a fight or flight, kind of a mode that is decreasing our digestive health, making us fat because our cortisol is going up and measuring the quality of our life.

Yeah, that's a good summary. Well, Danna, thank you so much for your time. And people want to get more information, learn about the effects of stress and get health the way to eat for gut health and whole body health.

The website is tell us the website again. It is lean, healthy, ageless.com. That's a pretty cool name. Thank you. Well, trying to stay lean, healthy and ageless no matter what our age.

And I'm 71. Hey, hopefully I'll be saying that at 81. Yes. Hey, thank you so much for your time. My pleasure. Thanks.