Understanding Why Weight Loss Can Be Challenging Transcript

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Introduction to Hidden Causes of Weight Gain

For this doctor talks, we are going to talk about some sort of things you may not have heard of before. That could be affecting your weight. With me, I have a guest doctor, Evan Hirsch.

He's also known as the energy MD. He is a world renowned expert in fatigue, a bestselling author, and a professional speaker. He's the creator of the energy MD method, a science backed, clinically proven four step process to resolving chronic fatigue.

McPherson and long Covid naturally. And he has a book, podcast, online practice and has helped thousands of people worldwide. And today he's going to share with you, you know, some of the things that could be causing underlying issues with weight and some of the things you might be able to do.

So thank you so much for joining us, Evan. Thanks so much for having me on. So when someone feels like they are having a hard time losing weight and they feel like they've done everything, have followed all the standard advice, what are some things they might be missing?

Yeah, there are toxins that can build up in the body that can. And that can really make it hard to lose weight. So in general, there are two ways to gain weight.

You can either get more fat cells or you can get increase the size of your fat cells. But a lot of people don't know. Is that actually the way that the body protects itself from toxins, like heavy metals or chemicals or molds, is that it actually will create, that will dilute those toxins by increasing the size of the fat cell.

And so consequently, you can, you know, have the perfect diet and be exercising and everything that you're supposed to be doing.

The Toxic Five and How They Affect Weight

But if you still have those toxins in your fat cells, they are not going to shrink until you get rid of those toxins. So, you know, that makes sense, right?

That that probably, you know, is resonating for people. How does someone know if that's happening to them or what are some of the toxins that they may have been exposed to?

That may be an indication that that is the challenge they're facing. So the the toxins that I look at, what I call are the toxic five, and these are heavy metals, chemicals, molds, infections and trauma or nervous system dysfunction.

So four out of five of those are physical in nature. There are things that can be tested. So there's urinary tests that can be done to look and see whether or not somebody has heavy metals, urinary test for chemicals, urinary tests for molds and mycotoxins and then for infections.

Oftentimes it's more symptom based. But you can also do urinary tests as well. So it's important to remember that all tests are imperfect. But having these tests sometimes can really give you an inkling as to which of these that you have.

For the people that I work with who've got chronic fatigue syndrome or long Covid, they actually have all of these things. And so we don't do that much testing because we know that they have those and we just go ahead and we address those.

But for people who aren't in that situation, when we're looking at losing weight or are having a hard time losing

weight, you want to be a little bit more, judicious about figuring out which of these causes that you have.

So you're not wasting your time, energy and money on supplements, or meds that you don't need. Yeah. And I think that's really powerful. That's one of the first steps I always like to take with my patients is like, what's the underlying cause?

Right? Otherwise we're just kind of throwing Band-Aids on things or guessing, which doesn't get people the results and probably is why things haven't worked in the past because they didn't know what that underlying cause was.

Agreed. So when we talk about, you know, toxins in the environment, can you give us an idea of what some of those might be? Sure. So when we're looking at heavy metals, we're talking about things like cadmium.

So this can come from any sort of exposure to smoke, that you smoked in the past, or maybe at second hand smoke. Maybe your parents smoked. They had the windows up or you're driving around town.

Mercury. So all fish, unfortunately, now have mercury. I got a lot of my mercury exposure from eating tuna fish back in the 80s. I just love tuna fish and ate a lot of it.

But really, any fish or anything coming from the sea these days? Unfortunately. And this is because there are coal plants still in the world that produce mercury vapor, and that mercury vapor settles in the oceans, and consequently, it gets concentrated in fish.

And the bigger the fish, the more the mercury. So tuna and halibut, swordfish, those are always going to be the highest ones. And then other ways that you can get mercury include mercury fillings or silver fillings.

They're called silver fillings because it doesn't sound good to say I just put mercury fillings in your mouth. So generally silver fillings are half silver and half mercury.

And then there's lead. So, you know, many of us live in homes that were built before 1970.

Examples of Heavy Metals, Chemicals, and Mold Exposure

And consequently, there is the, you know, there might have been paint that, had lead in it that was in the dust that still exists in the home, even if it's been scraped or whatnot.

So and even people, you know, telling me stories about how they grew up next to leaded gasoline stations, you know, that we don't have those around anymore.

But, there's a lot there's some of those different ways in which you can get, lead. So those are the heavy metals, you know, there's other ones too, but those are the main ones.

And then when we're looking at chemicals, we're looking at pesticides or herbicides. These are things that are sprayed on non-organic foods even unfortunately organic foods about 10% would get some blow by, you know, where the farm next door is not organic.

And so consequently it's spraying things and then it comes over. Organic is still the best way to go, though. And you want to remember to wash your vegetables, after you get them from the store or from the farm.

So that's, pesticides and herbicides. There's glyphosate. So roundup oftentimes people remember when dad or mom sprayed roundup, around the house several times a year.

So unfortunately, all of these things are going to significantly damage your DNA, cause inflammation, and, caused that increase in size of the, of the the fat cells, as we previously mentioned.

And then in terms of mold, unfortunately, about 50% of all buildings in first world countries have water damage.

And most of those, unfortunately have mold.

So any place that you have ever lived that at any point in its history had a water leak, a flood, a busted pipe, some sort of water damage, then you can get mold in your body.

Even if you were five years of age, it can still be in your body today. Okay, so definitely important to get that checked out. And then with the infections, you know, when you have any sort of significant stressor, whether it's a significant trauma or abuse or whether it's something that changes the way that you see the world or a motor vehicle accident or a betrayal or something that is a significant stressor.

It causes the immune system to become dysfunctional, and then the infections can become opportunistic. So this can be things like yeast or Candida. It can be, Lyme type infections, Borrelia, Bartonella, BC, it can be parasites and other bacteria too.

So important to combine history plus symptoms. And then the laboratory test to determine which of these you have. I mean, that's almost overwhelming with how many different things could, could be the impacting things here and things that you may not have even thought about that you were exposed to decades ago.

Yes, it can be. But it's important to remember, like so many things, that when we break it down into small chunks and we move through a process that you figure out the causes that you have, you you match it up to the treatment that's actually going to fix that cause and you're going to be successful.

And, you know, as humans, we overestimate the amount we can get done in a day. And we underestimate the amount we can get done in a year. Right. And so it's really important to remember that if we take baby steps and we're treating something eventually it gets out of the body and you're just going to feel better along the way.

And that's really, really helpful advice. I don't think I was on screen, but I was raising my hand of the person who takes on too much, and I think probably good advice for all of us than anything we're doing that, though.

Those little things add up and you have to look at that, that big picture. Well, it's fun to one of the other components you talked about, which are chronic infections.

And I think this is really become your your real, real area of expertise post-Covid. It sounds like in terms of helping people with that, but it sounds like there are different infections also that people should be aware of.

So can you tell us about the relationship between chronic infections and weight? Absolutely. So, like many of these other stressors that we're talking about, any stressor in the body is going to negatively affect your hormones.

So your adrenal gland is a little triangular gland. It sits on top of the kidneys and it produces stress management hormones, the main one being cortisol.

Well cortisol manages insulin and cortisol manages the immune system. And so consequently when you have an infection it stresses out the body. You know, whether it's Covid or whether it's one of these other infections and it's going to tax the adrenals.

The adrenals are also the central glands. So they're responsible for the function of some of the other hormone glands that are that are present. So as the adrenals go, so goes the thyroid.

And so consequently most people know the significant, relationship between thyroid and weight gain.

Chronic Infections, Stress, and Hormonal Effects

Right. If you if your thyroid is not optimized, you cannot lose weight. Or it makes it very challenging to lose weight. Right. So it's really important to make sure that the adrenals and the thyroid and then the sex hormones get affected.

And so all of those, you know, what happens to people after they hit menopause. Oftentimes they're experiencing an increase in weight gain, right. Because there's a stressor of decreasing those hormones.

So if we add in something that becomes a stressor upon all the other stressors that you have in the body, it makes it very hard to lose weight. And then, you know, you also mentioned trauma, which I don't actually think has come up, in many of my stomach talks.

However, it is the thing I know I see, I don't want to say the most commonly, but really, really commonly. In, in my patients. So can you tell us more about that relationship between trauma and weight?

Absolutely. And so I like to talk about this more as nervous system dysfunction. Because oftentimes when people think of trauma they're thinking, well, you know, I wasn't abused as a child.

You know I didn't have sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental, emotional, whatever it was. Maybe you had a happy childhood, but the reality is, is that, you know, if you were bullied in middle, middle school or rejected by a peer group or had a hard time in or had a breakup with somebody at some point and, and had a hard time with something else that changed the way that you looked at the world.

Consequently, if you if you ever experienced one of those things that is trauma or that causes nervous system dysfunction, and then if you add in these toxins, so heavy metals on their own can cause nervous system dysfunction and mold and all these different components on their own can cause nervous system dysfunction aka trauma.

So then your your nervous system is not functioning the way that it should. Your limbic system, your amygdala, the way that the body is perceiving the world makes you feel unsafe.

And consequently that is an increased stressor on your body. And what happens when you're stressed? It's that cascade that I mentioned before the adrenals get compromised, the other hormones get compromised.

You're going to have increase in inflammation in the body because cortisol manages the immune system, right? We've all heard of prednisone, right. And prednisone suppresses the immune system.

And cortisol prednisone is made from cortisol okay. It's just blown up a thousand times. And so if cortisol is not functioning correctly, if it's either too high or too low, that's going to negatively affect the immune system.

You're going to get more inflammation. And consequently the cortisol cannot manage that inflammation appropriately. And then you're going to have issues with your ability to lose weight because your hormones and your metabolic rate is going to be changed.

So that's kind of, you know, just like these other toxins, whether they're mental, emotional, physical, even spiritual, anything that's going to be a stressor on the human body is going to, inhibit your ability or it's going to decrease your ability to lose weight.

And I think that trauma really is something that is worth emphasizing because, you know, we talked in the beginning, like people who feel like they have tried everything and nothing seems to work.

Some of the clearest examples I have in my clinic were people where they came in every month. And we, we did the program and they were following the advice the best they could, and they didn't have very dramatic weight loss.

And then, something would change you that they would intentionally change it or it would change for whatever reason. In one case, I had someone who divorced an abusive partner.

In another case, I had a family and they downsized to a house that was more affordable for them and got rid of a lot of financial stress. They were experienced on a daily basis.

And like in these cases where or people quit really stressful jobs and it's like, like the weight just comes off. Right. And I've like to say that it was something I did.

Trauma, Nervous System Dysfunction, and Weight

But they, they now all the stuff they were doing, all the advice they were following for me finally worked because they were in that state of high cortisol and stress and, holding on to weight that they really just couldn't lose when their body constantly was in this state of stress.

Yeah, that's that's so important. And that's something that I've seen as well. In fact, when people join our program, I tell them at some point in this program, I'm going to want you to join a nervous system retraining program, because my wife, who kind of leads some groups in our program, she's a trauma informed mindfulness coach.

And so she does have that background, but we don't have an official curriculum. So it's kind of like, all right, this is really important. This is going to expedite your healing.

Whether you feel like you have trauma or not. It's you. You have some. And it's important to get remedied. So I think you said in the beginning there was five things that and I feel like I missed one of them. What did we miss.

So heavy metals okay. Chemicals molds infections and trauma okay. I think I was lumping the heavy metals and the chemicals together, which they are different things.

So that makes sense. We did cover them all okay. So when it comes to removing toxins you know you have this four step process. Can you explain to the audience what that looks like or what that involves.

Absolutely. So the first step is it's kind of like what you alluded to is to figure out the causes that individuals have. Right. So really important first step and notice I said causes and not diagnoses.

So it's really important to remember that diagnoses are not what you're looking for them. They're kind of a conglomeration of like labs plus your symptoms.

But they don't really tell you what the causes are. The causes are the underlying issues. Right. And so I generally find in the work that I do is that the toxic five are at the root, root of everything, but there are other consequences.

So the I, I basically break these causes into deficiencies and toxicities. The deficiencies are things like we talked about with the adrenals and the thyroid and the sex hormones.

So it's hormones. And then there's the mitochondria which makes 70 to 90% of our energy. That gets damaged by the toxic five. And then there's vitamins and minerals and then lifestyle habits.

So not enough good water, not enough good food, not enough good movement and not enough good sleep. So I consider all those to be deficiencies with besides the lifestyle habits, all the rest really can be caused by the toxic five.

And then the toxic five are over here on the toxicities. And so once we figure out the causes then the next step is to replace the deficiencies. So even though this process is really all about removing the toxic five, you have to make the body more resilient.

And you have to prepare the body for removing those toxins. So we replace the deficiencies the the hormones and the vitamins and minerals and the mitochondria.

And then in step three we open up the exit pathways. So to get rid of these toxins, which are really embedded in the tissues in the different parts of the body, we have to make sure that those processes, those pathways are open.

So the liver and the kidney and the lymph and the neural lymph, which is the garbage system in the brain and the

gallbladder and the intestines, all those pathways have to be open.

I kind of think about them as like a funnel where the bottom of the funnel is the step three. So that bottom has to be open. So when you start dumping the toxins in and step four, they have a place to go to get out of the body.

And the the rate at which you can do this is directly dependent on the work that you've done in step three, and I do recommend that slow and steady wins the race.

You know, when you're trying to mobilize these toxins very quickly and very intensely, the body generally doesn't do well.

The Four-Step Detox Process

So you have to remember that, you know, like we talked about before, you have to have the expectation that this is going to take a while to get out of the body.

But at the end of six, 12, whatever months, you're going to look back and you'll be like, oh my gosh, this was so amazing, you know? And then you've got the rest of your life to enjoy, and you don't have to deal with all the crap that was in your body.

So just that's the four step process that I take people through that I found to be most helpful. Thank you for sharing that. And I think what you said about looking back, you know, six, 12 months at a time is powerful.

I advise my patients of that all the time, right? Sometimes when you look at yesterday, you know, see the difference. But if you look back a month, two months, six months, then you're like, wow, I've come a long way, which may be the number on the scale, right?

But it may be other things like your energy level or things like that as well. Right. So you're looking at that and I think, you know, like I sometimes have patients log those things.

I write down a lot of what they're telling me to so that I can go back and be like, oh no, no. When you came in, you said that you, you know, always felt tired and you said you couldn't walk more than a mile.

And like, now look at what you can do. So I think regardless of like what method you're using, looking back and seeing that progress is so powerful, you're not going to see it overnight most of the time.

But when you look at these months at a time or look back a year, you'll see the impact your health changes are having. Absolutely. And generally, people do need that reflection, you know, and oftentimes it's coming from people around them where they're like, oh, you know, my partner or my friend or my kid or whoever it is said to me, hey, you know, you seems like you're doing better.

What are you doing? Right? And so, so, yeah, so it's important to kind of reflect that back because as humans, we're incredibly adaptable and we forget from whence we came.

Yeah, yeah. That's powerful. Well, anything else you'd like to share? About what you do with our audience? Well, you can find me at energy MD method.com, and we do have free 20 minute visits with me to see if we're a good fit to work together and see if I can help you.

But I think, you know, one of the most important things that that people can do moving forward, just as a little takeaway is to, to focus on their mindset, you know, like all this stuff that we're talking about and removing these toxins and working on trauma, etc.

Mindset, Gratitude, and Closing Advice

it really all starts with mindset. And I believe that it really starts with gratitude. So just three gratitude today is really

what the research says.

It can be the same gratitudes every day. But oftentimes that is really great for starting to, retrain your nervous system and moving in a positive direction.

I love that such a simple place to start to find three things you're grateful for every day. Write them down or meditate on them. And, and it does. You know, we can change our brain chemistry.

We can change our nervous system and how it responds to things. And that's such a tangible, easy thing to do. I love that so much. Thank you. Okay. Well, thank you so much for joining me.

And we'll make sure people have connections to your information and have a have a good one. Thanks for having me.