Introduction to Kate Northrup

Welcome back to The Super Fertility Summit. I'm so excited to have you here. And you are in for such a treat right now, because my dear friend and incredible, incredible expert Kate Northrup is here with us today.

She's an entrepreneur, a bestselling author, and a mother, and she supports ambitious people to light up the world without burning themselves out. And I know that sounds good to you.

It sounds really good to me. Kate teaches us how to heal our relationship with money, time, and work. She's the author of the bestsellers Money: A Love Story and Do Less.

And she's the creator of the gorgeous Do Less Planner and the host of the top ranking podcast Plenty. Her work has been featured by The New York Times, Oprah Daily, The Today Show, glamor, Harvard Business Review, and more.

She lives with her husband and business partner and their two beautiful daughters in Miami. And Kate Northrup is here to talk to us today about a topic that isn't confronted enough or is confronted so much, but not talked about enough, which is how to reduce the stress of money and work in order to support having healthier fertility.

Kate, welcome to the Super Fertility Summit. Thank you Cleopatra, I'm so happy to be here. It's so wonderful to have you here, Kate. So I always like to start from the end and ask, what's the one thing that you want people to be able to take away from the conversation that we're about to have?

Okay. The one thing I want you to remember is that our bodies are incredibly wise and inherently fertile, and our survival wiring is an unconscious way that we present ourselves from the expansion it requires to feel safe enough to conceive a physical baby or any other creation.

And there are specific things that we can do to rewire ourself for safety, to be able to access our inherent fertility. But it's not going to come from your mind.

I love that so much. It's not going to come from your mind. I want you to tell us a little bit more about what you mean by that.

Survival Mode vs. Creation

And maybe first starting with the understanding that the energy of survival is counter to the energy of creation. And so many of us are living in a state of survival.

So tell us about that state of survival and how we rewire ourselves for creation and thriving in the world that we live in today. Yeah. So my love affair is with the nervous system.

And, you know, the nervous system is deeply intertwined with the reproductive system. Also the digestive system, the immune system, the endocrine system.

It's there's no system in our body that is not essentially mitigated by our foundation of how safe our nervous system feels in our nervous system wiring.

and sort of set points are determined by the environment that we were raised in. Now, most of us were raised in environments that, were suboptimal for lack of a better.

I mean, that's just true. Like, it's not often that you meet someone who is like the environment I was raised in was

so calm and supportive, and I had all my needs met, and I was deeply attuned to.

And even if that was what it was like in your household, which I have met people where they're they're just like, no, no, it was gorgeous. Like, oh, it's amazing. Amen.

Yeah. We live in a sympathetic, dominant culture. So even if in your home, the setting was rest restore, digest, tend and befriend in the outer world, certainly our educational system, the economy, the media cycle.

And just kind of like the way everyone does things. We have a sympathetic, dominant culture, which means we are in a fight, light breeze, domination or freak out energy.

So in the nervous system, we have what's called the range of capacity or the range of resonance or the range of regulation. And that is the range of our capacity, our ability to respond to the stimulus in our lives, both positive and negative, and remain in a conscious state of choice about our response.

So being regulated does not mean being calm and relaxed all the time. Being regulated means I am present and I am having an experience, and I am consciously choosing how to respond.

We will very often have a small range of regulation because life is really stressful and we have a stress bucket that is very full, if not overflowing.

And then one more thing gets added in. You know, someone cuts you off in traffic. They run out of zucchini at the grocery store. Your husband looks at you wrong.

You're like in full meltdown. And that is because you are out of your range of regulation and will go two directions. One is hyper, and I think most of the people listening to this are going to, resonate with a hyper response.

And the other one is hypo. Hypo is more freeze and, flop and fawn hyper is fight flight. Now we don't have to literally be trying to fight somebody or be running to be in a flight response.

So like a modern day woman, flight or fight response could be working 14 hours a day, could be being in constant self-judgment and also other judgment.

That's a low grade fight response. what's tricky is that in our culture, productivity is really celebrated and being busy is really celebrated. So those of us who tend to more of a hyper nervous system response get very celebrated by society for that behavior.

But sometimes that behavior is a maladaptive trauma response.

Nervous System Regulation and Fertility

So the very thing that we think earns us a badge of honor is actually a deeply dysregulated nervous system and deep embodied fear, which will prevent you, well, which may inhibit your ease of conception.

This is so incredible, and I think is probably blowing the minds of many people listening. I mean, we're talking about the central nervous system and how it's principally involved, number one, in our survival and safety.

And then secondary to that, our ability to get and stay pregnant and grow a human nurse, a breastfeed, a human nurture, a human care for a human. And yet hearing it in these incredibly stark terms is really eye opening.

And especially the piece about how much we have been conditioned to be in our sympathetic nervous system, to be in our fight or flight response. Most of us are highly educated, high achieving women, go getters and in many ways are living in a more masculine way as opposed to in in our feminine.

And that has an impact whether we realize it or not. And like you said, it's being rewarded, which makes it even

more complex. And the work that you're doing in the world being a stand in a resource for women to say that you can have the business of your dreams, you can have the career of your dreams, you can have the financial serenity and expanse of ness of your dreams, and not have to live in in a state of emergency is. It's pretty revolutionary, Kate, and beautiful and important.

So first, I just want to thank you for that. And really personally, as a woman who lost her mother at birth and can really identify with the fact that I felt like most of my life, like I have to justify and and prove that I'm worthy of the space that I take up in the world because someone gave up their life so that I could have mine.

I mean, that's probably like one of the highest forms of hyper functioning, right? And so thank you for what you do and what I would love to hear for the woman listening, the human listening right now saying, this is me.

Oh my God, what do I do? How do I change? Especially when the world around me isn't changing anytime soon? Yeah. What are some tools that we can begin using today?

And we already know from you that it's not starting in the mind. That's where I think. In my mind, we're all trying. To solve our problems from the mind.

So tell us, please, Kate. I want to I'm going to answer your question, with a story and then a practice. And so, in in 2021, my family and I moved to Miami unexpectedly.

And, we were paying for two lives. All of a sudden. So we had this previous life in Maine that we still had the mortgage and all the things. And then now we had this new life in Miami and suddenly paying for, like, so much rent, you know, childcare.

The private school did that, and my husband was incredibly ill. He's also my business partner. So, I had we were like, fully one man down in terms of parenting earning and the company and two lives suddenly, like, sort of not entirely double the expenses, but like quite a bit more.

And, this was not the first time this had happened with him. And so I was at a point where my previous behavior was that I would ramp up and run a campaign in my company, too, because the stress and the pressure, felt like I needed to use all my energy towards production.

And with the guidance of a couple of trusted therapists, I realized so in one particular session, our therapist looked at me and he was like, okay, I want you to go inside and ask yourself, close your eyes and imagine that Mike has just come home and he has said, okay, I just made $10 million.

So now you don't need to do anything like we're good for a good long time, so you can just do whatever now. David said, now I want you to feel what is happening inside your body.

And my response was shocking. Now, the thing about the body is it has no sense of time, and it doesn't know the difference between if something is actually happening or you are imagining something happening.

I mean, this is like a fundamental principle of amazing, high performance athletic training and so many other things.

Personal Story: Stress, Money, and Health

So I imagined and what the response was is that I felt flatlined and almost depressed, and I was like, what is going on? And so in conversation with a trained professional, what I realized is, and I'm sharing this story because I know I am not the only one who's wired this way.

What I realized is without the imminent threat of financial pressure, I felt dead. Wow wow wow. My nervous system was wired in such a way that I was addicted to financial pressure, and I was using stress and pressure as a stimulus to feel alive.

Oh my. God. And this connects back to the health piece. So at the time I was not trying to get pregnant, but I did get all my labs done. And my doctor, who's an amazing functional medicine doctor, looked at my numbers and he said, Kate, if you keep living this way, you are going to get very sick.

And I was like, shocked. We can't have a family where both parents are really sick. My kids need a parent who's well, and so I didn't have a choice but to operate in a new way.

So I had all this very real financial need, no one else making the money at the time, and a doctor telling me, like, listen, lady Jane, you need to shift because you're adrenal.

So he was basically like, your brakes and your gas are completely broken, which you would be able to say what, all those. Yes. Yeah. And if I had been wanting to get pregnant, it would not have worked.

That's probably. True. Yeah. Probably. Right. Oh what did I do. Well I did an experiment and the experiment was just for 90 days. So I really recommend this just for 90 days or pick an amount of time that's going to work for you.

It was so it was 90 days or a certain amount that I was willing to go into our savings. So I was like, either we're going to get to 90 days or I'm going to go this amount in the whole financially.

And during that time, I am not allowed to ramp up and launch a new campaign from this place of like, I got to make. Money, I got. It, I know that, and instead, any time I want to do that, anytime I feel the urge, which, by the way, was multiple times a day, I.

I am going to instead, relax. And I'll tell you, like one thing specifically that I did around that because that'll be the practice. Okay. and I just want to be really honest, it felt awful.

Like it felt like I was dying because there was a part of me that was dying. and I cried a lot. There was a lot of just, like, lying on my bed crying.

There were so many unfelt feelings that needed to come up from years of working over my feelings. and then probably. Generational, you know, like, I'm sure that I was, like, crying tears on behalf of my grandmothers.

Okay. Yes. So here's what happened, though. It was a freaking miracle. At the end of 90 days, we had to hit all of our goals in the company. We never needed to go into savings, and I had lived evidence that stress and pressure were not required to get the results that I wanted.

I had created them from relaxation. I didn't shut down my company. I was delivering on the things I had already promised. I just wasn't like ramping up to do something new and all like this extra, you know, like bonus extra stuff happened that I didn't have to ramp up to make happen.

So what was one of those practices? Well, I already said one of them, which was feeling my feelings. so much nervous system dysregulation comes from essentially thousands and thousands of open tabs in our internal emotional browser.

From all the moments of big T and little T traumas and collective traumas and all the ancestral ones as well, that we did not have the capacity, the support or the insight or to actually feel and fully metabolize those moments and, and and allow them to leave our system.

And so we're walking around with like a million open emotional stress loops and that's that. That's the right bucket. It's overflowing. And then we wonder why we're completely on edge all the time.

And so a really beautiful way to regulate your nervous system is to allow yourself to have a scream into a pillow in the closet, or have a good cry or whatever.

You know, whatever emotion comes up. How often are we starting to cry when we're talking to a girlfriend and we

start to do this? Or we we put our hands over our eyes and we apologize trying to stuff it back down.

We need to actually let it flow. So that's one thing, is actually letting ourselves feel our feelings. And then the second thing is, we had just moved to Miami.

We were in a high rise. I was on the 41st floor, so I felt super disconnected from the ground because I was. And so I would go down to the waterfront by our building, and I would sit and look at the ocean, and I would resource my body with the energy of the ocean.

And that might feel like, what are you even talking about? But what the data shows us is that the just looking at nature, even if it's through a window, but better if you can be outside.

Just looking at nature regulates our nervous system. Why? Because we are nature. We are animals. We are made of the same thing. So if we want to be more regulated, if we want to expand our capacity and metabolize and start to empty that stress bucket, looking at nature, being in nature, and then actually like looking at the ocean, looking at a tree, and then allowing ourselves to let the energy of that nature, body come into our own body.

And you might not even know what I'm talking about, but just try it out. Your body knows how to do this exactly. And your body will feel it instantly.

It's incredible how how long did it take you?

Practices for Feeling and Regulating

Did it take you the full 90 days to feel like you got there, or did it happen much more quickly than you expected? That's a good question. No, I mean, I it's so. Okay.

So now I'm to gosh, three I'm three years out from that moment in March of 2021. And I will say when faced with contraction or feeling any kind of pressure or whatever, financially it is very rare that my first instinct is to ramp up and do something that I like to like to go fix it from the place of stress.

but sometimes I still go there. And so I would say that like within the 90 days I felt a dramatic difference. And now I had evidence to be able to tell my brain when it was like, no, no, no, no, you better get busy.

I could be like, no, no. But remember, we did that experiment and it was fine. And then it's like, oh yeah, okay. So, you know, I'm a scientist just like you, Cleopatra.

Like I need evidence. And so it really helped to rewire me. I had the lived experience and then I had proof. And so, yeah, it happened. It happened like, it doesn't have to take forever.

I mean, these, patterning that we have in the nervous system have gotten there over, you know, certainly decades in our lived experience. And then, you know, if we bring in the epigenetics and ancestral like it's, you know, hundreds and hundreds of years, but it doesn't need to take decades to unravel.

Like people can notice a difference. You can go outside and put your back against a tree trunk. You'll notice a difference. that is a revelation. And it's it feels so much like what I say to our mamas when they come to the Prime Minister that, you know, we have mamas who have been considered infertile for up to two decades, mamas who have had up to 17 miscarriages.

When they come to us for help, I mean very long hard journeys and and it's shocking to them when I say to them just because it has been long and hard up until now does mean it has to continue to be long and hard.

And I think it's still hard to wrap your mind around that when you're in that first moment of hearing it. But what a revelation to feel how quickly life and we can transform and reorganize.

And your story is such beautiful, beautiful proof of that. So I can't thank you enough for sharing that story because it's so, so meaningful. So feeling your feelings, which has to happen through the body doesn't happen in my mine.

I need to tell a story about your feelings while you're feeling them. Yeah, right. So like so many of the stuck emotions, maybe it's pre-verbal maybe, like, we don't know and it doesn't matter.

Like sometimes it is really helpful to know the story and metabolize that and work through it. But if you just have emotions coming up in me, my daughter Ruby, who's six, she'll just like be having a meltdown and she just be like, I don't know why exactly.

It doesn't matter why you're crying. It's still really productive. So just lean into this feeling. You can totally cry without knowing why it's not a problem.

And I would just say the same thing to anyone here. It's like it is a beautiful thing to just let it out and feel the whole feeling all the way through.

Usually a feeling will shift in about 90s if you just give yourself over completely to it. Now that is also an incredible piece of knowledge to have, because I think the tendency is to tiptoe around feelings and try to run from them, distract ourselves from them, because if they feel so big and they feel like if you go into them, they'll swallow you up.

But really what happens is that they dissipate rather quickly, right? That's so incredible. And I love how you you brought up the example of Ruby, because what a blessing to have a mama like you who is teaching your daughter.

Is this at such a young age that you don't have to know why you feel the way you feel, or why you're crying? And it is not only okay, but productive and constructive to cry and let your feelings out as opposed to why are you crying?

Stop crying, which I think a lot of us were brought up with. So Amen to that. Thank you so much for for how you're raising your daughters and for the example you are, and for teaching all of us about these really practical tools that we can use when when I think about the nervous system and the things that we can do to heal our nervous system, what would you say are the best and worst trends that you're seeing right now?

Because I think that nervous system healing is becoming a little bit of a buzz word or phrase. And, what do you what do you think is working really well?

And what do you wish would be different? That's a great question. I mean, I think that, listen, the body is complex. Humans are so multifaceted. So any time we oversimplify and just say, like, oh, it's always your nervous system or it's always a trauma response or it's, you know, it's not.

However, I think that we could probably stand to swing the pendulum further towards nervous system healing and less towards mindset.

Community, Relationship, and Support

because. I like that. Because our thoughts and our beliefs, you know, our essentially our mindset are caused by our nervous system because our nervous system mitigates our emotions and then our emotions activate our thoughts and beliefs.

So by the time we've gotten to a thought and belief, there's like a whole unconscious cascade of things that have happened. And then we have all these mindset experts being like, just choose a thought that feels better.

And, you know, it's it's not that simple. So I will say this, like, if you're going to lean into nervous system healing and you have a background of real traumas, if there's a background of abuse of, of neglect, you know, like, I would really work with a professional. Yes.

you know, I, I don't think that we want to just be, like, out here running fast and wild with our nervous systems. If we have, like, a real background of big trauma.

That being said, you're not going to hurt yourself if you go out and hug a tree, which which is like regulating to your nervous system. Do you know what I mean?

So I don't think we need to be super. I wouldn't like, try to learn eMDR and practice it on yourself, but like, yeah, go like, you know, smell some basil.

it's not typically. there are so many things, Cleopatra, that as humans, we've been doing for millennia. And if we go back to the indigenous traditions that are the original for every single one of us, you know, no matter where you are in the colonized colonizer spectrum, every single one of us originally comes from an indigenous group, and these practices have been going on for thousands of years sitting in ceremony, connecting with plants, dancing, music, rhythm, bare feet on the ground, sitting in a circle, connecting with the moon, connecting with our cyclical nature.

So like this is who we are. We just forgot. let's say that again one more time. This is who this is. We just forgot. But when we get into regulation, your body will begin to remember.

And it will naturally gravitate towards the things that already live in your lineage that are very life giving, that your grandmothers did, and your great grandmothers and your great great great grandmother.

I mean, fundamentally, like everything that's a nervous system, healing practice is something that has existed for eons. That's so beautifully, beautifully said.

And I think is also the even more the case for why we want to do this healing and interested support and community, because communalism and having that support was, was and is always such an incredibly large factor.

And it's huge ability to do everything in life, including get and stay pregnant and have our sex babies and everything. I don't know if you read Cleopatra, the book, the Garden Within by Doctor Anita Phillips.

I haven't read it. Okay. I love the title. Okay. All right. Good. The garden within. Oh, my goodness. She's a she's a doctor who specializes in trauma and the nervous system.

And she really spoke over and over and over again in that book about how safe community is our most potent healing ingredient, safe community, over and over and over.

It needs to be the first place we turn. But most people don't have safe community in their lives, which is why what you create is so meaningful. Thank you so much.

And I, I, I think I want to really underscore this. So I wrote the title, I love the title and I want to read this book. We have mountains of studies to show just how critical this support component is to getting pregnant, staying pregnant, carrying the baby to term, having a baby who who has good mental, physical health, neurocognitive health, etc.

and yet, I think that people still here feel when they hear the word support as if it's kind of optional. Nice to have cute fuzzy, not so concrete, not the real science.

And in fact we have an enormous scientific literature on it, and it's even more critical for women than it is for men. But it's critical across genders, binary or not.

And so I really I want to stay here and underscore this, because I think it's too easy to gloss over this piece and feel like it's nice to have support, but it's an optional thing, whereas it's actually the most core human need.

I mean, our brains are social. We are social beings. That's why tend and befriend who, by the way, the author of that study was one of my mentors at UCLA.

I mean, just the, in my PhD program, it's these are it's so fundamental to who we are and what we need as especially as women, especially as mamas. Even if you don't yet consider yourself a mama because you haven't been able to birth your child yet. And we're living in a world that is more interconnected than ever, but more separate and isolated than ever.

And we really are, forget we've really forgotten who we are in terms of the communal lives and peace. What you have, you are somebody who excels at building community online and offline.

I've been part of all of your communities, so I know this firsthand and have benefited tremendously from all of your communities. I know it's just a natural talent that you have, but how do you how do you make that happen for yourself?

How can a woman make that happen for herself or allow that not make because that's so effortful? Allow. Yeah, but it does require making it a priority.

So first of all, I think that, really ship building has historically been identified as, you know, more of one of the womanly arts. And so that's fine.

you know, building relationship in with both men and women is more of a feminine energy quality. Unfortunately, due to being raised in a patriarchy, automatically we devalue that which we see as feminine, that which we see as the skill set of women.

And so it's just that, like, I think that we a badger to be super straightforward was my first business was in network marketing. It was relationship selling.

So I and I started that business when I was 15 years old. Amazing. So as my brain was finishing up development, I, I was wiring together that building relationship and being of service was actually required to meet for me to make money.

Beautiful. And so like it just got wired is like, this is an incredibly productive way to spend your time. Now I don't see relationship transactionally at all in that way.

The way I've always done it is like I'm a resource in my community. the more we build our networks, the easier it is for everyone. You know? I see us as like, especially women.

What Super Fertility Means

I really see us as, like the mycelium underneath the forest floor, just that it's we're actually one organism just sharing resources and that when, like, there's not enough water over there in the forest, all these mycelium, the network goes out and just, like, sends the water.

I mean, to me, it just is an easier way to live for everyone. I also just, I really like people. So it is it is somewhat how I'm wired. But I wanted to share that, we need to notice our tendency to devalue relationship building because it's deemed as a feminine activity and instead really see it as deeply productive, financially and otherwise.

It's incredible. It actually takes me back to a moment, in USC, where I was I became a tenured professor, and I was the first woman of color in history on the tenure track.

And, a dean, a male dean, said to me that I possess many qualities that are not valuable, including, my good relationship skills, my great communication skills, and my active ism.

And it's such a I mean, it's kind of shocking to hear that in and in recent years, this kind of conversation can actually happen. But it's such a representation of what you said, which is that we inherently, in our society, devalue skill sets that are perceived as more feminine and I, I really believe and hope that as more and more women are in leadership positions, that can start to shift.

But until the world around us shifts, the things that you have taught us here today are so critical to ensuring that we get to shift so that we get to live a healthy, happy and Super Fertile life and pass that down to our our super babies and our super grandbabies and so on.

So I just feel, number one, blown away by the depth of this conversation, but not surprised because I knew you were going to bring that here. And I'm so happy and excited to be able to share this with all of the people listening.

But thank you so much for the work that you do, Kate. I really appreciate it. You're welcome. I want to ask you one more question before we close. What does Super Fertility mean and feel like to you and your central nervous system?

I love that. So, you know, my podcast is called Plenty because that feeling of there's more than enough, there's overflow. That is what Super Fertility feels like to me.

It feels like being plugged into the source of life force, knowing that there's always more where that came from. knowing that we are fueled from within, from our deeper connection to that which is greater than us.

That's what Super Fertility means to me, and feels like it feels like Plenty. And so beautiful. Super fertility feels like 20. So good and I feel that too.

So thank you so much for sharing, Kate. Thank you for the honor and blessing of having your beautiful wisdom. here with us, I really think this conversation is a game changer for so many.

Thank you. Thank you Cleopatra. What an honor. Thank you to you listening. I'm so happy that you got to be here with us for this conversation, and I can't wait for you to join me at our next conversation.

See you there.