Opening and Guest Introduction

I just kind of hit a point where as I was moving into my 70s, realizing that this work wasn't supporting my health anymore, and I had to look at that.

I knew that for me to live my health span into my 90s, which I'm sure I can do because I'm free of chronic diseases and I'm not on any meds, just hormones and supplements and a really healthy lifestyle.

I knew that I had to have a little more time. Welcome back to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Heather Sandison. And today I want to introduce you to someone who's literally helped shape the trajectory of my life.

I met Dr. Sally Lamont when I was an undergraduate at San Francisco State University in the early 2000s. She is the person who introduced me to naturopathic medicine and really shaped my purpose and meaning in life.

And in many ways, she introduced me to a vision of not only what medicine could be, but who I could be. And decades later, we've reconnected at conferences over the years, and she is still the person I quietly think of when I ask myself, who do I want to be when I grow up?

Dr. Sally is a naturopathic doctor, and she's a licensed acupuncturist with over four decades of experience in functional medicine. And until recently, she was practicing at Marin Natural Medicine Clinic, where she worked with patients facing complex chronic conditions, digestive disorders, hormonal imbalances, immune challenges and cognitive decline, among many other complaints.

And she does all of this with clarity and warmth and deep clinical wisdom. She has been practicing since 1981 when she earned her degree at National University of Naturopathic Medicine.

And she also completed her Master's in Oriental Medicine at Emperor College. She's trained in the Bredesen Protocol, and she's played a very pivotal leadership role as the executive director of the California Naturopathic Doctors Association.

And she, along with the team, were responsible for securing licensure for naturopathic doctors in the state of California. And that alone is legacy work right there.

So today, Dr. Sally, she's stepping into a new chapter that I'm excited for her to share with us. She's offering consulting and referral services to help patients make sense of their histories and their labs and find the right practitioner fit to support their health and their goals.

So she continues to live her belief that food is medicine through her beautiful education platform as well, Dr. Sally's Kitchen. And I've invited her here today because as I mentioned, she is a model in aging well, thinking well, staying engaged, really fully engaged and living life to the fullest.

So Dr. Sally, I'm just so honored to have you here. Thank you. Thank you, Heather. It's honestly my honor to be with you. You have inspired me with the work you've done, and I'm happy to be here today.

You've been practicing for more than 40 years. This is rare and remarkable. What drew you to naturopathic medicine when it was far from mainstream, before it was cool?

Yeah. No one even knew about it. When I heard about it in the mid-'70s, You know, I was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1953 when health was not even a consideration.

And I watched two sets of Grandparents. fortunate to have a brief introduction to one, a longer introduction to the other. And they lived very differently.

My dad's parents actually had a small farm, they garden, they lived close to nature. They were descendants of the pioneers and they kind of understood living off of the earth.

Discovering Naturopathic Medicine

And my mom's parents ran a greasy spoon in Kansas City, worked themselves to the bone, ate garbage. And as I was going through high school and college, I watched the two sides of my family go different directions.

I lost the grandparents who worked in a restaurant and ate poor health very early. They died of heart attacks. I barely met them. And the other grandparents lived longer and more fulfilling lives.

So by college, I was looking at food as playing a very important role in longevity, even though I didn't even know how to articulate that at the time.

But I took courses in biology, human biology, microbiology, biochemistry, and when I heard about naturopathic medicine, I just knew I had found my calling.

I have never looked back. I've loved this career. When you were teaching the Introduction to Naturopathic Medicine course at San Francisco State, I remember that moment probably the first week of the first class where when I realized what it was, it was just this, it wasn't an if question anymore.

It was just a matter of when I would go to naturopathic school. It was so clear it was aligned with my values. Looking back, the core principles from that naturopathic training 40 years ago, what still guides your work today?

The principle stated in Latin, docere, it means to teach. And I think I am a natural teacher. I love sharing what I've learned with others and empowering them to change their health trajectory, really.

So that's the one that touches me most, I would say, the role of doctor as teacher. And it's not the way conventional medicine is practiced at all. So, yeah.

And food has been such a big part of your journey. And that understanding of food, the role of food in healing, how has that evolved over the decades?

You talked about what that looked like noticing your grandparents and them aging. But using food as medicine now, has it evolved or kind of do you come back to the same tenets?

Well, I think it has evolved. I was very fortunate in naturopathic medical school in 1980 to have Dr. Jeffrey Bland as a nutrition teacher, and he is the founder of the functional medicine movement, a brilliant biochemist himself, and he has developed the science of nutritional medicine, I would say.

in the beginning, you know, growing up on spam sandwiches and wonder bread and ding-dongs and junk like that, I… didn't know really what food was until I started to get my hands in the earth and recognize the difference between real food and what we called at the time junk food and what we're now calling ultra-processed food.

So much science has been done to break down the carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamin, mineral, and now the phytonutrient benefits of food. In the end, food is nourishing and it brings us joy as well as health.

We just need to learn to get our hands on real food and cook it and use it really to nourish us instead of just eating because we need to or we're hungry without the kind of thought that I think it really deserves.

So tell us about Dr. Sally's kitchen in that context. What is the problem that you're trying to solve for patients and other practitioners as well with the kind of prescription recipes and this idea of a food pharmacy?

Break that down for us. Yeah. Well, one of the things I noticed is a lot of people don't cook. They don't know how to cook. They don't know where to start with food.

Food as Medicine and Dr. Sally's Kitchen

So though I'm not a chef and a cooking instructor, I am a teacher by nature, so my goal initially was to share recipes and to educate about the healing power of food.

So I mentioned the word phytonutrients. I love that word. It means plant nutrients. they're really pigments that are in food that make tomatoes red and blueberries blue and greens green.

Those pigments actually interact with our genes and help them program our bodies for health instead of dis-ease. So I try to, in my recipes and many blog posts, educate people about the nutrient value of the actual food that they're using, and then share recipes with them about how to integrate those foods and nutrients into their diet.

That's incredible. I have seen this over and over again as well, where people just don't know where to start. And I think there's one, it's so convenient and easy to get junk food, ultra processed food, right?

We can drive through, drive through, we can pick up something from the deli, even if it's at Trader Joe's or something where we might think it's healthy.

It's marketed as healthy, but it's still not as good as we could, of course, make it at home. I'm curious how you guide people to like take the first steps of taking back control of what they eat and how to find the time and, you know, how do we navigate this if we're somebody who's like working or juggling grandparenting, all the things that come up in life that make it easier to choose the convenience foods versus cook at home?

That's a really good question, Heather. I wish I had the comprehensive answer to it because it would solve our nation's healthcare problems. I guess people are so strung out and busy doing everything that often food is the last thing you think of.

So I would say part of my answer to that is become a foodie and start to prioritize food in your life. Make time not order Instacart even, but really put your hands on food and experience it and then begin to prioritize it.

Take 30 minutes to go to the grocery store a couple of times a week and get whole foods. Get the protein that you need, the chicken, fish, beef, tofu, grains, beans.

Have those things in your house. So build a pantry and a refrigerator stocked with small quantities of the fruits and vegetables that you're actually going to use so you don't end up wasting a lot.

And then start playing. I mean, beyond Dr. Sally's kitchen, there are recipes there. There are now. probably thousands of sites full of recipes. Instagram and Facebook flooding every day with recipes on the New York Times and on the Apple News Feed.

So there's no lack of, I think, inspiration. It's really, for me, about prioritizing food in my life. I think it is the foundation of health and making time to plan out a few meals, get the ingredients, and then Prioritize 30 minutes at the end of the day to put together a meal.

And I always say after you've made that meal and you're cleaning up, put what's left over into a nice glass container in the refrigerator so you have that for lunch or dinner in the next day or two.

If you're single, cook for two. Invite a friend to join you. If they can't, then that's your lunch for tomorrow. If you're a couple, cook for four so that you always have, so that it isn't so time intensive, just meal by meal, but you're making enough for future meals in the week.

Make soups on the weekend and freeze them for, you know, one of those days when you come home and you're

exhausted and you have a sore throat and you feel something coming on.

You've got your chicken soup in the freezer. And I have a really good recipe for chicken soup on Dr. Sally's kitchen. It's kind of my signature dish. We're going to make sure that's on the show notes so it's easy for everyone to find.

I've had this experience, right, of feeling overwhelmed by work and parenting and everything that happens in life. And I've had someone suggest to me, well, why don't you just do Instacart so you're not having to go to the grocery store all the time?

And my response is like, I love my grocery store. I love going and seeing the artichokes and like noticing what's in season and picking the cucumber that I think is going to, you know, or the pineapple that looks the best.

And whoever picks that up on Instacart, they're not going to have the same care or attention going into picking out that produce. So I don't want to outsource that.

I want to do that. I wish I had the time and could put in the effort to go to the farm and pick it myself, right, or grow it myself. But this is, I couldn't agree with you more, this is really about prioritization.

And I find that when I'm going through the produce section of my grocery store, it's actually, it's really calming for me. I enjoy it. There's all the, my senses are engaged and I now know the produce guy and I can have these conversations with him and it feels like I'm in my community.

It's my grocery store home. And that feels really good, but it is really just a matter of what's prioritized. My friends get Instacart delivered and that's just a different lifestyle.

It's a prioritization, they're spending their time in different ways. I'm curious for someone in their 60s, 70s and beyond, are there tips you have for eating with vitality rather than eating for restriction or feeling, I think there's always this tension of like, we want to inspire people to eat healthy and especially at first, it can feel restrictive.

So how do you help people navigate that? another good question. Be willing to experiment, to try some things that you maybe haven't tried before.

Healthy Eating Habits and Practical Meal Planning

Being open. While I recognize the benefit of elimination diets, I agree that it can often make people feel like they shouldn't have this and shouldn't have that.

But say a person thinks they're not supposed to eat wheat, so they don't think that they can cook with it, try something new like quinoa. You know, that's honestly a pretty easy thing to cook like rice and can be the basis of wonderful salads, whether it's a tabbouleh type salad or whether, because I make tabbouleh with quinoa.

or, you know, put in cucumbers and goat cheese or sheep feta and mint and bring herbs into the picture too. They make food so much more interesting. You know, dill and parsley and basil and oregano.

These are the flavor bombs. that help amp up the flavor in our food so that it's more exciting to eat. And then it makes you feel good about having invested the time because what you're producing is actually really delicious and tickles your taste buds.

And they're all medicinal. Absolutely very medicinal. But I love what you said about going to the grocery store and getting to touch the food and pick out what you want and getting to know the grocer.

And it's wonderful, go to the farmer's market if you have one and it's in season because you're always going to find the best produce there. So I would say being willing to experiment, introducing the flavor bombs, the spectrum of spices and herbs.

And I have lots of recipes for this kind of thing on Dr. Sally's Kitchen. You embody aging well, and I'm curious about your seasonal practices, physical, mental, emotional.

Do you personally prioritize different things now than you did earlier in your career? I remember when, again, teaching the class, I'll never forget, you talked about how when you would start to feel sick, you would just take time off and do a juice fast, and how that would be this really nice reset that your body was basically asking for.

And I'm curious, you know, these, I've learned already seasonal practices and these practices from you. How has it shifted kind of, will you share how that's evolved over the years?

Yes. I have to say I don't do juice fasts anymore. I did that in my fees and fees, but much less so now. I do it very differently when I do it now. As I've gotten older, my particular body type needs three solid meals a day.

I am a huge proponent of breakfast and a protein and vegetable and fiber-rich breakfast at that. I think Adopting a healthy aging mindset is really critical.

It's so easy as we move into the sixties and seventies to think, well, I'm getting old now. I'm a senior now. I need to like, I don't do those things.

I can't do those things anymore. And that cripples her body's healing capacities. When we stop engaging in things like lifelong learning. and movement and we sit in a chair all day and are glued to a tube or a device of some kind.

So the importance of exercise has never been greater for me and so I prioritize moving my body every day That became increasingly difficult, practicing medicine, sitting in a chair on a computer, nine hours a day, five days a week.

So as I've gotten older, I have increased the amount of exercise. As I've stepped out of practice and I've had time, I have increased my commitment to moving my body every day.

And so but I don't I don't do juice fasting anymore. I have probably replaced that with intermittent fasting. I don't eat late anymore. I make sure that I have three hours before I when I after I finished a meal before I go to bed.

And so that really means finishing up your meal by seven. And if you're going to get in bed by 10. And I know that that can be challenging. But You know, on a one-on-one basis, I've been able to work out with people how to find the time to get 12 to 14, maybe 16 hours without food.

But even 12 hours makes a huge difference. You know, one of the things we've learned in nutritional science over the last few decades is the body's organs kind of have their own time clocks.

And the pancreas, which secretes insulin, turns down its production and release of insulin after 8 p.m. So if we're chowing down on popcorn and chocolate and, you know, worse things at bedtime, it's easier for those calories to be stored as fat, to have blood sugar remain higher, much better to clear the slate through the evening hours not eating and then get up and have a big glass of maybe warm lemon water to get what we call the gastrocolic reflex.

When liquid or food hits your stomach, it stimulates the intestine as a whole to begin to wake up and contract and promote a good bowel movement. So lemon water followed by a good healthy breakfast.

I happen to be an egg person. They contain citicoline, or not citicoline, rather choline, that is so important amino acid slash member of the B vitamin family for cognitive function.

So I integrate those with greens and tomatoes and onions into a scramble in the morning. That's a ritual that's working with me at this phase of life.

Yum. I can tell you're going to make us hungry here today. So you've talked about this habit or ritual that you go of around fasting, juice fasting. Is there anything else that you've kind of decided or realized doesn't work for you in

this phase of life or doesn't work for your body type or maybe that you even realized was unnecessary or counterproductive?

I think we hear, we think of juice fasting as healthy. I certainly have, and there have been times when it's really served me.

Aging Well, Fasting, and Brain Health

But I'm curious, like if you feel like the trends, are there any trends out there that maybe aren't the best? Or things that you, you know, like with the wisdom of experience as you look back, have you changed your mind on other things?

Let's see. You know, I don't know that I have. I think the juice fasting piece when I first learned about it was we were doing carrot juice straight, which we now know is full of sugar.

And so what I was doing in the eighties fasting is not how we would even think of doing juice fasting now. And now we have Lots of wonderful companies that produce beautiful, tasty combinations that are not as much sugar.

So certainly if you're going to do a juice fast, dilute each glass with a bit of water. And, you know, I kind of like the idea of getting a lot more fiber in our diet as we age.

And that's something that Americans as a whole don't get enough of. And juice fasting doesn't really give you that fiber because we have lost the fiber in the juicing process.

So I think over time, I've become more of a fan of eating real food, eating that full color spectrum of fruits and vegetables to get those phytonutrients.

and much less on fasting. But that's what's right for my body type. I'm a kind of thinner, higher energy person who needs more solid food, especially as I've gotten older than when I was younger and could kind of coast on it.

You've worked with patients who are aging and dealing with cognitive decline for many years. What do you think matters most? And you may be overlooked by other people and particularly in conventional medicine when it comes to maintaining a healthy brain, protecting our health as we age and particularly our brain.

Yeah. First of all, having that positive attitude about aging makes more difference than we can imagine. According to, I've got it right here, a Yale study, a positive, what they called a glass half full attitude has a greater effect on longevity than not smoking or cholesterol levels.

So just thinking as we get older that we're old cripples our vitality. I think it's very important to be a lifelong learner. Even though I have stepped out of clinical practice, I don't like the word retirement because then it sounds like you're going to go to bed and never get up and that is far from it.

But being a lifelong learner allows you to keep growing as you age, it keeps your brain smart. I'm a biochemistry geek, so I'm still listening to leaders and attending conferences, because I'm going to keep my license.

I'm not going to lose my identity as a naturopathic doctor by stopping working, but sitting at a desk all day was not working for me anymore. So my point is to keep your mind active and continue to learn.

Take a course at the local community college and in something you never had the opportunity or the time to learn about. Geography or geology or astronomy or art or learning to play the piano or another instrument.

There's just so much opportunity. So I think that is a big one. Moving your body is absolutely a critical habit that, I mean, I cannot believe when I go back to the Midwest, we both have some connections to Kansas.

When I get there, I see people who They don't really prioritize leaving their house and getting out and walking, let

alone building muscle mass by taking a yoga class or going to the gym or the Y and just doing some simple strength training.

As we age, if we don't move our body and build strength, we develop something called sarcopenia, which is muscle loss. And muscle is our metabolic machinery.

We have to have good muscle to make us move and to generate something that I think you've had guests talk about, BDNF, brain derived, meaning coming from our brain, neurotrophic factor.

It's a compound that helps our body, our brain build connectivity, build new neurons. And that doesn't happen when we're parked on the couch going, well, I'm old now.

It hurts to walk, so I just won't. And then watch your life degenerate. Right. How do digestion and hormones and immunity and cognition intersect from your perspective?

And I'd love for you to even bring in some of the acupuncture perspective here. How does a complex system achieve more optimization, more balance as we think about aging?

But go back to one of the things you mentioned there. Digestion, hormones, immunity. Hormones. Yeah, thank you for the hormone hint there. I think balancing our hormones after we go through menopause is really important.

And thankfully, there's a kind of a shift in the winds now to acknowledge the benefit of keeping our hormones in balance. As we move through menopause, the HPA axis, the hypothalamic pituitary adrenal, but also our thyroid ovarian hormones and adrenal hormones start to decline.

Those messages are inconsistent and some of those like our ovaries atrophy and stop producing estrogen and progesterone. So I think it is critically important unless you have a list of really good reasons not to, like a prior history of breast cancer might be one of those considerations, or a mom with or a sister with an invasive breast cancer.

I think it's a good idea to use a low dose transdermal estrogen early. Now I want to comment on that last word I used early because I see women in their 40s who are starting to have some peri-mental puzzle symptoms think they should go on hormones in their 40s while they're still cycling every month.

I disagree with that idea because as we move into menopause, our estrogen levels are fluctuating and they're often still higher than progesterone levels, giving us something called estrogen dominance.

So starting hormones too early can exacerbate that estrogen dominance and lead to extra, you know, bleeding between periods and more long continuous than it needs to be.

Once our periods have stopped, that's the right time or very shortly before or after to bring bioidentical hormone replacement therapy into the treatment plan.

That makes a ton of sense. What about acupuncture? How do you incorporate acupuncture into a treatment plan when it comes to protecting brain health as we age?

Well, I have to be honest with you that I kind of stepped out of using acupuncture in my practice as, I mean, I love it. And I really didn't like stopping doing acupuncture and I will comment on how it could be used.

But it isn't something that I had time to do over the last 10 years of my practice as I went through the functional medicine training with Dr. Bland and did the Bredesen protocol.

training, the need for people to have a doctor who would really take a detailed history, listen to their story, run the right labs, explain it to them, get them on a lifestyle and supplement protocol to improve their health was more important for my work.

Hormones, Acupuncture, and Cognitive Support

And there's a lot of acupuncturists in the Bay Area, so I didn't have to be that person. But I love traditional Chinese medicine. And acupuncture is a fantastic tool that I think that would be useful in a person suffering from cognitive decline.

You know, we have this life force, and we call it in naturopathic medicine, the viz medicatrix naturai, the healing power of nature. It's in us. It's what keeps us alive.

And yet the way we live today impedes the flow of that energy through the body. Part of it is postural and part of it's biochemical. So taking time to lie down on a table and have a skilled acupuncturist put needles in the points around the base of the neck, around the temples and the forehead, and through the body as a whole gets the qi moving.

In Chinese medicine, they call that life force qi. We so rarely take the opportunity to slow down and receive maybe an occasional massage, you know, but acupuncture is a dedicated 30 minutes to having your energy balanced by a skilled practitioner.

And it's incredibly relaxing and improving blood flow and the flow of chi to the brain and throughout the body. I love the idea of having that be part of a nurturing protocol for a person who wants to work to improve their cognition.

And we've certainly seen that even with patients who have severe Alzheimer's, their verbal ability, their focus, their attention improves with an acupuncture treatment.

Not for everyone, it's not guaranteed, but with a skilled practitioner, we've seen real amazing benefits to that, and particularly when it's complemented by this prednisone approach.

Right. Your career has evolved in many directions, you know, you don't let the grass grow under you. And you have a big clinical, your clinical practice, you've had a big transition lately.

And you don't like the word retirement, it's kind of retirement-ish. It's this evolution of your career towards consulting and referral work, as well as developing, continue to develop Sally's, Dr.

Sally's kitchen. But I'm wondering what led to that decision? How do you know that the timing was right? How did you know when the timing was right? And what are you hoping this next chapter looks like for you?

Let's see. Practicing medicine is really hard. I don't think most patients understand how hard it is for any doctor to do this work. And when you take on the task of doing the best job you can to be a doctor, it's very all-encompassing.

And I gave my best to it. I love people. I love learning about them and helping what I learn about them influence their lifestyle and diet. And that part of practice I loved.

I actually loved the onset of the use of electronic health records, which in many ways revolutionized the practice of even naturopathic medicine, but I moved from a practice where I would meet with a person, do that work, maybe give them an acupuncture treatment.

I was moving throughout the day, but over the last 10 years as my practice became focused around being on a computer, sitting across a desk from people and then dealing with the curse of it all, which is record keeping, you know, keeping meticulous records and documenting everything and having it all in electronic health records.

just meant that I was spending my weekends finishing everything it took to complete a patient's chart. And then there were hormone prescriptions and it was a cycle that was getting to be so much and then working and videotaping recipes and doing everything on Dr.

Sally's kitchen. I just kind of hit a point where, as I was moving into my seventies, realizing that this work wasn't

supporting my health anymore, and I had to look at that.

So I am going to turn 73 this summer. And I knew that for me to live my health span into my nineties, which I'm sure I can do because I'm free of chronic diseases and I'm not on any meds, just hormones and supplements and a really healthy lifestyle.

I knew that I had to have a little more time. And I also see that there are wonderful young practitioners like you. I love going to the naturopathic conferences and seeing what we've built over the last 40, 50 years as a profession.

And I also see The fact that there are many medical doctors growing increasingly disenchanted with the way medicine's being practiced and they're drawn to functional medicine.

So I started to think about bringing another practitioner in to take over my practice. And I found a lovely young doctor, Sophia Stewart, who took over my patient care, patient's care at the 1st of May of last year.

And she's doing a great job. She's as excited and passionate about health as I am and really, really bright. And she's doing a great job. So I figured out kind of how to replace myself in that role so that I could start to have a life myself.

and take the time to wake up in the morning and go, what do I want to do today? And I'm having, I mean, I have to say so much fun experiencing that because it isn't something I did after college.

I just went straight to naturopathic medical school and straight into practice. So now I get to be with friends. That's so important.

Transitioning Out of Clinical Practice

One of the hallmarks of healthy aging is connection and having a community. I had a good friend develop ovarian cancer and die in the last five years.

And I could see that I didn't have the time to be with her and to connect with her. And it became clear to me that there was more to life than sitting in that role I was in.

So I made a change and I also want to travel. That's much easier done in one's seventies than in one's eighties and nineties. It becomes uncomfortable to travel.

I've worked with so many people in their eighties that just said, you know, I don't want to get on a plane again. It's uncomfortable. Unless you can fly first class on a pod, it's hard to get over to Europe.

So the desire to travel, the desire to be with friends, the desire to learn other creative endeavors drove me to make those changes. I am a repressed artist.

And I used food as my art, and I still do. I'm cooking more than I ever have. But you have other interests. And I think the idea of stopping work as we hit our 70s, it's different for some people.

I mean, our mentor, Dr. Jeff Gland, is turning eight. I don't think the guy will ever stop working. He's one of those unique individuals. But as a woman, as a mother, a wife and a friend I knew I needed to branch out and devote some time to the rest of my own personal life.

It sounds selfish, but it isn't. Yeah, no, in fact, the opposite. What an inspiration to others, too. When you can put your own health first, that is modeling what everyone should do.

And you clearly are not doing that in a selfish way, right? You're cooking for others, you're spending time with those you love, you're showing up as a friend, as a wife, as a mother.

in a different way, and I think it's actually quite the opposite, right? There's a Ram Dass quote of like, the best thing I can do for you, I'm going to totally butcher it, but it's like the best thing I can do for you is work on myself, and the best thing you can do for me is work on yourself.

And you are a model of that. For younger practitioners, you mentioned running into them at AANP, at our conferences, or just students who maybe are considering this career path.

What do you hope they understand about longevity, sustainability, and staying in love with the work, with naturopathic medicine and functional medicine?

Hmm. Well, this kind of medicine, naturopathic medicine, especially functional medicine, it's a calling. So those who want to move into this field need to know this isn't like becoming a neurosurgeon or an orthopedic surgeon where you may make a half a million dollars a year.

This is something you do because you love people and you love helping people and you love changing lives. So that is one piece of an answer to your question.

That occurred to me and I got that out. Tell me the rest of what your question was. How to make it sustainable? Because, you know, I felt so seen when you were describing, like, it's hard.

It's a hard work. It's not an easy path. But you've done it for 40 years. And you talked about, you know, getting up and moving around and not being sedentary as you do it.

But do you have any other tips for being able to sustain a clinical practice? Yeah, I think taking breaks is a really good idea. And I wish I had done more of that through my career.

So there's two ways of taking breaks. I want to put out traveling and the other personal retreats. One of the tools I've used really since I was in my early thirties is going away for a week or sometimes just a long weekend by myself.

to focus on healing. In the early days, I would do a juice fast and I would write. So getting a way to take care of yourself, to rejuvenate yourself is what fuels the ability.

Like you have to fill your own cup up before you can share it with others. So doing maybe yearly retreats is one important way to sustaining a career like this.

and acknowledging cycles in life. I was blessed to be married first to a wonderful, one of the original holistic slash integrative slash functional medicine docs, a medical doctor, John Lamont.

He had non-Hodgkin's lymphoma when we met. We were together for 10 years. He was part of the first group of participants using the drug Rituxan, which now saves lives with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, but he did succumb to it 34 years ago now.

After he passed, I took a couple months off. I went to Hawaii. I took care of myself. I mean, if I had just kept practicing, I would have burned out faster.

So taking breaks to feed yourself, to feed your soul is critical. That can be done in retreats. That happens to also be really good for relationships.

So my husband does that as well. And it's not that we don't love each other, it's that we'll love each other more when we get a little space to come back to ourselves and our center instead of just being workaholics.

And then taking time to travel, maybe a couple of weeks every year. Last February, I took three weeks and went to New Zealand before I retired. Cause it's like, I kind of had to get off the train and, you know, an adventure to come back and continue to serve several more months until I turned my practice over to my colleague.

But, you know, going to awesome places like New Zealand, and I understand you're going to be going soon too, that's one of the most magical places in the world.

That is really important.

Legacy, Rest, and the Next Season of Life

And one other essential thing is some kind of a personal meditation practice, some way of connecting to the healing power of nature, to God, to the source.

So taking whether it's 20 minutes or five minutes a day to breathe, to slow the heck down and let our adrenal glands reduce the amount of adrenaline and norepinephrine that we're shooting out.

Taking a really big break from the demands of life is restorative and I'd say allows us to continue to do this work longer. Thank you for permission. Yes, I am going to New Zealand for a month next week.

I appreciate that. I appreciate you charting this path for us, for those who are coming behind. It really does serve as a model for me personally, and I'm so deeply grateful.

There is no one I think I feel more honored to host. And it feels a bit like a full circle moment, although I hope the circle just keeps going. And I hope that for our listeners, it feels like a quiet invitation to slow down and ask better questions about how we want to live, how we want to age, and how we want to care for ourselves.

You've really illustrated today that aging gracefully isn't about doing more. It's about doing the things that matter and doing them with intention. Trusting your body, nourishing it with real food and prioritizing real food, real connection and real wisdom.

and to allow our body to evolve and our work to evolve without losing the heart of why you started, right? I think that your legacy is living not only in the patients that you've cared for and continue to.

but or in the laws that you helped change and the licensure that you helped us get or the recipes that you've taught. But it's also like you are inspiring generations of practitioners simply by showing up in the world the way you do.

And I am one of them. And I know I also know I'm not alone. So thank you. Thank you for shining a light and paving the way and modeling this life of integrity and curiosity and health and reminding us that we can thrive and just live these really amazing full abundant lives through our 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond.

Thank you. Thank you. I am so grateful for you. Thank you, Heather. It's been a pleasure and I hope our circle keeps growing. I know I'm not stopping.

I'm just shifting gears into the next season of life. And it's just an amazing pleasure for me to reconnect with you, to see how you've used this work and to change the lives of so many other people.

Thank you so much for listening to the Think Well, Age Well podcast. If you enjoyed today's conversation, please take a moment to subscribe, leave a review, and share this episode with someone you care about.

It's one of the best ways to help others discover tools and inspiration for aging well. To stay connected, get bonus resources and never miss an episode, head over to drheathersanderson.com and join my email list.

Until next time, keep thinking well and aging on purpose.