## Introduction and Listener Review

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So these basically are things that an onlooker can't physically see like a cane or a wheelchair, but limit our daily activities and quality. This is Doctor Talks.

Real talk from real doctors on the issues that matter to you most. Hi, it's Dr. Jenn and welcome back to the Integrative Health podcast with Dr. Jenn.

I'm going to be doing a solo episode today and I wanted to also start something new where I read reviews because I would love if you left a review and wrote a little review out so I could share it with everyone.

here and this one is from Nikki Johnson 84. She says root cause health insights you can actually use. Dr. Jen brings a refreshing no-nonsense approach to complex health topics.

I appreciate how she breaks down issues like thyroid disorders, hormone imbalances, and chronic conditions. into clear, actionable advice. She has a total powerhouse of a minimum of four and a health acrobat.

She makes you feel like taking control of your health is actually possible even with a busy life. And yes, that is true.

## Why Invisible Disabilities Matter

Thank you so much, Nikki, that we can take control of our health even when we are so busy. And that should be our priority because we need to feel well.

If we don't feel well, we can't do busy. And if we're feeling tired, well, our mitochondria is not doing well and we need to fix that. So go back, take a listen to the other episodes that talk about things that can hurt your mitochondria.

Okay, so I wanted to bring awareness this week to invisible disabilities. As most of you know, I suffer from an invisible disability, which is Hashimoto's thyroiditis.

I am now in remission, so I don't even declare that illness over me anymore. But because of what I went through with conventional medicine, I had to have half of my thyroid.

removed and I always have to be on thyroid medication. And that can complicate things. And it is frustrating that I have to take medication every day.

And I see it as a blessing from the Lord because now I am super passionate about integrative medicine, evidence-based medicine, and maybe a little taste of distrust in the pharmaceutical companies and in conventional medicine that is brought to you by the pharmaceutical companies.

Actually have a little. I may, for those of you listening on video, because it is really frustrating. And there was this article, this study that came out on how eating eggs is bad for you.

And I'm like, I'm doubling down on eating even double the eggs this week because of that. Because we can't have disease without inflammation. If we have inflammation, we will have disease.

If we don't have inflammation, well, what is going to happen with the body that the Lord created for us? we're going to thrive. Okay, so let's talk about invisible disabilities.

what this means, and I do sit on the board for IDA, the Invisible Disabilities Association, and I will call the action right now. I would love for you guys to join us for our yearly gala.

It's virtual. I would love for you to donate $5 to my table. I will link it below. I'm very passionate about this because invisible disabilities are conditions you can't always see, but they shape our lives every day.

This could even be perimenopause. Perimenopause is an invisible disability, I think, at this time because No one's really talking about it. And if you go to your doctor, they give you birth control and what else?

## Dr. Jenn's Hashimoto's Journey

Progestins, birth control, progestins and antidepressants. Literally happens every day. So when I had an invisible disability, an illness, it was the Hashimoto's in medical school.

And it was awful. I was so tired when I got my thyroid, partially most of it taken out. No one knew what I was going through. I had to go through surgery.

I had to live with this diagnosis. And I had thyroid disease all throughout undergrad. And I was gaining weight because I wasn't on the right medications.

I wasn't on NIT3, the active thyroid hormone. And you look and you're like, oh, she's just lazy or she's just whatever. And I was struggling with this.

It was harder for me. And things, they are a little bit harder. But now I reclaim that and I work towards being healthier. But there are people out there with diabetes, chronic fatigue, vaccine injury.

They have these invisible disabilities that No one knows why they don't have energy or they don't feel good or they can't do everything or they just want to stay in bed.

So we need to bring awareness to that. But I also think that we can bring hope because most of these invisible disabilities are root cause based and we can heal from them.

Our bodies are beautifully and wonderfully made. So I really believe that we can have a root cause approach to this in healing. So I just love to bring awareness to this.

I mean, invisible disabilities can also mean physical, mental, neurological conditions. They can be debilitating pain. They could be fatigue, dizziness, cognitive challenges, sensory changes.

So these basically are things that an onlooker can't physically see, like a cane or a wheelchair, but limit our daily activities and quality of life. And the Invisible Disabilities Association defines it in exactly those terms, emphasizing that impact can range from mild to severe, and it varies from person to person.

And this definition can often lead to misunderstanding social justice and just not getting enough support. So this makes the invisible visible. And this is a step to better care accommodations and community.

So for me, with Hashimoto's, like my first Clues were this crushing fatigue, brain fog while I was trying to be a medical student, cold and intolerance, hair chains.

I just wasn't feeling myself when I was rotating in the hospital. And, you know, my classmates and attendings, they

couldn't see this. So I was just pushed harder and harder.

And then I remember what really helped me was when I got on T3. which was NP thyroid, natural thyroid, which they're trying to take away and cause ruckus again.

But that changed for me because I was not converting from T4 to T3 well. And this was just really hard though.

## Examples of Invisible Disabilities

And this is why I'm so passionate about invisible disabilities because I looked fine, but I really was struggling and trying to stabilize my thyroid hormones while juggling exams, on night calls, working in the hospital, imposter center, all this stuff.

It was hard. And what really helped me was getting on T3, dialing into sleep, nutrition, all those pillars of health, eat, sleep, breathe, move, all those pillars, they really helped.

But this really, this season, it grew my empathy and shaped my approach as a physician. And we really have to believe the patient no matter what. We have to measure what matters, we have to personalize our care, and we have to look for root causes.

That was just like one example of my story. Let's widen the lens a little bit. So, invisible disability is not just one diagnosis, it's a broader category.

And for example, like perimenopause, you know, we have symptoms like sleep disruption, mood swings, vasomotor symptoms, like hot flashes, brain fog, and cycle changes.

And this can really profoundly impact our daily function. Diabetes, for example, you can't tell if someone has diabetes all the time, and this fluctuating glucose can cause energy swings.

They have neuropathy or neuropathic pain in their legs, and much of the struggle is not hourly visible. What about chronic fatigue and post-exertional malaise where they have their spoons and they can only do so much before they're out in a day?

And that's really hard because they have this debilitating tiredness and this rash after patterns that the outsiders may misinterpret of them just being lazy or they just want to watch TV and that's not it.

They physically can't. was about vaccine injury. So many people report persistent symptoms after vaccination. And regardless of your viewpoint on vaccines, like compassion, evidence-based evaluation, and support are vital.

And I tried to get something passed in the AOA just recognizing vaccine injury. And these were my colleagues and my friends, a lot of them. They wouldn't even consider passing it along to the House of Delegates.

It was like ignored. This is a big invisible disability. I mean, these kids, these adults, especially post pandemic, there is vaccine injury and we do have to identify it and not gaslight and we need to repair it and get to the root cause.

Other examples that we might not think of is an invisible disability. or migraines, autoimmune disease like rheumatoid arthritis, Hashimoto's, Crohn's, ulcerative colitis, long COVID, mental health conditions like anxiety.

I mean, sometimes this can fit hand in hand with perimenopause. So many women suffer with anxiety and perimenopause. And this is why my approach is root cause because we can fix most of that anxiety.

And I also think spiritually, anxiety we can really attack too, because that's not what the Lord wants. Concussion and traumatic brain injury. All these kids playing football or soccer actually had more concussions.

When I worked in the ER, I'm like, my kids, I don't want them playing soccer. But that can also be an invisible

disability, hearing and vision impairments that aren't obvious to others.

So if a condition limits a person's movements, senses, or activities, and it's not obvious to others, it fits under the umbrella. So this can be like a hidden, not apparent, or unseen.

This is used interchangeably, so it could. So let's talk hope, not hype.

## Root Cause Approaches to Healing

Invisible doesn't mean unknowing or untreatable to the medical professionals. If we take a root cause approach, what's driving these symptoms in a person and what lovers are most likely to help?

So this is really helpful when we talk about it. You know, like biology for endocrine, our thyroid, our adrenal rhythm, our sex hormones, insulin and glucose dynamics, that can all play a role into what's going on, which is an invisible disability.

Our immune and inflammatory tone autoimmunity and triggers, like what are they? Is it Epstein-Barr triggering this chronic fatigue? Is it Lyme? our mitochondrial neutral status, we can optimize those like our B12 or vitamin D magnesium to really help if we have these like chronic diseases and symptoms.

And looking at sleep in our circadian rhythm, that is so important just to help us that are struggling with these invisible disabilities get through and cause hope.

Also, I like to talk about lifestyle inputs, so protein for nutrition and making sure our glycemic control is steady and not going up and down can be helpful if we're battling with something.

Resistance training is great because metabolically when we are fit, we are going to feel better no matter what we are going through. And then nervous system regulation.

This is so important. I did a podcast a few episodes ago about the true Vega, which will stimulate the vagus nerve and put you in that sympathetic, out of the sympathetic and into the parasympathetic rest and digest.

That can be really helpful. Also prayer and breath work and meditation. You know, we know Jesus meditated and that is really helpful to put us back into that rest and digest.

Also looking at environmental load like allergens, irritants, total toxin, toxic burden. This could be swapping out things from the home. I know we needed to get out of glyphosate country where we were living and we moved because it was very toxic glyphosate.

So I'm praying that our country does something about all these environmental toxins that we have. So how this lands in care if we are listening and we have an invisible disability or we know someone that does, we first need to validate that you are going through something that no one's in your shoes.

So, you know, we hope that the doctor or the person taking care of you or the person at the grocery store can just treat you well as a human being and invalidate how you're feeling.

And then, you know, what matters for that condition? How can you get help? How can you express what you need from people? Maybe just acknowledging is important enough.

So it's how we turn the I'm invisible to I'm seeing I'm supported and I have a plan. And this is where the IDA or Invisible Disabilities Association can really help because you have an ally, you have an advocate, we're bringing awareness to this.

So if you're out there listening, you're like, well, how do I support these people with invisible disabilities? So believe people when they say that they have fatigue, pain or brain fog, because lack of a cast or cane doesn't mean lack of

a disability.

Ask them what helps rather than just assuming, right? If they're tired, like, ask them what they actually need. Please don't give them just like, here's tips for feeling better, you know, unless you're professional.

## How to Support and Advocate

But ask them because tiny adjustments, if they're asking for little things that you can help with, could be life changing for them. support their accommodations at home, work, church, and school.

And this, like having, you know, a kid that maybe is a little more ADHD, this is really helpful when teachers adjust because they don't know how their brain is processing things.

And this could be really helpful if you just go the extra mile and instead of judging people, like see how you can accommodate them. And make sure you use respectful language and share accurate definitions as we spoke about today so you actually know what invisible disability means.

And then just build some community with them. So maybe check in with them, invite them to the watch party or awareness events. If someone is having a flare that has an invisible disability, maybe start a meal train for them.

Just be helpful. And I know for me, I really like if a mama just had a baby is breastfeeding, I draw them off breastfeeding cookies and then I leave unless they want me to stay or I offer to do laundry.

If you're there, because postpartum depression is an invisible disability, so there's all sorts of things. And if you were there once, make sure you're helping them because you've walked in their shoes.

So if this episode resonated with you, please support Invisible Disabilities Association or IDA. I will drop the website below. You can donate to my table for the gala or if this is after the gala, we would just love your support in general.

We are looking for volunteers to help with things and board members. You know, invite a friend for this. This is so great. IDA is doing amazing things.

They're getting cards that you can get that It shows, you know, what's going on with your invisible disability in case people don't know. We're working on getting more awareness on driver's license.

So if a police comes up to you, they would know that maybe you you wouldn't act the same way or something else might be someone would consider a weird.

a weird behavior is not. It's just part of your invisible disability. So this is all just great stuff. So I just really appreciate you guys for listening to this and for your support.

And I hope you enjoyed this mini session. please leave a review and also please reach out to me if you want a specific guest or topic for the podcast.

This podcast is for you, for the listeners, and I really enjoy doing it. And yeah, just thank you for your support, you guys. Check out Ida and have a great day.

Thank you for tuning into Dr. Talks. We hope today's episode has enlightened and inspired you on your path to optimal health. Each day is a new opportunity to make choices that empower your well-being.

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