Why Anxiety Is a Clue, Not a Flaw Transcript

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Podcast Introduction and Guest Welcome

What are you curious about? What's the next thing that makes you believe? Yeah, you love that? That's such a great question because I'm curious about so many things.

But I would say when it comes to the brain, like how can I simplify things for people even further, right? So that you don't get overwhelmed with lab testing and supplements.

And I'm always looking, how can I simplify this? How can I make this more doable for every single person that walks into my office? Welcome to the To Curious MD podcast.

I'm Dr. Ali Ahmed. And I'm Dr. Surya Ravan. With the wisdom from holistic, alternative, and these conventional medicines, we are here to challenge the status quo.

We're curious about the connectivity and complexity between diverse fields of knowledge as a relief to consciousness, chronic illness, mental health, resilience, and beyond.

learning more about the art and science of healing, or listening to stories of extraordinary healing. You're in the right place. Let's dive in. All right.

Welcome to the Two Curious MDs podcast. Today, I'm Dr. Soraya Raman, and I'm talking to Laurie Hammer, who's a functional nutritional therapist and creator of the Calm Mom Method.

She emphasizes amino acid therapy to restore neurotransmitter balance and support anxiety and mood regulation. Her MindThrive certification trains practitioners in targeted amino acid protocols, functional nutrition, custom client protocols, and faith-integrated support.

Her approach integrates biochemistry with mindset and practical tools for real-time symptom relief, not just long-term nutrition. I loved visiting your testimonial page and your clients rave about you and saying that they love how your approach sees the whole person.

So yeah, welcome to the Two Curious Seventies podcast, Lori. It's wonderful to have you. Oh, thank you so much for having me. I am very blessed to be here.

I love your mission. I love your podcast. Thank you so much. We've really enjoyed getting to know people from all different paths and every person has their own individual path.

Laurie Hammeru2019s Healing Story

I feel like as healers, it's always very instructive to start with, where did your story start as a healer? When did you first hear that call and what led you there?

Yeah, so, I mean, it's my own personal story. I struggled with anxiety, depression. I had a 12-year battle with an eating disorder and just not in very good health and in a good place in my life.

And I was introduced to amino acid therapy and functional nutrition, which wasn't called functional nutrition back in 1996, so I am dating myself a bit.

But all of that literally saved my life. I had done the whole counseling in groups and tried to get into eating disorder clinics and all those things, and none of it fit me.

None of it was a solution. So until I addressed the nutritional piece, balanced my brain, did all of that stuff for me, and then I became well. Absolutely.

And as we're kind of talking about wellness and wellbeing, what for you is that state of wellness and wellbeing? How do you define that? feeling well body, mind and spirit, you know, your body feels good.

Is it going to be perfect? No, but you just feel good and grounded and you're content with your life, but you're also, you know, looking for what God has for you next, right?

So you're content where you are, but still on that path and you know, your spirit just aligned with who you're created to be. Absolutely, absolutely. I love that because it really gets to the place where there's this idea of alignment.

Yes, alignment. That's a great word, Saraya. We know when it's happening, we can sense it and we can experience it. Can you describe a little bit about how you conceptualize what felt like non-alignment when you talk about your experiences with eating disorders, for example, and anxiety?

What felt out of alignment? Where were you experiencing it? Gosh, I would say everywhere. You know, I didn't know who I was created to be for one. So that was a challenge for me.

When you don't feel grounded in your faith, that's always a challenge. I think I grew up in a home. I mean, my parents loved me a lot, but there was a lot of mental health issues going on, you know, with my mom and stuff.

So there was definitely not alignment there. And, you know, I took on the eating disorder. That's how I coped with life. That was my coping mechanism.

So certainly not in good alignment there at all. Gosh, I just didn't know how to function without it. Yeah. And thank you for blending that, you know, your story really weaves psychology, personal experience, and functional nutrition.

What were the first kind of biochemical clues that you got that this is what I put in my gut, that there's something there? Like, what pointed you in that direction?

Well, I had a lovely nursing school professor that she sent me an article that was on eating disorders and food cravings, and it was about amino acid therapy.

And it really rang true with me that you have deficiencies and if we fix those deficiencies, your brain becomes balanced. And it also talked about being very sensitive or allergic to the things that you're binging and purging on.

Defining Wellness and Alignment

So I called out to this particular eating disorder clinic. It was outpatient. And I went there and discovered, yeah, I did have celiac disease. I was sensitive to dairy and gluten and all those things.

And I was very, very undernourished, malnourished. And once we started using the amino acid therapy, it's like a light bulb went on in my brain. The depression lifted, the anxiety lifted, the craving cycle stopped.

They didn't have the food noise anymore. And it really honestly was miraculous. Oh my gosh. I want to just kind of take a beat and say that as a traditional physician, none of my colleagues and I are talking about amino acid therapy yet.

yet I say yet because we want to start like talking about it all the time I know right what's the most misunderstood aspect of amino acid protocols or therapy itself like what have you come across in that it's just it's just missed it's not important so that's a myth I mean amino acids affect everything in our body from head to toe, inside out, your hormones, your hair, skin and nails, your enzymes.

Everything needs amino acids. It's the building blocks of life. It makes up proteins. So it's just forgotten. And I think

that's the biggest challenge is we have to go back to the basics and you can't get more basic than amino acids.

Absolutely. And so as you started to kind of talk amino acids, you know, some of the kind of different neurotransmitters that we're talking about, for example, dopamine and serotonin and, you know, just all the essential, when I'm talking about all of this, you know, it's really easy to throw the name out, but really remember that we're talking about interconnections between neurons and each of these neurotransmitters serves a function in a massive pathway, right?

It's massive metabolic pathway. And yes, absolutely, amino acids being the basic building blocks of proteins are the building blocks of all of these neurotransmitters.

So it's kind of like saying, well, here's the precursor molecule, precursor Lego blocks, you know, pieces that you need.

How Amino Acid Therapy Helped Her Recover

to make your larger molecules and your larger molecules are actually going to then impact your neurotransmitter levels and downstream effects of how the imbalance of the neurotransmitter levels can then impact behavior, thought, you know, all these kind of conditions that we talk about, addictions, OCD, you know, all of that.

And so it absolutely makes sense, and that there's a correlation there. And so we know that amino acids are neuromodulators, for example, glycine, taurine, and glutamate.

I just want to kind of set the stage for people to talk about it, because I think we can really do a deep dive here of what amino acids map to what systems, for example.

I know that some of what's happening here, and you can probably relate Why amino acids? Like what's draining those precursor molecules? What's off balance that in a society or in a culture in which we're all eating protein, we should be replete with amino acids?

Why are we still having these upstream deficiencies? And what's kind of doing a steal, right? What's having the effect of stealing the amino acids away from the pathways that they need to go down?

So what's going on there? Oh gosh, there's so many things, isn't there? I mean, let's go just to foundations. We might be eating protein, but are you digesting protein, right?

So our digestive system is very compromised. It has a lot to do with our food system and the toxicity going on there, which kind of you know, wrecks our gut microbiome.

So how is your microbiome? But most importantly, let's, you know, take another step. How well are you sleeping? If you're not sleeping well and what's affecting your sleep, you're going to get depleted in amino acids and minerals and fatty acids and all of those things.

What are our thought processes? Most of us are running on empty all the time because we never stop and rest. We've lost the rest culture. in this society for sure and so then that just keeps us stuck in overdrive and when you're overdrive you are burning through all of your foundational items so fast and so you know we're not out in the sunshine we're not grounded you know going out in the forest or going for a walk or putting our toes in the grass even most of the time you know so we're just so disconnected and that disconnection creates deficiencies and then you know just stress whether it's chemical physical or emotional you know everything builds and so you're just building up this bucket and it starts overflowing and that's when you know disease and autoimmune and stuff starts expressing itself because all the foundations are like chaotic Yeah.

Oh my gosh. It's like this massive system in which just right at the foundational level, something's choking it up.

Why Amino Acids Matter for Brain and Body

And everything downstream is just trying to make up for it. It's like, oh, we've got to just run faster. And anxiety is really kind of like this hunger.

And then it's kind of like, we're not getting enough. We're not getting enough guys, you know? Wow. It's like you're sprinting all the time and you don't know how to breathe.

Well, and most people don't know how to breathe. Let's just go back to another basic. Can you even actually breathe beyond your, you know, your upper chest?

Are we breathing and getting that good oxygen, carbon dioxide exchange? And most of the time it's a no. Yeah, yeah. Oh my gosh, just as we're talking about this, I can really feel how this has been a journey of learning for you.

I really want to know what keeps you motivated, you know, what's the kind of message you have for your patients when they come to you. I'm sure, you know, you bring a whole host of tools here.

So when you're actually talking to somebody and they come to you, for example, with maybe brain fog. You know, these really common words that we have right now to kind of describe our experience of exactly what you describe.

There's so many different ways that it manifests. But I think we can admit that we're going to root cause, we're going even further back. And so when a patient comes to you and they come with all of this, how do you, one, explain to them what you do, and then two, how do you peel back the layers for them so they understand, you know?

Right. Well, going back to your question, what motivates me? My clients motivate me. So if people call them and they're like, this is what I have going on.

And then we start doing a few things or even in the first appointment, you know, we'll do the amino acid therapy. And by the time they're done with the appointment, you know, they're already feeling better because the amino acids work that fast.

And so just explaining to them that we have to address these foundations first because, again, amino acids are the building blocks. And your thought processes, your neurotransmitters, how you respond to stress, how you think about things, all depends on these amino acids.

And so you can't talk away a nutrient deficiency, you actually have to fix the nutrient deficiency, right? You can't medicate away a nutrient deficiency, you have to fix the nutrient deficiency.

And so we talk a lot about the deficiencies and I get a really good health history of people and we can pinpoint kind of where things you know, went awry for them.

It could have been at birth. It could have been an event in their life or an illness or those kind of things. And then we kind of, you know, tease things out from there.

And then it really makes sense for people like, oh, that is when it started. Maybe it was an abscessed tooth and they had a root canal and everything went downhill from that.

Well, let's go back to that moment, right? And have we addressed that piece yet for that person? And then we do the amino acid therapy and we're just literally opening up a capsule of amino acids, putting them under the tongue and staring at each other like, okay, how do you feel now?

Because my goal is to fix those really easy to reach deficiencies first and then we can go to the tooth or the hormone issue. Let's see what's left over after we're doing the basics because sometimes we're chasing things and we forgot to go to the basics first.

It's kind of like trying to run a marathon without preparing for the marathon. You know? Well, this is wonderful. I

love this explanation that you have because it feels like what you're talking about is kind of like a biochemical tuning that you're kind of tuning somebody up and really thinking of this one critical layer that we haven't already thought about.

Root Causes of Nutrient Depletion

And maybe we haven't just had a chance to think about, you know, it hasn't really been taught, you know, Western medicine really comes at diagnoses as kind of these, you know, kind of symptom based kind of definitions of disease.

And then when you talk about the gut microbiome, right? Like, you know, that abscess tooth, it just struck me. We always give antibiotics for things like that.

That does a number on the gut microbiome. And we have such an overuse of antibiotics in the medical field that we know that is a big problem. And so that's another ready reason why.

And then you talk about the food supply, just the fact that we are in an ultra-processed food desert, right? Really, it's not nutrient dense, it's not giving our bodies what we need, and it's doing that over a long course of time.

So of course, we're feeling depleted over a long course of time, it makes sense. This really appeals to me as an integrative practitioner because integration means kind of bringing all these pieces together.

And so I think our patient populations, we probably have in common are ones that have tried everything, have gone through the regular models of standard protocol, just as you did, and exhausted everything and kind of hit a wall until somebody can look at it holistically and including the mind, body, spirit, as well as the nutrition.

And so it appeals to us in the psychedelic world as well. So psychedelic therapy really is about this integrative model of bringing together all those three things.

Do you have any kind of experience where, you know, amino acids have come up with psychedelic therapies? Yeah, actually I've had, you know, a number of clients that have used them both at the same time.

Usually they're doing Well, I've had people do it before. They do the amino acids too. I feel like I see better results if they do the amino acids first, but I've had clients do it both ways and they work really well together.

I mean, the one you would have to be cautious with would be serotonin because some psychedelics are boosting serotonin so you don't want to overload, you know, any of your patients or clients with that.

So I know I would stay away from that if they're currently doing psychedelics for sure. But other than that, it all works together. It all works together.

That's wonderful. And then do you have specific amino acids that map certain diagnoses or how does that kind of work? What's the… Yeah, so I like to divide it up into five categories.

So first would be serotonin. So that's somebody who has anxiety, depression, OCD. Maybe you're a perfectionist. You have a lot of PMS. You have food cravings in the afternoon or evenings.

Your temper is easily triggered and so you don't know why you get so angry so fast. So that would be your serotonin because serotonin is like your inner sunshine, right?

And so it just makes us feel happy and like good and grounded and you know your glass is always half full or overflowing instead of half empty. And then there would be like GABA.

GABA is like nature's valium. Right? And so GABA lets us, you know, our shoulders come down, lets us take a deep breath and let it all out. And so that burnt out, overwhelmed feeling, GABA really helps with that.

So that's a great neurotransmitter. Endorphins would be like that inner joy. So if you don't have enough endorphins, you're craving comfort, whether it's from food, drugs, alcohol, porn, exercise, whatever it might be, right?

You're really sensitive to emotional things. You cry a lot. Your pain sensitivity is really high. A lot of people with endorphin issues have chronic pain.

Then there would be catecholamines. That's going to be more of your dopamine. That's where you get your drive, your emotional drive, your mental drive, your physical drive comes from your catecholamines.

People who are low on those might have ADD, ADHD, those kinds of things. Are you craving substances to give you energy, whether it's nicotine, alcohol, drugs?

What else is going to give you energy? Caffeine, right?

Using Amino Acids in Practice

Caffeine. And so those would be the four main. And then glucose regulation, there's amino acids that help with glucose regulation too. So if you're hangry, grumpy, frumpy, in between meals, you know, there's a glucose regulation issue.

So I'm using amino acids in all five of those categories. Beautiful. And as you're even talking, you know, I want to even turn it the other way to understand, okay, what does drinking a cup of coffee, you know, twice a day do to your body?

Right. Like you said, you're reaching for it because there's a deficit. What's that caffeine doing? Because somebody could say, well, I have caffeine when I'm feeling tired and that's better.

But it may on the surface look to be doing the same thing, but it's not. What's the difference? Well, the difference is, is you're reaching for that caffeine for a stimulant, right?

And so you're stimulating your nervous system, right? You're trying to mask something that's a deficiency. And so that is always hard on your adrenals.

It could be hard on your whole endocrine system. You know, we're talking about hormones, right? And so if you're using it as medicine, quote unquote, to get you through the day, we need to take a step back and go, why do I need something to help me get through the day?

Right. So coffee in this country is it's so social. It's a socially accepted addiction in all circles of life. Right. And we need to address it. There's a coffee shop in every corner.

And I'm not saying coffee is bad and you shouldn't go out and have, you know, some social time. That's not what I'm saying. If you have to have coffee or anything else.

Like you can't start your day without it. You can't get through the morning without it. There's an issue. There's an issue and you really need to address the issue.

And so coming along with amino acids, you know, it's not stimulating. It's just nourishing. And what you really need is nourishment so that your body doesn't crash later.

Because either you fix it now or your body will do it for you later and it's not going to be any fun. That's such a great way. I'm feeling like, you know, when you take in the amino acid, you don't ever feel the need to go into the stimulant because your nervous system isn't trying to make up for a deficit.

It's already where it should be, which is in this kind of aligned mode, right? We're kind of moving. And that your nervous system, that's the other thing is it will figure its way through.

Like it will look into the environment to say, I need something to help me get through this next little bit. And I know what it is, you know, whether that's caffeine, whether that's alcohol, whatever is available around me.

And it's when we have those kind of like unconscious cravings for something and it's behaviorally damaging. That's when we call it an addiction and it's not behaviorally damaging and it's actually being rewarded.

That's when we call it Starbucks. Right. There you go. You know, it's monetized and you know, what's, we were talking even about just, you know, I love this way of thinking about the human body because it gets beyond blame.

Yes. Right. It gets beyond, there's something wrong with you. It's like, no, we all have the same body. We all have this nervous system and we just need to learn how to use this.

So tell us what are some of the things that you, in addition to amino acid therapy, like what are you kind of talking to your patients about to help them to really make these changes in their lives and what are you seeing happen?

Yeah, so I mean, like I said before, we go back to those foundations, right? So how are you sleeping? We talk a lot about sleep hygiene, you know, going to bed, I teach my clients, you know, set an alarm to go to bed.

Other ways you forget doing things, so set an alarm on your phone, you have an alarm for everything else. Set an alarm to go to bed. Like, so you're in bed by 10 p.m.

every single night and a lot of clients are like, I really like 930. Like, go for it, go for 930, that's fantastic. But let's try for 10, you know, if you're up to 11 or 12. and get your sleep hygiene really well.

Lifestyle Foundations: Sleep, Salt, and Circadian Health

And then we'll talk about diet, right? How much protein are you consuming? How many fatty acids are you avoiding? You know, toxic seed oils, you know, those kind of things and hydration.

And one thing people really overlook is salt. I keep this little thing on my desk. Usually it's full, but you know, I'm about down to the end of this one.

And I lick my finger and I dip it in my salt all day long. This is Redmond Sea Salt. It is like spark plugs to your body, spark plugs to your brain because you need those electrolytes.

You need those minerals in order to keep going. So a lot of times this is what helps people sleep or get through the afternoon is just learning to use salt because we've demonized it.

And it's not a demon. You just have to use the right kind, you know. So we're working on things like that, you know, learning to go outside in the sunshine two to three times a day to help set your circadian rhythm, making sure movement is happening, making sure you're moving your lymph.

So, you know, doing tools that really don't cost much that should just be part of our basic, you know, daily life and we implement them to the best that we can in this crazy life that we have and just learning to slow down.

Yeah. I mean, those are basics. And then if we need to, you know, I run blood work panels and I do hormone testing and we dive into the deeper things so that we can get to your root cause issues, but we still have to address the foundations first.

Absolutely. You're reminding me how when back when I used to be a resident training in the middle of the night and ER and the pediatric ER, there used to be this freezer with the Pedialyte popsicles.

Oh, yes. And for whatever reason, I just was like at 2 a.m. when I'm really tired, the couple of times that I tried that out, it like jolted me. And so you just reminded me of because they contain a little bit of salt.

A little bit of salt, yeah. A little bit of sugar. So it just kind of gets in there and we're so dehydrated, you know, we're completely like unaware of kind of our proper balance sometimes and we get overused.

Yeah, we were working like 10, 12 hours without rest, like not really replenishing. It's such a culture of ignoring what your body wants in medical training.

It is one of the knee worst places to be. For you. As a doctor, as a nurse, you know, in that field. Yeah. You're not supposed to take care of yourself.

Oh, no. The irony of it, right, is like the people who are supposed to be taking care of everybody else can barely take care of themselves. Yes. How many times have nurses said, oh, I can't even, I don't have time to run to the bathroom.

You know, I just had a catheter. Right? That kind of dark humor took over. No, that's great. Thank you so much. And that was such a great kind of example of how we can break down those symptom clusters and really think about the body on these different system levels.

So thank you for breaking that down so elegantly. Lastly, let me just ask you, you've got a course. You're teaching a course. So can you please tell our guests about that?

And what motivated you to start teaching then? Well, because so many people don't know about amino acids, right? And so I am training practitioners from actually all over the world how to use amino acid therapy in their practice.

And I even have a few moms that have joined the practitioner group because they really wanted to find a certification that would fit them so they could help their family and their friends and who knows what it'll turn into.

So It's open as just a certification course on amino acid therapy.

Teaching Practitioners and Supporting Tapering

We meet once a week. We go over case studies. There's a whole online class that you can go through and it's a six-month program and we just have so much fun.

Oh my gosh. Now for anybody who's looking into this kind of therapy, tell us about which patients. You mentioned moms. What kind of patient categories are you teaching about and what's the breadth of what you're including?

and get nutrition if, you know, autism and neurodivergence is something that's… Yes, we definitely address that. A lot of people come with anxiety, depression, you know, the OCD, the ADD, ADHD, Parkinson's, MS.

I mean, any neurological condition you can use amino acid therapy with. I deal with a lot of people trying to come off their medications. So they're working with their prescribing practitioner, they're using amino acids so that they can do the taper.

And amino acids work amazing for people trying to taper off their medications. So rarely, rarely ever see any negative side effect when people use amino acids alongside the tapering process.

That is incredible because that is one of the biggest problems we're having. Yeah, protracted withdrawal, whatever it might be. I honestly, you know, I've been doing this a long time and I'm sure there's maybe there's some out there, but I have not seen this in a couple decades.

I have not seen a protracted withdrawal when somebody uses amino acids while they're going through it. I have people come to me who have protracted withdrawal and then want to use the amino acids.

We have results, but it's not as good as if they used it while they were tapering the medication, if that makes sense.

So it makes sense to fix the deficiency while you're tapering off the meds so that your nervous system doesn't freak out.

Absolutely, because the meds may have been depleting or creating kind of a backlog, depending on how they work as reuptake inhibitors. And so when we start to taper off, where are we going to make those neurotransmitters from?

underutilized, you know, synapses going to get new neurotransmitters kind of popping off in them. That makes so much sense to me and I hope that's something that we can find out.

Can I see one more thing about that? Absolutely. Think about the microbiome because we'll use SSRIs as an example. They kind of ruin the microbiome. I mean it's like kind of like taking an antibiotic, like they're ruining your microbiome.

But if you're putting the amino acids in your body while you're tapering, you're also nourishing that microbiome and you're gonna get 90% of your serotonin or more out of your gut.

And so your gut really needs that serotonin support when you're tapering off those meds. So it's really systemic the way the medication affects you. And so that's why it's so important to bring in the amino acids and the other foundational stuff.

And I really think it needs to be part of mainstream psychiatry And, you know, for MDs, because there's a lot of MDs that are helping with the tapering process to, you know, outside of the psychiatry circle.

Curiosity, Simplifying Care, and Closing Remarks

So my goal is to teach enough practitioners so that it does become mainstream. That's amazing. Laurie, what an amazing tool. What an amazing teaching that you've given us.

What a wonderful, you know, look into anybody who's interested in learning about amino acids. Where can they start? How can they find out more about you?

Can you just point us in the right direction? Yeah, you can go to my website lorihammer.com. Okay. All right. Wonderful. And if they want to access your course.

Yeah, the courses is on the website as well. And you can also just, you know, send us a message if you have any questions and we'll be happy to assist you.

Wonderful. Wonderful. Thank you so much for this conversation. One last question. We like to ask that here. What are you curious about? What's the next thing that Makes you lose.

Yeah. You love that? That's such a great question because I'm curious about so many things. But I would say when it comes to the brain, like how can I simplify things for people even further?

Right? So that you don't get overwhelmed with lab testing and supplements. And I'm always looking, how can I simplify this? How can I make this more doable for every single person that walks into my office?

Wonderful. Wonderful. Well, thank you so much. It's been a treat. It's been wonderful. Thank you so much. You're welcome. Thanks for joining us on the To Curious Andy podcast.

We hope today's episode inspired you to ask new questions and explore fresh perspectives. We challenge you to ask us those unasked questions that you're curious about in your medical practice, condition, health and wellness.

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Post or comment with a question or curious inquiry that you have and seek to explore or learn with us. Stay curious and we'll see you next time.