Podcast Introduction and Episode Overview

working on libido can absolutely help with Lyme disease. And the way that I have seen it help really is with symptom alleviation, with sleep improvement, With improving a level of like happiness and serotonin.

While we are going through this, the bigger things I've really seen as far as working, on the libidio is it truly is sleep, sleep improvements, stress reduction, inflammation reduction.

So that's obviously can translate sometimes into pain reduction symptom reduction Hi, and welcome to the Lime Bites podcast, where we shine a light on the misunderstood science of Lyme and other vector borne diseases, as well as the truths that many still miss.

I'm Dr. Mariah Hinchy, naturopathic physician and fellow of the Medical Academy of Pediatric Special Needs. I specialize in treating chronic Lyme disease, as well as other complex inflammatory conditions.

In this podcast, we break down what's working and what is not. We share the facts that most people miss, challenge outdated thinking, and give both patients and practitioners the tools to heal smarter.

So let's get into it and change the way we heal Lyma. Hi, and welcome to another episode. I'm your host, Dr. Maria Hinchey. And today we're going to be talking about a topic that I don't think has really been discussed.

We're gonna talk about libido in Lyme disease.

Dr. Diane Mulleru2019s Lyme Journey and Libido Focus

So this is gonna go way beyond just feelings of fatigue and lethargy and pain and just not being in the mood and really dive into the physiological connection between Lyme disease, sex hormones, and low libido.

And here with us to talk about this, not only is a doctor who specializes in treating Lyne and complex chronic illnesses, but she's also the libidio doctor.

So welcome, Dr. Diane Muller. Tell our audience a little bit more about yourself and how you came to specialize in these two really important topics. Yeah, thank you so much.

So it's great to be here everybody and one of the things that I think so many of us like one Of the reasons why so, many, of, us end up in these professions largely is due to our own Interests our, own pathologies our Own histories those sorts of things so i've been a lime doc for many years about 15 of them and i That started because of my own issues with Lyme disease.

I had chronic pain, I have fibromyalgia, headaches, migraines, all the kind of things. And the stories with that I like to tell, like one, my pain was so bad that it actually felt some days like I was getting my legs sawed off.

Sometimes I would get stuck in a sitting position. The worst one was actually getting stuck on a toilet where I couldn't actually move because I'm stuck with such bad pain.

It would have to have somebody physically carry me. And then other things that were happening with Lyme included things like memory loss, leaving my home, forgetting where I lived, numbness and tingling so bad in my hands that I couldn't feel things, like as I was carrying them, for example.

So it was very obvious to me that I needed to study this and like so many people I was misdiagnosed for so much years and eventually after my own studying in naturopathic medicine I ended up learning about Lyme disease,

tested myself and that really became my journey with Lymen.

So many people in this topic we're talking about today, Dr. Mariah, so many when I tell them I do Lyme and libido, it's so easy to be like, well, these things seem so different.

But actually, and one of the things we are going to explore today in our talk is how related these two types of illnesses, how relate they actually can be.

and how causative they can be. And libido was actually something that I was interested even prior to my Lyme diagnosis. I have a horrible history of sexual assault.

After that happened when I 19 years old, I wound up just feeling really disconnected to female anatomy. A lot of pain, a lot numbness. And frankly, a lot of confusion.

And as I went through healing from that, from a mental, emotional, psychological standpoint, I still was noticing like no ability to enjoy pleasure, no abilities to connect to my partner.

and the Lyme symptoms really started coming up. So it was a huge interest of mine that kind of got diverted as I went into the Lime, you know, process and studied that deeply.

That's why later on as it had repaired myself from Lymen and all those crazy things that go with that.

Lyme as an Interrelational Illness

I also got back into studying relationships and hormones and tantra and, you know, in sexology and various types of things like that to really have these two very unique, but as we're going to talk about today, like pretty interrelated topics.

Thank you so much for sharing your personal story with us. And I think, You know you just nailed the first question. So I've heard you say that Lyme is an interrelational issue.

Can you explain what you mean by that? Yeah, it's so important, right? Because I think with Lyme, any of those of us that have gone through this, It's so isolating, right?

That's why these social media, Lime, chat, and support groups become really popular because it's just looking for people that understand. One, especially when oftentimes we look normal and everything seems normal in the common lab test, yet we know there's something wrong.

So what I mean by interrelational is the impact that it actually impacts the friends and the family network. So I have seen divorces over this. I've seen breakups.

People realize that they can't have babies or feel like they cannot have baby in the middle of disease and that leads to complicated things. And I feel that so much of the support right now that is given to Lyme survivors is really just about their physical body, which is essential.

We obviously have to do that. But there's not a lot of talk yet about, like, what about the influence on the marriage or the relationship? What about influence in your friend circle and your children and all these sorts of things?

And that's known in other diseases, you know, cancer, for example. There's a lots of emphasis with something like cancer or alcoholism on supporting the family unit with these sort of thing.

But, there is not as much talk with this yet on Lyme disease. And I really think it's essential because We can so often have our complete family unit fall apart due to our illness and yet nobody is taught as a spouse, as partner, or as child how to really be in relationship with somebody that is suffering from these things and of course in the relationship to libido.

What happens to our marriage, to a relationship when all of a sudden we don't have the energy or the thought or any capacity to even think about intimately showing up for our partner when we feel this way.

So there's so many different ways that these are all connected and really play into impacting the entire community. Yeah, that's such a good point. You know, there's not many other diseases that not only affect your entire body, but also, you know your brain and your emotions and you're capacity to be there for other people much less even yourself.

So, yeah, thats such an important point On strictly talking about libido, how often is low libidio a symptom or associated with Lyme and other tick-borne diseases?

How Low Libido Shows Up in Lyme

Yeah, it's a great question, and I've looked up stats on this and cannot find any from, say, a research perspective, but it is something that has been on my questionnaire for Lyme since 15 years ago when I started working with Lyne disease.

And I can tell you almost 100% of the time, people at least that make it their way to my office have low libido. So I think it is absolutely a symptom from what I've seen clinically and from the data I personally collected almost in every case.

Yeah, we have the same question on our checklist as well. And it's almost always checked off. Yes, exactly. Exactly. The easiest way, and we'll get into more mechanisms as I know today, but the easiest I way I a lot of people say, like, how do you expect me to think about sex?

How do think of me expect to thing about intimacy when, I can't even get to work. I cant even make my bed. Can't take my child to daycare or gymnastics or whatever it is.

How am I going to even begin to think about sex? So obviously that's like one of the more obvious ways that people are oriented to this. Right. And to that point, so how does somebody know like besides the obvious that they have low libido?

Are you ready to transform the way you diagnose and treat complex chronic inflammatory illness? Because what if everything you've been taught to treat separately is actually deeply connected?

At the Limebite Symposium, we're bringing it all together. Join us November 13th and 14th at the Fort Lauderdale Pompano Beach Resort in Florida. or attend virtually from anywhere for the premier functional medicine conference on complex chronic illness.

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Because the reality is, your patients don't have just one of these. They have several. And if you're not trained to recognize how these layers interact, you'll continue to miss the root cause.

If you are a patient still searching for answers, this is the information that your doctor may be missing. This is how we move from symptom management to true healing.

So join us in Pompano Beach or from anywhere in the world. Don't get left behind. Register now at limebites.com. That's L Y M E B Y T E S dot com. Yeah, great question.

So, medically speaking, kind of a funny way we diagnose this.

Hormones, Stress, and Inflammation

And it's kind a of funny because it is still very subjective, meaning it still a personal, say, way, we are speaking of it. The medical definition of low libido, low-libido medically is actually defined as hypoactive sexual desire disorder.

That crazy mouthful. Why we do that sometimes, I don't know, but we in medicine. And so essentially how we define that is basically reporting a low desire alive for six months or more.

So if you report that to your doctor, then they say you have hypoactive sexual desire disorder, aka low libido. But like I said, it's subjective. The first part of that that's not really well defined is That well, what is that normal like like when are we reporting to our doctor that our sex drives low is it like, when we have we haven't desire like once a week once, a month.

So it's still so it still not very clear, so the way I like to define it is really is two different ways one. Do you feel like you could be improved with better relationships, less stress, better sleep, last neuro inflammation, and better happiness, right?

All of these types of things, because that's what we actually see the hormones that are related to sex when we see all of those things change and improve.

So if we could say, hey, we feel better, we would like to improve any of those things. It's probably worth working on the libido. So that's one way to look at it.

From an interrelational standpoint, when we look studies around libida, what we wind up finding is that most couples that report the highest on happiness index scores have an intimate type of acts, you know, and I'm using that because I don't want to use sex because we're talking about way more than just penetration, right?

We're taking like way anything that we can put into a sexual intimacy category, and it's once a week. So I would say based upon that and say, okay, once-a-week related to happiest couples, then we might say if we're not having a drive to actually interrelate that way in once week or more, than we could probably say hey, our libido is low.

Okay. So give us an overview of what you think the major physiological contributors are, and then let's kind of break them down one by one. Obviously, hormones are going to play a role.

We know that Lyme significantly messes up both female and male hormones. Can you talk a little bit more? Just start there. Yeah. So hormone wise, we absolutely want to make sure when we're saying hormones, were talking about sex hormones.

Adrenal hormones and thyroid hormones because all of those really actually can impact the drive. And from the standpoints, you want me to actually list them out?

I just want it to be clear on your question. Well, however you wanna present it is fine. I think sometimes it's helpful for the listeners to kind of get like an overview before we dive deep into specifics.

Yeah, let me list them out first. So we're talking hormones and let's say, okay, from a libido standpoint, we are talking sex hormones with estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, adrenal hormones, so cortisol, DHEA, and our thyroid hormones.

Those are the real common ones that are going to impact libid. We also see our cardiovascular system and it's really known for men, you know, a lot of like erectile dysfunction.

For example, we think a lots about cardiovascular health, but women also need proper cardiovascular flow for proper arousal. So cardiovascular help is another one.

Our nervous system is a huge one, and neuroinflammation is big reason for a low sex drive. So we see neurological, then obviously of course we have psychological, so we had that mental standpoint as well.

And then beyond that, all of our diet, lifestyle, those sorts of things. So what we're talking about here, let's go through them kind of together. So I've looked at a lot of research to say, can I see anything that is like super specific on Borrelia lowers testosterone?

I have not been able to find anything like that. However, what can find is, and I'm going to take a step back to, say again, clinically, What I notice is oftentimes, as I imagine a lot of limelighter docs notice, is that when we have Lyme, we do see a lotta hormones fall.

You know, cortisol can be high or low, thyroid can oftentimes be low sometimes high, and we see sex hormones oftentimes in the gutter or in very weird balance of each other.

So do I see a study on Borrelia actually say lowering testosterone? No, I have not found that specifically. However, what we see for example, we other things.

We see that cortisol, for an example can lower testosterone. So if somebody is in that early stress stage where their cortisol is high and we that let Borrelia has actually driven that cortisone up due to that earlier onset stress, that can a lower a testosterone, can also lower estrogen.

And estrogen and testosterone are two of our key most important hormones, of course, when it comes to libido. So that's a really important thing there.

From a thyroid perspective, there are studies that are showing, especially when it comes to autoimmune disease, that all those inflammatory markers that often raise with Lyme disease trigger an auto immune response.

That's why some people say that late stage LyME is actually auto-immune LyMe is because we have this almost autoimmune-like process happening on our cells.

one of the cells that can get impacted by Lyme, of course, is our thyroid. And so we see research that says, okay, well, if the thyroid is impacted negatively, and low thyroid hormone will actually lead to a lower testosterone and estrogen production.

So we can see very similar things with cortisol as well as thyroid, where we can see that process of those sex hormones actually lowering because of the lime.

Another interesting thing from an inflammatory molecule standpoint is MMP9. This is an enzyme. It's associated, we talk a lot about it, with mold. but it's an inflammatory enzyme, it is called matrix metalloproteinase, and this particular enzyme will actually elevate also with Lyme.

There are some studies on this. It's been associated with one of the reasons for things like Lyma arthritis. What's interesting from a hormone issue as well, is that MMP9 is also secreted in women around the time we menstruate.

It's one of the things that is a kind of a signal to tell our tissue to break down and slough off, right? Because it's a protease that's breaking down protein.

That's bringing down, unfortunately, the tissue in our joints, but also at, in healthy levels, at menstruation, that the, tissue that has actually causing our uterine lining to sluff.

Vulvodynia, Neuropathy, and Oxytocin

So, if you're kind of putting all this together, what can be happening is that when we have Lyme and when have increase in some of these inflammatory molecules like MMP9, and then we go through our menstrual cycle, which is going to increase that inflammatory molecule even more, that's one of the relationships with all of a sudden why we see, we can see pain, menstruation disorders, or we could see these situations which I know a lot of us in the Lyne community see which women go to their cycle.

all of their symptoms worsen. So there's that inner relationship to the cycle and to that proper hormonal cycle, and that properly menstruation cycle which of course can be linked also back into libido through these inflammatory molecules.

So I would say with almost all of my female patients, they all tend to get worse in the couple days prior to their flow or their menses. And I never knew that that was the connection, but I talk about MMP9, which is aka collagenases, right?

So this is that inflammatory enzyme. that breaks down the collagen and actually feeds the spirochete, feeds Borrelia, breaks our joints, causes arthritis, et cetera.

But I had no idea that this was the actual link as to why there's such an exacerbation of symptoms. So that's great to make that connection. Yeah, I love understanding the whys, right?

It's like, it's so fun because most of us see this stuff clinically. And so we know this because we watch these patterns over and over again. But it is really fun to understand like that's why that is happening.

So that one of those really super interesting links there. Should we go on to the stress component? Yes, please. Okay, so I did mention this a little bit already by saying high cortisol can also lower estrogen testosterone levels.

So we see that over and over again. You know, high-cortisol can create that dysfunction in our brain or hippocampus in memory. And so that obviously is a stress and doesn't tend to make us super, say, horny, super interested in sex and sexuality from that standpoint.

So one of the other things that's really important to mention though with this is DHEA. So DHA is oftentimes lowered. We see this frequently lowered with Lyme disease.

And so when people have a lower DheA, DHeA is that precursor to testosterone, and testosterone of all the hormones, both for women and men, is the hormone that is super linked to healthy libido more than any other hormone, right?

We want that testosterone as a high driver. So when we see Lyme lowering DHEA, which it commonly does, then we a lowering then of that Testosterone downstream, and that's actually going to drive that libidio.

And what's also interesting and I know we're going to, you know, come to this later, but just because it's DHEA, is a lowering amount, a lower amount of D HEA I've seen in certain situations to heal common cases of vulvodynia, that pain in the vulva.

And I now we are going talk about that a little bit more later but that's very interesting to me in this because we see, we sometimes see Lyme as a precursor to that vulvar pain.

We see lyme also lowering D Hea And then I've seen DHEA applied topically to the vulva really help to reverse, in certain cases, vulvodynia. So we can like use D HEA in a way of like getting our libido back, supporting our energy, kind of healing that, but then also in working with healing things like vulvidinia that can in some cases be caused by Lyme disease.

Right. So since we brought it up, do you mind just talking about it right now? Sure. Yeah. Okay. Let's just talk about that a little bit. One of our upcoming questions was going to be the link between Lyme disease causing vulvodyna or vaginal pain, pain of the vulva.

Can you elaborate a little bit more on that? Because I have so many patients that have this as an issue and it is just like mind blowing to them when I say, no, like this can be one of the symptoms of Lyme disease as well.

When you're answering, if you could talk a bit about, do you think like, is this almost like a form of neuropathy? Is it mast cell derived? What is the mechanism that's going on here?

Are you suffering from Lyme disease or another complex chronic illness and aren't sure who to trust when it comes to herbal supplements? Hi. I'm Dr. Mariah Hinchey, founder of Lime Core Botanicals.

As a naturopathic physician specializing in complex, chronic, infection-driven illnesses like Lyme disease, I needed herbal medicine I could truly trust.

That's why I formulated LIME Core botanicles. where our herbal tinctures are handcrafted in small batches right here in Connecticut. We use the whole herb, Never Isolates, to preserve the full spectrum of medicinal compounds.

Every single step from sourcing to extraction is done with precision to ensure maximum purity, potency, and consistency. These are the same herbal formulas I used to heal myself and have used for years to help my patients and family members heal too.

And now I'm making them available to practitioners and patients everywhere. Lymecore Botanicals, herbal medicine you can trust from a doctor who lives this work.

Learn more at LymencoreBotanicles.com Yeah, there's so many different actual mechanisms that really could be happening here. So we see that vulvodynia is sometimes even just like an ulceration issue.

There could some sort of lesion or ulceration. We see it can be a neurological, it could a pain and a nerve root issue, so this typically happens if the nerve roots in like the lower thoracic, the upper lumbar, or the sacral, basically low spine and tailbone.

you know, for our listeners, like those areas, the nerves in our low back and our tailbone areas. If those are inflamed, that can be contributing to the vulvodynia.

Resources and Finding Dr. Muller

And one of the things like from a Lyme standpoint is we know that Lyne can cause neuroinflammation. That is super interesting, right? And there's definitely cases of that and research on that.

So that's very, very clear. and it couldn't cause neurological pain syndrome, right? And what's interesting from a standpoint of vicious cycles, like one of the things I talk about in interviews like this a lot is the vicious cycle that we get into in medicine.

And a vicious circle to me is like a chicken and an egg. It's almost a what came first, how do we out of it? It is interesting, the viscous cycle I see is that We have pain in our vulva and that's caused by neurological inflammation, it's cause by ulcerations, is caused sometimes even structurally, Borrelia, you know, that creates the neurological, inflammation can cause this.

Another thing that can caused it is detroser, like the bladder muscle. So that bladder muscles that actually controls that stretch of like, oh, we have filled up with enough urine in your bladder, to stretch appropriately and then contract appropriately when it's time to release urine.

So we see that muscle, which Lyme has been shown to impacts. Well, that must still has the link to problems with vulva dyne as well. We see all these different reasons for it.

and the bladder detrusor muscle as well as neurological pain syndrome from Lyme, both of those things can actually be impacted and caused by Borrelia here.

So the vicious cycle can be one of the things that can really help and actually calm nerve pain is enough oxytocin. Oxytosin is that intimacy molecule.

It's that love molecule, it's hormone that we have released when we cuddle, when touch, orgasm. And so that will actually help from a standpoint of pain reduction.

It will help with a stand point of neurological inflammation reduction and there are studies on that. So oftentimes that can be a way we actually get out of some of that pain.

pain, and we can actually repair that way. But of course, when we're not interested in intimacy and sometimes touch, often with things like fibro and all these other symptoms that go with it, where it's like a little bit of touch actually feels bad, not good, sometimes then it is hard to access the hormone that we need to actually get out of this.

I would like for you to tell our listeners how they can get a hold of you, if you have any exciting news or events coming up.

Cardiovascular and Neurological Drivers of Libido

And then we are going to dive deeper into this discussion. So for all of you who are subscribers, hold on, we're going go deeper in a moment. And for those of who aren't, hit that subscribe button so that you can come with us and hear the rest of this conversation.

But Dr. Diane, please tell everyone how and where they can find you. So super easy stuff, you guys. So if you go to libidoquiz.com, super-easy to remember, just libidoquiz.com.

You'll actually find a free quiz that will actually, the first part is a research-based questionnaire quiz, which it'll guide you through is your libado actually low or not.

If you get yes to that, then it's going to basically give you the root It's going to ask you more questions and it's gonna tell you the top root causes of all the things we're talking about today and which one is most likely your number one root cause based upon your answer.

So it is totally free. You can go to libidoquiz.com to really get that and get information on likely root-causes that would be perhaps a good place to start with in your journey.

And then you can find my two practices also super easy at mylibidodoc. com and mylimedoc, so super-easy. Wonderful. Thank you. Okay, so diving back in, we talked about adrenal and stress.

We talked sex hormones themselves. I think you briefly touched on cardiovascular health. Why don't you continue with that? Yeah, I think one of the important things, there's two important thing to make a note of here.

One is that cardiovascular disease we know is the leading cause of death worldwide and oftentimes a low libido is a early warning sign of a cardiovascular problem.

And men tend to go to their doctor frequently when this is problem because it usually leads to erectile dysfunction and that oftentimes is, you know, the most men I know that have gone through that, that's like motivating right to see a doctor.

Women, however, it might show up as lower arousal or a little bit of pain or low lubrication. And sometimes those aren't as motivating reasons to go to a doc right away, and it could actually be an early warning sign of a cardiovascular problem.

So I'd like people to know that because those symptoms of like, oh, something's changing could be a bigger something than you may realize. That's important.

The link with Lyme, since that's our topic today, really comes down to Lyne carditis, right? So we get, so we know that Lyte can affect the heart. We also know, that Lime, through its inflammatory systems, can actually infect the vasculature.

Like the Vasculature, we more and more that a lot of what's creating things like coronary artery disease is this

oxidative, this like toxic type of stress on the vast of the vessels and Lyme, of course, through its crazy biotoxins that get released.

as well as through its inflammatory processes, can really create that vascular stress. And so that's the, that link then of, so we have that vesture stress, we know that vasculose stress can actually be linked to low libido.

That's very, very clear. So that really how those two things fit together from a causation standpoint. Okay. Then what would be the next? So beyond that, so we've talked about sex hormones, we talked cortisol and thyroid a little bit.

The next thing really to talk about is the neurological system. So we have to have with every process in our body, We have that proper neurological flow, that stimulation to the tissue.

From a neurological standpoint, If our nerves are inflamed, we know Lyme disease, co-infections, mold, all these things cause this neurological inflammation.

So we have our nerve that are not firing correctly, they are actually not signaling tissue correctly and that can actually be contributing to that low arousal.

It can be contribute to a low lubrication, to low responsiveness of the tissue. And another thing that's really interesting with that is The female versus male cycle of arousal, right?

Because most of us, even in medical school, were just taught at this like male linear cycle, of a rousel, which is really, hey, we get excited. There's this we feel aroused.

We get exciting. It we engage intimacy, intimately, the climax, and then we go through refractory period. And that's what most. Of us were taught as far as, you know, that the arouse cycle well.

from a neurological standpoint. If we're not stimulating, if the nerves are not sending that information to the arousal tissue to get aroused, that can make a difference there for men.

But for women, what is interesting, and I really appreciate a model of female arousing arousement done by Rosemary Besson. And she redefined female arrowsal.

So it's much more of a circular situation of arrosal, so by the circular Many women don't get aroused until you actually start engaging intimately. And because we're taught that arousal is just you get excited, you kind of turn on, and you feel a certain something, then you move from there into intimacy.

Well, for females, because our anatomy, our blood flow to our brain, an estrogen and progesterone dominant scenario, that bloodflow to the brain is different.

Oftentimes we don't start getting aroused until we actually engage intimately. This is why women commonly will report to me like, oh, wow, okay, I tried having sex last night and I was not in the mood and did not feel like it.

And then like 10 minutes into it, it was like… actually, I'm really glad I am doing this. And then like laying afterwards and, you know, saying to a partner like, wow, i'm Really glad we did this, why don't we do this more often?

And it's because nobody has taught women that arousal does not always come first. Sometimes arouse will actually comes later. But if we are not, if were in a situation where we're so neurologically inflamed and our nerves are sending that response to our tissues, just like with men, that are aroused may not happen in that way that is making that leisure sensation really possible.

So we want to restore that neurological dysfunction so that we can actually get those signals going to our erotic tissue more appropriately. And so how do you recommend doing that?

Like what are your go-to therapies for decreasing neuroinflammation? Yeah, and there's a few different things. I mean, one thing is if we're talking about neuroinflammation causing pain, so if were back to the vulvodynia scenario.

If we are talking that, I'd like people to know that there is a study that a colleague of mine did internally. And this is a sex toy, a sexual massager company called Mystery Vibe that I really like because they're so research based.

So they did a study that showed that three times a week of a sexually massaged toy. Three times the week used for 12 weeks had a five times reduction in pelvic pain.

So to me, what's happening there is almost this neurological repair where it's like we're starting to get it. It's almost like fibromyalgia, right? Where it like those pain signals are incorrect and that threshold of like with fibro where we hit our hand on the desk and all of a sudden it it wouldn't even register to somebody without fibros pain, but with fibro that pain threshold so dysfunctional that the nerve sees that and senses that, and feels that as pain and the brain then registers that it has pain.

And so the same thing I believe is probably happening when we see studies like this three time use for 12 weeks, five X reduction of pain in the vulva is when are actually putting a little bit of pressure and stimulation and vibration on the tissues.

is perhaps due to almost like this neurological reset of actually changing that pain threshold. So that can work. Sometimes internal massage can. I mentioned DHEA on the vulva earlier.

Dhea is just just absolutely amazing. As far as healing the tissues, as far is reducing pain, vaginal lubrication, I really like a product called Jolva.

People can get that on my stores by Dr. Annika Becca. And I like her product because it's DHEA, but she also puts stem cells into her products and you use it topically on the tissue of the vulva, the clitoris, and even all the way down to the anus and the anal sphincter.

That actually causes the issue to rejuvenate and it prevents things like atrophy where tissue shrinks and just is not as functional, which happens with Lyme, but it also happens for the aging, right?

So DHEA is a really good thing. Cuddling is amazing and if you're like at a point where it's like you can't be touched due to your Lyme symptoms I get it and that obviously we have to lower those symptoms first but just engaging intimately even if You're not ready for anything.

Treatments for Neuroinflammation and Tissue Pain

That is that is sex or sexual in any way even just saying okay, you know partner How can we actually have a cuddle date and literally cuddles? 20-second hug, right?

The 20 second hug has been studied and researched for that's how long it takes for oxytocin to be released. Again, that hormone that is improving sleep, lowering inflammation, doing all these things.

What we see is 20 seconds is where you really get that oxy-tocine boost and you get more and more, and the more frequent you do those 20 2nd hugs. So if you've never tried a 202nd hug try it because It's actually a lot longer than you think.

Like when I first studied this research, I was kind of obsessed in my social circles around like, you know, just like counting when i hug people. Oftentimes five seconds is, or less, is all we tend to hug.

So it's simple, but it really releases that oxytocin and can contribute to a lots of that stress reduction as well. And then certainly there's other things, right?

For cardiovascular, we want to consider things like citrulline. Citruline is an amazing amino acid that will actually help to dilate our blood vessels and to bring more blood to that area.

And then, of course, you know, it goes without saying on, on your summit where people are hearing so much of this, but just to always throw this in there, we of, course always need to get back to the root, right?

So we want to make sure we're absolutely taking care of Borrelia and toxins and anything else that's going on as well. Before I forget to brings this up, can you talk a little bit about how hormone imbalance or having low levels of estrogen and or testosterone negatively impact the immune system and actually could help this infection to thrive and survive inside of the body.

I mean, from a standpoint of actually say going in and lowering T cell function or those sorts of things, I don't know that I have like a study to say, okay, our white blood cells are directly impacted by this.

That would be a good thing for me to look up to see if that study exists. So I can't talk about it from that standpoint. But what I CAN say is just more of like the overarching obvious thing of if we don't have those healthy hormone levels, like for example, we see that estrogen and progesterone, but especially estrogen, It really impacts things like memory and brain health and function.

So from that standpoint, I would extrapolate that when we are seeing lower levels like that of impacting the brain, we could perhaps see some immunoproperties that way.

But I don't have a specific study of that as far as the immune system and estrogen and testosterone. I've seen in a few of my patients where women have had really low levels specifically of estrogen, even if there's like a progesterone imbalance or an estrogen dominance when the estrogen is lower.

And then the women who have chosen to go on like a bio-identical hormone replacement, it's kind of like once that happens, their ability to manage this infection is night and day.

And again, obviously, these are the woman that have the very deficient hormones. This wouldn't be like a one-size-fits-all thing, but it's just so apparent how important having these hormones are for the overall immune function, inflammation, et cetera.

Yeah. I mean, I definitely see the same. That's why even in my book, it's not in your mind, that I talk about a four-part way of healing from Lyme. And one of the first things I say is phase one, and I call it the rebuilding phase.

In phase 1, we work on thyroid, adrenals, sex hormones, mitochondria. From a standpoint of herxing and all those things we talk with Lyne disease, you know, hypersensitivity and whatnot, that there's so much less of that, and that I see treatment goes so better when we build up sex hormones, we'd build-up thyroid, build of adrenals before we actually go in and say, let's do any of our antimicrobial treatments to actually address Borrelian co-infections.

So I completely see it in my practice, too. That's why I organize things that way most of the time. Yeah. Alright, so we've talked about Lyme's impact on libido.

Yes. So let's flip it around. can working on libido help in Lyme treatment? I know for a lot of people, it's kind of like the last thing on the totem pole and it can be looked at as just one more chore and thing to do.

But can you talk a little bit about the benefits of enhancing libado and being intimate and having that intimacy in the ability to actually help and resolve the infection?

Yeah, this is another chicken and the egg type of scenario, right? Because yes, absolutely, like working on libido can absolutely help with Lyme disease.

And the way that I have seen it help really is with symptom alleviation, with sleep improvement. with improving a level of like happiness and serotonin while we are going through this, improving relationships, right?

So it's like, oh, there's so much that gets put on the back burner when we're in survival mode naturally, of course there is because we were trying to survive.

But the subsequent thing like we started our interview with today is like relationships get impacted and so the ability of even engaging to a level intimately can really support the relationship and that can also lead back into having more supportive care from a line perspective.

But, the bigger things I've really seen as far as working on libido is It truly is sleep improvement, stress reduction, inflammation reduction.

Hormone Balance, Immune Function, and Lyme Recovery

So that's obviously can translate sometimes into pain reduction symptom reduction So the way I like to describe libido is interesting because we talk about so many other things with Lyme, right?

We talk like, okay, we gotta get good sleep. What can we be doing to get people to sleep to heal? we got to work on the diet and get the gluten out and the inflammatory food is the high histamines and all the things that we commonly do.

from a lifestyle component. We got to move the limb. So all these things. Libido oftentimes is not talked about in a way from a lifestyle perspective standpoint.

And the reason why it's important to consider is because of that hormone oxytocin I keep coming back to, that is that it is a master regulatory hormone.

We don't realize oftentimes in public societies, we don t actually realize, because it s not talk about how much this hormone will actually regulate the other hormones of our body, our happiness, or sleep and all the things I mentioned.

And so when we are trying to get our pain down, when were trying our sleep better, and happiness and like just the tiniest little glimpse of that to help us survive this, actually working on our libido can improve all that.

So then the biggest question is, that's the most obvious question that people are probably thinking about this is like, okay, it's great Dr. D, but like how am I going to do that when I can't even think about engaging in sex when have no drive and I just feel horrible.

I'm just trying to get through the day. And that's when we can actually begin to open up, like, what we actually mean by libido, by sexuality, right? So that could mean, for example, that we have one date, you know, one day a week, we even one-date every couple weeks, where we are just laying in bed in whatever position is the most comfortable, and just touching and holding each other's bodies.

Right, there can be different ways of accessing this that doesn't have to be the classic definition of sex in order to still get all those hormones. So this is a time to actually get creative with your partner if you have a partner.

creative with yourself if you don't, and really begin to say, okay, well, within the context, just like we say we ask with every other question with Lyme disease, Within the Context of Movement, what type of movement can your body handle and not hurts, right?

What type positions you need to be in for sleep? How do we maximize that? And libido's the same, the more we can become curious about it and say okay well what ways can we explore touch when I'm exhausted, when my body hurts?

what ways are still available to us. And sometimes we do that, we can actually find really creative ways of connecting to our partner where we actually look at this as like, this doesn't have to be traditional intercourse.

There can be a lot of other ways to exploring this and still getting those hormones released, still having that connection and in touch. still caring for our partners, showing that bi-directional love and so forth.

So I think the creativity around this and really releasing the fact that libido equals sex from an intercourse standpoint is part of how we solve that.

Yeah. How do you suggest that people talk to their partners about this? Because for I think for a lot of people, it's just a hard subject to bring up, especially when you have Lyme disease and you feel the way you do.

For most people it has probably already become an issue. So do you any suggestions on how to go about that conversation?

How Libido Support Can Improve Lyme Outcomes

Yeah. The way I describe it is the how, the when, and the where of these conversations. So the were is very basic. I go through a lot more of this in my course material, but just to keep this pithy for our time allotment today, where is essentially literally that.

It's like having these kinds of conversations in the bedroom, probably not a good idea. You want to make sure wherever you're associating a conversation that could be a little bit sticky is not that same place where you want engage intimately because you don't want be engaged like that way and all of a sudden have that trigger of that memory or that conversation, that perhaps did not go as smoothly.

So you wanna make you just kind of protecting yourself that ways. Where is really important? When is also important. Like when obviously is you have to consider your own needs, but I would consider when are you the most resource throughout the day with Lyme?

Like most people I work with with lyme have like, you know, one point in the where it's like okay. And like yes, it feels bad all the time. But maybe at 10 30 AM, maybe it'd like a little bit less bad.

Right? So like when, are going to be the resources? They're going be a time of day. The way that I tend to tell people to frame it as far as when for their spouse or their partner is to make sure to almost give them a warning about the when, but not in like a honey, we need to talk kind of voice, right?

So it's like, not, hey, you know, I need talk. The when is like the, when and the how can be related as saying, hey, honey, I know what's going on with me has put a lot of pressure on you and a lotta pressure us, or however you frame it, and I'm just giving you an example.

I really wanna explore how we can continue to stay connected in the middle of all of this. And I am wondering if you would be available for a conversation like that at 10.30 a.m.

tomorrow, for example, if that's when you think you're gonna feel the best. The reason we kinda give them that information is it helps them prepare that, okay, we're going to have a conversation maybe about intimacy, but we are going do it in a way, or they're prepared, they know it's coming, it is not the, oh, boy, honey, I have to talk, where they are gonna go into that conversation with anxiety.

And so that's also wrapped up in the how, and the How is also putting you guys on the same team, saying like, We're gonna explore this together. I know whether or not you understand this.

You might name some of the feelings they have. frustrated or whatever they're feeling, right? Because our partners have their own feelings around our disease process.

And I want you to know that I'm still really interested in the middle of all of this of staying connected to you. So I wanna explore some ideas. And really, so that's kind of the frame.

And so what we're doing there and the how is also working to put you guys back on the same team again, because oftentimes with these crazy, you know, horrific disease processes, we almost like get dissociated from being on same as our partner.

They maybe not understand, they may not be supportive. So we are really working with kind framework and the pre framework here to position everybody to be on the same team again.

So you're actually going to that same goal of like, okay, you might not understand what's going on with me partner, but I want to still find a way despite that to stay connected to you, which of course is easier said than done.

But the goal here is to hopefully get you not only through Lyme and in remission and a true survivor of this, but also to keep your relationships intact and hopefully come out of it with your relationship stronger than ever.

So some of these also internally, I know this is from my own personal experience, it is so much will, the will comes from hey, I want to come out of this, not just stronger.

I wanna come outta this and have my relationship survive as well. Yeah, and that support system is just so important, beyond obviously just with your partner, but as we started this talk with family and your intimate community that you have, because a lot of times it's just, so, isolating.

It really is. It's like the social isolation of this really complicates things. The number of times clients of mine are crying because relationships are falling apart because friends have left because they just don't have any of that anymore.

And obviously, like obviously this is a traumatic, this was one of the things that makes this such a trauma, that Lyme disease is such trauma. And that's why I think it's really important to talk about strategies around what can we do to actually keep our relationships intact during this, because even though it is hard having that support system and really having a strong relationship is part of what I thing gets people through this.

Talking to Partners and Closing Advice

Yeah, I agree. So what would be your last couple pieces of advice for our listeners who are struggling here? One of my last pieces advice I would say is take, just like you're doing time for everything else I know you are doing, which is so much.

All your supplements, any sort of machines you're using like rife or whatever else you are doing, every lifestyle thing, even if it is two minutes a day to start, to wrap yourself in a big hug, sit with a child, a partner, an animal like a pet, just something that you can just hug and cuddle up to.

A living thing. you know, preferably not just like a blanket or a pillow, but something that's living, even if it's two minutes a day, just holding that person or that pet to really get that oxytocin release.

I know it and then we can build from there. But even, if you can start small at just two-minutes-a-day, you get so much of that oxygen released. The other thing I'll leave you with is like when it comes to, you know, these types of relationships with your partner, just continue to allow yourself grace.

Like these kind of things as far as how to communicate. It's just like, sex and libido and all these things we're talking about. So many of us were not taught how do this in our childhood and our life.

The conversation, we want to set you up right where it's like there's not that trigger of the bedroom if it doesn't go well. But it is just another example like so many places with Lyme and chronic illness to just You know, radical self-compassion, you know working to improve what we're doing while still giving ourselves so much forgiveness, so love, and so compassion in the process.

Yeah, that's great advice. Thank you so for being here with us. Why don't you once again tell our listeners how and

where they can find you. Sure. Thanks so much for having me.

It's been lovely chatting today. And you can find me again by going to my libido quiz, super easy, free quiz. Gonna tell you some of the root causes of why your libidio might be low from a functional standpoint.

So that's libideoquiz.com. Okay, wonderful. Well, thank you everyone for listening. We'll see you next time at our next episode, and I hope that you've found this information helpful on your journey healing Lyme.

Take care. If this episode gave you an answer, brought you new insight, or made you think differently, subscribe to the Lyne Bites podcast and share with someone who's ready to take control of their healing journey.

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