Why Your Body Isn’t Healing—And What Your Brain Might Have to Do With It Transcript

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Introduction to Nervous System Regulation

50% of the illnesses that you go to see a general practitioner for are actually issues of neuroplasticity. 50%. 50%, so think about what we see doctor for.

We see it doctor, for pain. Pain is huge. we See a doctor. For anxiety and depression and burnout, we. See doctors for immune issues. So even dermatitis issues, of eczema.

These are all issues where the immune system has now over responded. And we typically think, oh, this is an issue in the body. It's the brain. Hi, I'm Dr.

Jess Petros, and on my podcast, Dr Justin Filtered, we uncover the real root cause of most misunderstood symptoms with help from top experts and real patients who've healed themselves.

Welcome to the Dr. Jess Unfiltered podcast. Today, I'm really, really excited. If you guys know me at all, you know I am super big on nervous system regulation.

It's one of the first steps of my program when any patients or clients come to see me. And so, of course, Ashok Gupta, because if you guys haven't heard of the Guptah program, you've been missing out.

It is forged through his own personal journey that he has come up with this program. And it has helped so many people recover from chronic complex illnesses that I think many of listeners will be surprised to hear and connect that to the nervous system.

So thank you Ashoke for coming on the podcast today. Welcome. Thank you so much. I'm delighted to be here. Yeah, absolutely. So first and foremost, I really, really want to hear your story because you don't come from a medical background, actually.

You went to Cambridge, right? And you have a degree in economics. That's right. How the heck did you get into nervous system regulation? How's this important to you?

Yes. Well, my journey started in the mid to late nineties. And in those days, these illnesses were then even recognized or weren't given the right name.

So it was a very difficult time. I was studying as an undergrad and was burning the candle at both ends like people do at university. But I also was stressed about work and keeping up with my peers.

Ashok Guptau2019s Personal Illness Journey

and I got some kind of virus and it affected me spiritually but also in my gut as well. And I thought nothing of it, thought I've just got a flu, I'll get over it.

I seemed to get some over some of the symptoms of flu but physically I seem to degrade. It got worse and worse to the point at which I would open up a textbook.

and I couldn't read the words on the page. It's like what had been precipitating into old age. And I would crawl to the bathroom sometimes, I'd be so exhausted and i couldn' rest.

If I rested, it wouldn't help the situation. I was just extremely fatigued. For those people who don't understand what I

later got diagnosed with as ME or chronic fatigue syndrome, imagine your worst day of flu times five.

So literally no energy, exhausted, no motivation. And it doesn't matter what you do, you just feel worse and worse if you engage in any activity. I would go from doctor to doctor.

They would say to me, we don't know what to call it. We have no treatment for it, and you might have this for the rest of your life. Goodbye. For a young man, that was like a brick wall.

What are you telling me that there's no way out of this? And that started my lifelong quest to try and understand what caused these chronic conditions that the medical profession didn't have answers for.

And I had met hundreds of others at different conferences and workshops and all trying to understand at that time, chronic fatigue syndrome and similarly fibromyalgia.

I remember one poignant day I was in a bookstore in Cambridge and I'm feeling very low, you know, I had very almost suicidal thoughts. And I thought I've got to get out of this.

I made a contract with the universe and said, if I can just get myself 20% well, 30% Well, ideally fully well I will dedicate the rest of my life to helping people with these conditions because it's untold suffering that occurs.

and i was at a book store in cambridge because in those days you research things in books, in the mid to late 90s. And I was in the self-help section and there's neurology section, and I just saw a book.

It was just jutting off the shelf. And, I don't know why, that book just called to me. I picked the book off of the shop and it was called The Emotional Life of The Brain by Professor Joseph Ledoux, who in those days was the foremost expert on the amygdala.

Yeah. I can put things together. This is helping me understand what might be going on in my body and my brain. And I linked it to the brain and in ad hoc way, I retrained my.

Using making up my own tools and techniques, got myself fully well within six months and then published a medical hypothesis in 1999 online. and it was published in a Medical Journal in 2002. And then I set up a clinic to treat other people who also were suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome and similar conditions.

And since then, I've been on a 20, 25 year journey from that to then setting up the first neuroplasticity program in 2007 online. Since then we've done seven clinical studies.

We now have an app and looking to do more clinical study. So that's been my 25, 30 year, journey to be in this moment. Well, I'd say the University Rewarded, your promise gave you great success and help with people who really needed it.

We do see the same patient population and the group of people that has chronic complex illness. Things like postural orthostatic tachycardic syndrome, which is a high heart rate, low blood pressure, make people feel like they're going to pass out.

We see long COVID people, we see Erlos Danlos people. We a lot of chronic fatigue, which is what you were diagnosed with. And these people often are told, hey, you're too dysregulated to regulate your nervous system.

Or they're told this is in your head and it's psychological. What do you say to the naysayers who say this to you about your program? Yeah, I think it's very interesting that in modern medicine, if you go to a hospital, there'll be a separate psychology department, a separately neurology department separate endocrinology.

And you're like, that's not how the body functions. Of course, at a biomedical level, If there's some issue that can be solved, we might separate them off, but essentially we want to treat the whole person.

And these chronic illnesses, in my view, cannot be solved at the reductionist level, which is where the pharmaceuticals work.

Why Chronic Illness Becomes Persistent

They have to be an integrated system because the issue is in the nervous system and the immune system. So we say it's not a hardware problem, it is a software problem.

You can't use hardware to fix the software. We have brain retraining and neuroplasticity. And that's what we do obviously at our clinic. And in terms of how we see these different conditions, I can kind of share our hypothesis as to what, we think is a trigger.

So we like to start with that biggest question of all, why are we here? Now we could have an amazing conversation next half an hour about the meaning of life and why we're here.

But let's say from a scientific perspective, you, myself, human beings, we are here because over millions of years of evolution, this nervous system and this immune system has evolved.

And we think have we just evolved through mammals, but actually we contain the DNA and the heritage of all previous animals and plant life. I love this statistic.

We contain 40% of the same DNA as a banana. Yes. So all these plants and animals have adapted to the environment so they can survive and we contain that lineage, which means that we are survival machines in the modern world.

And so that's our first principle. We're here to survive. Our second principle is that, we now live in an environment where there's more threats on the system than there used to be in previous generations and those can be emotional threats.

stress, mental threats, biological threats. So we're exposed to far more bacteria and viruses than we were in previous generations because of international travel.

And then finally, toxic threats we live in a more toxic environment in terms of pollution and cleaning agents and all those types of things. Now our bodies are being attacked far, more often than they used to be.

The body is in this low grade inflammation and always feeling it's under threat. That's our second piece of the jigsaw. Because of that, these unique factors come together to create chronic illness.

And I'm always interested in that question. What turns an acute illness into a chronic? So what turns COVID into long COVID? What tends a virus into chronic fatigue syndrome?

what tends short-term pain into Long-Term Fibromyalgia and pain syndromes. what sends a short term mold exposure into the longterm mold illness? That's the key.

and we believe it is in the brain and the Brain Neurology that this occurs. And so we like to use something called the fairy tale analogy to help people understand what causes these chronic conditions.

So if I may share that with you. Imagine you are Queen Jess of your kingdom. We don't have to imagine them. That's a nice ring to it. So Queen Jess of your kingdom.

You as the Queen are the prefrontal cortex. Your the rational conscious mind that's directing everything and making decisions. And your Kingdom is your body.

And your kingdom has two defenders, your nervous system and your immune system that defend against threats. And the nervous is kind of an information system, that flows through the body that tells the cells what to do.

Immune system is obviously a specific system. That has the resources to defend you against viruses, bacteria and toxins. Now, imagine that that system works great, it's optimized, but suddenly there is a drought in the kingdom.

Now I'm sure you see this with your clients, we see it all the time, that when it comes to complex conditions, people often have, at the beginning, a trigger, or they have chronic illness or chronic stress that was occurring for one to two years beforehand.

And we've seen this in cancer, and we have seen it in many different illnesses, there's been a period of chronic distress. And so that's the equivalent of a drought in the kingdom.

So the Kingdom is not operating optimally because of this drought. Now, because the droughts in The Kingdom, and that drought could be, as we said, stress, emotional stress physical stress toxins.

That means that the army and Navy who are defending The kingdom are also compromised. The army is your nervous system, the Navy, once again, your immune system.

Now, imagine a threat comes over the hill to invade the kingdom. That threat could be biological, so virus, bacteria, it could to be toxin, mould exposure, pain, a localised pain thing or something that's caused pain or indeed it can be an emotional event.

and normally your army and navy are optimized so they can fight off the invader, the system can come back to balance. But now because they're compromised, they go back that principle of survival is the number one priority.

We don't care whether this person feels healthy and well, we care about survival. So now they over respond because that threat has come in, if they know they are compromised so therefore they'll over-respond.

And so they fight off the virus. Let's take the example of COVID. They fight of the COVID infection. But the immune system and nervous system, the Army and Navy, they think, I wonder if the viruses still hiding behind the bushes or behind a hill or over in the forest.

We should still continue our immune and nerve system over response, our sympathetic overdrive, or immunity, because we never know. we've got to err on the side of caution here.

Now that causes more and more symptoms in the body. So when we have a flu or we COVID, actually the symptoms are being caused by our own immune response, not necessarily the virus itself.

The symptoms now become a proxy and the brain makes a little error of judgment. It says, I've got symptoms Maybe that's indicative of the virus still being present or the bacteria still be present, or that threat still been present.

Let me continue to fire off those weapons of war, the immune system and nervous system response. But some of those weapon now fall back into the kingdom and that is when we get inflammation of body, inflammation in the brain, toxic effects of that inflammation, gut dysbiosis and now the gut is getting affected and we've got a bad balance of good and bad bacteria, SIBO, etc.

And we also get the toxic effects that then lead to opportunistic infections start flourishing in the body. Allergies and sensitivities start increasing.

So the whole system is now imbalanced and hyper-reacting to the environment. And of course, you do a lot of work with histamines. The histamine systems are over-responding, the mast cells are responding, because the system says, what happens if we're still under threat?

Fire everything off at the smallest provocation.

Brain Retraining and Neuroplasticity

Once the systems stuck in that mode, the more it starts firing off the weapons of war, including the mass cells, the weaker the body gets. The more the army and navy generals get traumatised and think something's seriously wrong here, keep firing more weapons to defenders, which creates more symptoms and so on and we get stuck.

in that dysregulated state and the system doesn't come back to homeostasis. And that, we believe, is the core reason why Covid turns into long Covid, pain turns to fibromyalgia and even sadness turning into depression.

Wow. fear turning into anxiety. It's these systems in the brain that malfunction. And we believe it's in amygdala and insula parts of the brains that this is occurring.

We'll come onto that once we talk about specific brain structures. So using the analogy, now the army and navy are stuck. They're over responding. And what is brain retraining?

Brain retrainer is saying, when you come for your weekly meeting with the army and navy generals, they say, queen dress, we need the wheat, the corn. We need all the resources because we are here to help you survive.

And brain training is you say my dear generals. You have done an incredible job at defending the kingdom, but you can stand down. The war is over. Now, the army and navy generals won't believe you the first time.

They'll say, this is a trick or you don't know what you're saying. We're here to defend you. But neuroplasticity is this idea that through repetitive retraining, we train the nervous system and immune system to gradually settle down, get the message that we are safe, not just emotionally, but physiologically.

And then they come back to balance and then we get a period of parasympathetic stimulus. The vagus nerve then kicks in, the healing then occurs. Immune system is now calm and centered and optimized.

Then eventually health returns, energy returns. And so that is the core of both what we believe is reason for these conditions and then how we come out of them.

That was beautiful. I love the fairy tale analogy. And I think that really drives the point home. You know, and you also say it's the brain, not the body that's a driver of chronic illness.

So this is what I've heard you describe just now with the fairytale analogy, can you give us maybe a real-world example or a person you've seen to drive this point-home?

Yes, absolutely. Medicine traditionally has been about what can be measured. And so we can measure hormones, we could measure the blood. So everything became about the biomedical agents.

But the brain was this black box. We couldn't peer into the brains for the last 20 or 30 years. Suddenly as we are doing so, actually could a lot of illnesses be caused in the mind versus in brain?

The mind was psychological, but the brain itself is a whole network of systems, which are both conscious and unconscious, that control every cell in our body.

It's the master of everything. And if that malfunctions, then the rest of the body will malfunction. So I think we're seeing a switch from it's a body issue to it is nervous system issue and an immune system issues.

That's why I that the switch is now happening. Software problems, not hardware problems. Which we think 50% of illnesses that you go to see a general practitioner for are actually issues of neuroplasticity.

50%. 50%, so think about what we see a doctor for. We see it doctor, for pain, pain is huge. we See a Doctor for anxiety and depression and burnout. We see doctors for immune issues.

So even dermatitis issues of eczema. These are all issues where the immune system has now over responded. And we typically think, oh, this is an issue in the body.

It's the brain that's coordinating the immune system and nervous system, the master gland that is then creating this over response. So we hope that in five or 10 years time, when you go to your doctor with a issue like this, one of these, what we call neuroimmune condition syndromes, The first thing that prescribed to you is not medications, but actually neuroplasticity to solve some of.

These issues. have you seen actual, you know, labels or diagnoses put into remission with nervous system techniques, things that have shocked people probably?

Absolutely. We see it in our clinic every day. we see these healing stories and to us they're magical. You know we wonder why are more people not doing this?

And you mentioned a specific case. So my favorite case is we had a guy in New Zealand, a gentleman who was 83, right? and he had had you name it, fibromyalgia, chronic Lyme, mold illness, and he had a lot of symptoms and you'd had it for 30 years.

And obviously we thought, well, someone in their 80s, it's sometimes difficult to tell the difference between what are the natural symptoms of old age versus a chronic inflammatory disease.

We said, look, do our program, we believe it can help, but at your age, let's see what happens. And within six months, he had got up to 85% recovery, having spent 30 years pretty much housebound.

And we were really excited for him. So we said, this is amazing. Like, you know, we thought the brain at 83, perhaps it's not as neuroplastic. Maybe you can't retrain it, but you've proved us wrong.

You've proven that it is possible. matter how old you are, doesn't matter, how long you've had a chronic disease, you can retrain your nervous system.

You can get back to health." And we said, what are you going to do with your life now? We thought he'd say, well, I'm going retire. And he said I want to travel the world.

I wanna do all the things that I've dreamt of doing. It brought a tear to my eye that, wow, What a beautiful story and how grateful this man is to have his life back after having crippling symptoms for so long that he's going to make the most of his life now that has it back.

And that something that had spent tens of thousands of dollars on that, he'd traveled the world, seeing doctors, not being able to fix it. Just within six months, was able retrain his brain and get his health back, that means everyone can do this.

Everyone can get their health. Absolutely. I would love to kind of get into some of your research. How many published studies now? So we now have seven published clinical studies and we have five independent randomized control trials, an independent audit and a non-independent audit.

Amazing. So what did a lot of these studies center around and how can this help like the people listening or the practitioners listening? Yeah. So we think it's very important that this isn't just something that's anecdotal, that we really want to put the science behind it.

We invest a lot of our resources into these clinical studies and we now have a dedicated team for that. are looking to do more studies. So we have three in the pipeline.

We have a 501c fund in US that raises funds for these clinical studies as well.

Real Recovery Stories and Clinical Evidence

It's a very exciting part of what we do. Some examples of the studies, so we've done studies on fibromyalgia, which obviously is a big problem in population.

And we compared a wellness program to the work that we do. So the wellness had relaxation and whatever. And we were able to find that after three months, the Wellness Program had very little impact on fibromyalgia, but we had a close to a 40% reduction in fibro-malgia.

Halving of pain, halving depression, and an increase in functional capacity of around 50%. And that was just after eight weeks actually of using the program, which was quite amazing.

Another study on fibromyalgia, we compared our program to progabalin or Lyrica, which are the standard treatments for fibro-malgia. And after three months, We were six times more effective than Lyrica at reducing fibromyalgia symptoms.

Six times. It's very rare in a clinical study you get that magnitude of response. We had a 63% reduction in sleep disturbances, very small amounts in the Lyric, a halving of depression, halting of pain.

And once again, this is across the entire study. So that was a very excited study and that's once, again independent and published. With long COVID, we compared our Gupta program to a wellness program that had sleep, diet, exercise.

We were four times more effective at reducing fatigue and exhaustion in patients, twice as effective increasing levels of energy, and we had a 97% reduction in fatigue.

So these are big, large effect sizes in these populations. And then we did a study across 16 different conditions as a clinical audit, an independent clinical order, because we have that theory that all of these different condition, you know, we mentioned POTS, M-CAS, fibromyalgia.

These all are different buckets of symptoms, but the underlying cause may be the same, which is a dysregulated immune and nervous system. So we a did study where we thought, let's look at our patient population and let us look 16 conditions.

And we found across 14 of those conditions, the improvements were statistically significant. And, we had anything between 50 to a hundred percent improvement after three months of using the program across, 14 different conditions.

Um, and some of these like long COVID was 84% improvement in health and functioning after 3 months. Chronic fatigue was, I think, 75%. Uh, Lyme disease was a 100%. So we're seeing big improvements in these conditions just after, three.

So you kind of, I guess I would be remiss if I didn't ask. A lot of holistic practitioners, functional medicine practitioners even root cause practitioners are trying very hard at some of these chronic complex illnesses.

And some these people and patients have seen upwards of 20, 30 plus doctors sometimes. What are most practitioners missing and when should they incorporate some this?

Yeah, it's a great question. So we now have about 8,000 clinicians working with us, functional, integrative, nutritional, and naturopaths. And what they say to is that they love combining our program with the great work that we do.

We're not denying the importance of supplements, diet changes, lifestyle, medications. This is all important as part of an integritive approach. But the brain piece, we believe, is very important and in our humble view, the most important.

And so with a lot of our practitioners now, as they see the results, sometimes they start prescribing the work we do as the first thing. Because when you've got a dysregulated system, it's difficult for those supplements and those diet changes to actually impact because you can give people all the supplements in the world, but if the gut is Uh, dysregulated as a result of our nervous system being dysreculated, if there's a massive amounts of inflammation,

you can give people all of those things, but it's not going to have the same impact.

We've got to get people back to a good baseline. So a lot of clinicians that, um, partner with us, they will prescribe brain re-training first, get a certain level better, and then they'll work on the supplements and diet.

And, we prescribe that within our program as well. so we don't do specifics, But we, at a general level, encourage people to, have a, good anti-inflammatory diet No, I think that's really important, absolutely.

I mean, for people listening, they're like, gosh, some of these things they are talking about sound like me. What would you tell people? How can you if they need a program like this?

Or how would they tell if their dysregulated even? I would say if you meet the criteria of one of these illnesses, 99% of the time it's due to a dysregulation.

So it is very rare that you will see someone with one these conditions and yet there isn't inflammation or there is a nervous system dysregulation at some level.

Of course, there will be some cases like that, but the vast majority that we see are due to this dysregation. And the reason that it's often not spotted is because it seen as the norm.

You might do the tests and someone will go to the doctor, they'll do all the blood tests, et cetera. The doctor will come back and say, well, actually things are pretty normal, so we don't know what's wrong.

because it's first of all, very difficult to test because sometimes with chronic inflammation, it may not be inflammation all the time. So a test may pick that up or those tests aren't performed.

And even if you do perform those test, It's not a silver bullet. It is not saying just because you've got higher levels of CRP or inflammation that you then have a chronic disease.

You're responding to an infection and therefore you have higher level of C. R. P. it could be perfectly normal. The same with our nervous system. We could just be going through a period of dysregulation, we might have had a bad day, some stress.

Therefore, it's not an absolute indicator of chronic illness. But we know in the studies that these are definitely dys-regulated in a longer term. Okay, yeah, so people listening out there, if they have any one of these labels or ICD-10 codes or diagnoses, or even if the feel like they can't calm down and relax maybe, that's another sign or symptom, a big start or response, something like that possibly for people too, I would say.

Definitely. So if people are looking for concrete symptoms, we call it the wired but tired effect, where you want to relax, but it's like your body is buzzing or your brain is buzing and you just can't seem to relaxed.

And it just feels like a chore to do it. and therefore you get used to this feeling of, I'm exhausted, But I am also wired at the same time. That's a common factor.

A second common factors is this idea of post-exertional malaise that you But when you do more activity, you seem to feel super exhausted afterwards. And that often is once again, a signal and a sign that there's huge dysregulation in both the immune and nervous systems because they are already using up all your energy.

You're then performing a particular exercise, but the parasympathetic nervous system is not kicking in afterwards to repair the cells, repair, the muscle fibers.

Who Benefits and What Practitioners Miss

and therefore you're getting a supreme and intense exhaustion afterwards Yeah, and the parasympathetic nervous system, really, that's the only place that rest and digest healing can happen.

Exactly. Right? So it's very important that we get into that. At least some of the part of our time, I think a lot of Americans and Westerners are not used to slowing down and calming down.

What would you say to people who are reacting pretty violently or annoyingly, to say the least, food, supplements, even certain thoughts? I would say that as bad as it feels, it's very normal.

So as we take going back to the fairy tale analogy, if our nervous system and immune system thinks we're under continual threat, there's a very key piece of brain neurology that actually is from Professor Joseph Ledoux.

It says when the amygdala, that part of the brain, is responding to one particular threat If it is hyper aroused, it has the propensity to learn new threat detection and defensiveness to otherwise meaningless events.

Wow. And that helps us understand why in a lot of chronic illness, suddenly someone will get a sensitivity to a food. So you go on a Food Restriction Diet and then suddenly there's more restrictions you need.

Because the whole system is saying, I think the world is dangerous. I Think we're under threat. Maybe that food is food, is threatening. maybe that chemical is Threatening.

May be that new medication is threatning. The whole System is hyper reactive to anything new and different that it can't manage. This comes down to something in neurology called predictive coding.

So predictive coding is this idea that our brain is very used to a certain way of things being in homeostasis. And when something new happens, it will resist that unless it's convinced that it is beneficial to the system.

That's also the reason why we can't form good habits because habits, the ways that we've always done things, and therefore we have to do something regularly to prove to the brain that this is beneficial.

And in a similar way, that brain can get freaked out by things that don't fit into its model of the world and aren't predictive. Wow, so it's basically saying the Brain will go back to what's familiar and not what necessarily is good for us.

Exactly right. So the brain gets stuck in a lack of homeostasis. Homeostases is familiar for the. Brain, but if it gets into a defensive state, what becomes familiar is the lack.

Of homeo stasis, the over-stimulation of the, brain over simulation of, nervous system over stimulation of. The immune system. Now, if you now tell the. Brain that's not normal.

reduce that, it doesn't believe you. It says, no, I must continue this because this ensures survival. So it's predictive coding algorithm has now changed.

And that's why brain retraining isn't something you just do in one day. You don't just say to your brain, stop it. we need to come back to normality. It says, no, this is normility.

You need convince me. And that's where brain retraining comes in. The neuroplasticity works on three levels, which is repetition. So we've got to repeatedly tell the brain.

Secondly, emotional intensity. So we form deeper neuronal connections when there's emotional intensity, which is why if we think of our childhood, we'll generally remember things which were really positive and happy or things that were negative and partially traumatic as well.

And the third principle is self-compassion. If we try to retrain our brain or create new neural pathways at the same time putting ourselves down, criticizing ourselves or causing ourselves stress or saying we're not doing it properly, that compromises the ability to create neural pathway.

And so therefore these three key principles are an important part of healing. So perfectionism is a problem you see

quite a bit in the people who come to you probably is what I'm hearing.

Absolutely. And we definitely don't want to say these illnesses are in the mind in terms of psychological, but there are certain personality traits that we see time and time again that compromise a person's ability to relax their nervous system.

So a common one is perfectionism. A common one that has crossed all of these factors is conscientiousness, that a lot of patients, because they have this conscientous approach to tasks and situations, they then push themselves beyond their limits very easily.

And a task has a higher threshold for stress or a lower threshold of stress than perhaps the average person. Overachieving. So pushing beyond their limits, over rescuing and helping others, not thinking that they're good enough.

So approval seeking and people pleasing. These are all traits that keep our nervous system on high alerts continuously that then make us more prone for these conditioning effects in the amygdala and insular parts of the brain.

Well, I feel called out for sure. Okay. Once again, it's not that these traits are bad. We can be a healthy achiever. It's when those traits become unhealthy across a threshold that they compromise our own ability to stay healthy.

That's the issue. Okay. Can you explain for everyone what your definition of neuroplasticity is? I think that word gets tossed around a lot, and everyone's kind of like, what does that mean for me in practical life, maybe?

Sure. So neuro plasticity, is the idea that, you know, in the 20th century, they thought that our brain is pretty fixed, right? That we perhaps have a normal neuroplastic brain in the first few years of life, which helps us understand our relationships with people, our levels of stress and reactivity.

But then pretty much after that our brain is fixed for the rest of our lives in terms of personality, reactions of people around us and our physiology, most importantly in term of what we're talking about.

And then with these modern techniques of brain scans and various things, we realise, actually, the brain is neuroflexible. It's constantly rewiring itself.

Its constantly changing. And that's so empowering because it means that we aren't a fixed entity. We aren t fixed in terms of our personality. Our physiology is not fixed.

we could train our physiology to be stronger, more powerful, or in this case, stop it from getting stuck in these patterns. And it's the same with our genes.

So when we came up with the genetic code, we were all told, hey, when a cure all illness, because all the illness is basically fixed in our jeans. And we're going to have this great revolution.

It didn't turn out that way. Because actually, suddenly realized this is in called epigenetics, where our teams are interacting with environment and our lifestyle.

Signs of Dysregulation and Sensitivity

Although that felt disempowering initially, it's incredibly empowering because if we make shifts in our lifestyle and our personality traits and out reactivity, we can then impact directly on the epigenetic effects and therefore heal ourselves directly.

So neuroplasticity together with epigeneetics is empowering us for lifestyle changes. giving the power to us in our own hands. Exactly. Okay, so to the person who says, you know, I'm not really sure if this is me because in my mind I feel really, really calm.

But he's saying this more of a biological autonomic nervous system or brain response, right? So people are thinking I can feel calm in mind and still be dysregulated in the body and be having reactions in tissues, correct?

Absolutely. So we get these cases where they say, Ashok, we don't fit the mould because we do not feel dysregulated. We do feel stressed. But these systems are operating unconsciously and there will be a different level of conscious awareness according to each personality trait, each person.

And so inevitably, even if people feel like that, often the test will still show that dysregulation and it can still be occurring. And secondly, if someone's been through trauma, and that can be trauma with a big T or a small T, it could be conscious or unconscious, generally we tend to dissociate from our bodies.

So when there's a high level of dissociation, now to take a step back, when someone experiences trauma especially as a child, the childlike brain comes up with a very effective strategy, which is we are not ready to experience this or process this.

So we'll dissociate from it and we will repress both the feeling and the memory of this so that we can reprocess this later in life. And if that becomes a habit, then even as an adult, someone will learn to not connect with an emotional situation and repress those feelings, even to the point at which they may not be aware that they are even stressed or dysregulated or anxious.

And therefore, that also may be a reason that people may feel this fits for them. how important do you think it is to connect the mind and get out of maybe the monkey mind, and back into the body?

How important is that for the nervous system? It's very important. And of course, in the modern era, when we look at trauma recovery, we looked at nervous-system regulation, the whole idea of somatic work is gaining more and more credibility and is more mainstream now.

That's something that we've been doing for 20 years with some of the techniques that inhabiting your body, getting back in touch with your bodies is so important because for emotional regulation, we need to feel it.

You know, that idea of find it, feel, it forget it or forgive it to let it go. And therefore, Feeling into our body, feeling into your emotions and feeling safe in our bodies to feel emotions is an important part of both trauma recovery, but also illness recovery.

So we have a very special set of processes that we call somatic retraining, which are all specialized somatics techniques that train the brain how to be safe, train in the presence of symptomatology in your body and in general.

And people find that highly effective as the first part in brain retrainer. Well, now I'm very intrigued. So can you give me an example of something like that?

I don't know if it's something we could do here, or like an examples. Is it like a meditation? Is actually like touch on the body? What are you doing to get people back?

It's a number of different techniques. So we have a technique that is called safe sensations. And part of it is obviously without going too deeply into it because you need to really feel it.

I wouldn't want people to kind of test and experiment versus doing it properly. But safe sensation is very powerful for our clients. What it involves is first of all generating what we call a safe haven.

So creating a space in your own mind that is extremely safe for you. So you might have a glass dome over your safe haven and in that you then place objects or people that feel safe.

You might what we call your representation of love. That could be a figure from your religion, your spirituality or your pet, a friend that brings you a sense of safety.

We spend a lot of time generating this incredibly safe space and anchoring it in the brain. And then with that, we have a specialized somatic technique where people then touch into their physical symptoms because people don't realize this in these chronic disorders.

They are resisting. their body. Their body is tensed up against how they're feeling and that process is keeping the vicious cycle going. It's very subtle.

But when we recognise that, we then start making friends with our symptoms, making friend with out body whilst in our safe haven and this specialised process of feeling safe about our sensations.

And when people repeat that for 10, 15, 20 minutes a day, it's incredible the shifts that they get and they start inhabiting their bodies and then find it easier and easier to process emotions and process their symptoms as well.

I love that. Okay, that makes so much sense to me. It's really just about slowing down and feeling again, because you have to feel it to heal it maybe.

Exactly. For people out there listening, would you tell them that before they get into any sort of long COVID or Epstein-Barr virus protocol or Lyme protocol even, which this is all in my wheelhouse, nervous system regulation is the last step or the first step?

Well, naturally we would say it's the first step. At the same time, it can be a parallel step, so we work, as you said, with thousands of different functional integrative naturopaths and they will take care of the supplementation, the diet changes, and we'll take of of brain aspects.

So they can work in tandem. Sometimes someone will be too sensitive to respond to the supplements and medications, in which case the nervous system regulation piece can come first.

Absolutely. I agree with you. For most of my patients and clients, they seem to absorb and assimilate better when they're calmed down, as you can imagine.

Somatic Retraining and Safe Sensations

The body just seems to take the protocol. And I can almost half the time for a detox if their nervous system is in a better place, right? Their inflammation is decreased.

Absolutely. And we know that in sympathetic responses, our natural detoxification systems are shut down and our bodies are our own best natural, detoxifiers.

So when we get our system into balance, Our own detox system can beat any other external systems that are attempting to do what it does naturally. Absolutely.

I agree with you. You know, I've seen a lot of people who, if you're in sympathetic overdrive, you can't go to the bathroom, right? You can, t you, can you sweat in the sauna and then the natural amongteries or drainage pathways are blocked up.

Honestly, more than a lotta doctors, Ashok, from what you've told me so far. So, is it possible that some people aren't even reacting to mold or Lyme or some of these stealth pathogen pathogens, they're just kind of reacting.

Their body or nervous system is reacting the memory of that being there. I think you said that earlier, is that a lot of people that continue to be in that on phase of reaction.

Yeah, so be careful about how we differentiate between mold versus opportunistic infections. So let's take the mold situation. We treat a lot of people successfully with mold.

And in fact, we've just completed a mold study and hot off the press, some of those initial findings have been very

positive. we found that after three months of using our program, We're getting about a 35% reduction in mold symptoms just after 3 months and a halving of mold after 6 months.

and that's across the patient population. So that's a very exciting study that will be coming out soon. But in terms of mould, the way that we look at mould is somebody may be at baseline, they've got no mould reactivity, and yet there may well be mould in their home, because in most homes in the US and around the world, mould exists as part of our environments.

We have rain, we have wooden homes. But what happens is there's one distinct moment where in our analogy of the fairy tale, there may be a drought in the kingdom.

So someone's under extreme stress, chronic stress. And then when they have an acute exposure to mold, let's say they've got 100% exposure their brain then in that moment thinks, this mold is dangerous.

I need to do something about this. So then they have that reaction, that allergic reaction and the mass cell activation, et cetera, to defend the system against that mold exposure.

Yeah. so a hundred percent mold, a 100% response. But the brain is very clever and efficient and it says, you know what, That was dangerous I am now going to react to five percent mold.

So if there's five or ten percent, I'm going create a hundred percent reaction because we are here to defend. Survival is the number one priority. That's when you then find that you might have a household of five people only now one person is responding to mould and you might remediate the home and remove the vast majority of the mould, but still that person's reacting because, and this is controversial for me to say, it's not necessarily the environmental exposure or presence of that mould that is the issue.

It is both the exposure but how the brain is now processing that exposure that creates this response. Now, The offset to that is people will say, no, but we know there's genetic effects and we that the body's not detoxing effectively and there can be mycotoxins stuck in the, et cetera, etc.

But then I would challenge those people to say why is it that that person was able to be in that home without having reaction and suddenly a new reaction occurs.

Once that reaction starts occurring. their own detoxification systems are compromised. So that's exactly when we can then see buildup of mycotoxins, lack of detoxifications, and some of those genetic effects may be risk factors, but they're not necessarily causal.

We know time and time again, we keep pointing to genes and genes is our destiny. Genes is what the cause of this is. Genes are our risk factors, but it's a complex interplay of these other factors which then creates chronic illness.

And therefore we work with so many mold patients that as they retrain their brain, still do the remediation, and still to the practical steps. But you can be fully well, even if there is mold or small aspects of mold in your environment.

Wow, that's going to give a hope to a lot of people. I love that so much. And it makes a lots of sense to me. The body's been primed and then is stuck in the on phase to not feel safe with any exposure after that.

It's literally like a PTSD in a body almost. Absolutely. People might say, well, what's the precedent for this? It doesn't make sense. Look at food sensitivities.

Right? So look at peanut allergies. Peanut allergies are massively increasing in the population because there was a period of time when doctors told parents or the mother, don't eat peanuts during the pregnancy.

You know, it's really bad. Don't need peanuts. And now the reverse that said, no, eat peanut because the fetus has to get used to exposure to peanuts, so it gets used it and thinks that it is safe.

Now, children who do have a peanut allergy, there's a lot of great success now with this microdosing of peanuts where they give them very, very small amounts of peanut.

So you could say, no, the child has a peanuts allergy. It's fixed. But what we're learning is by giving them small amount and increasing it, eventually that child can handle and tolerate a certain amount of nuts.

That is brain retraining and neuroplasticity in action. What is going on there? The immune system is detecting small but they're so tiny that it thinks this isn't a threat.

And then a bit more comes and it think this is not a thread. It relays that information back to the brain. We believe the insular part of the brane and the grain gradually is getting retrained that peanuts are okay for the system.

Now that's the same analogy as mold. Is the analogy is chemical sensitivities. The brain has inadvertently made a decision that these things are dangerous and can be then retrain that is no longer dangerous.

That's what we're doing. And that's so, so important. That's actually the basis of homeopathy too. You know, a little bit more, do you see the problem?

Do you the see problem until it retrains the brain. So that beautiful. Ashok, you've worked with a lot of patients who've been, I'm assuming, bedbound because of their nervous system.

The most sensitive people who almost react to water if they have it sometimes.

Mold, Food Sensitivities, and the Three Rs

people who literally can't complete any of their activities of daily living. What's the first thing that you see shift in them in your Gupta program before the healing begins?

We have a three stage protocol, what we call the three R's of the program. And the first R is the regulation of a nervous system. The second R, is a unique thing, which is retraining of brain.

So we recognize that when people are bed bound, it's very difficult for them to engage with a recovery program because they can barely do the basics in life.

My heart goes out to them. So the first port of call is, can we get them to just begin to regulate the nervous system? So we give them very gentle breath work exercises, very gently meditative exercises.

And of course the somatic retraining, that's something that they can do even if they might be bed bound because it's literally just closing their eyes and going through and listening to our exercises And they begin with that.

And many of our clients say they need to do that for a few weeks, sometimes a couple of months if they're bed bound, and they'd begin to see things opening up.

They begin see the nervous system settling, which gives them more energy. Then as they get more, they can move to step two, the retraining of the brain.

And those are different techniques that we have. So we had the somatic retraining. We then have a seven-step brain retrainer, which is the core of what we do, we give people a massive twister board that comes with our package.

And it's literally two neurons in your brain and you're training your brains to shift one from one neuronal pattern to the second. And of course you might say, well, why can't people just do this in their heads?

They're so stuck in the heads with these negative patterns that we need to get them out of their brain. And that's where we get with physical movement to literally imagine the two neuronal pathways or cell assemblies in that brain

and they're retraining the brain using the seven step process.

Then we have the accelerator technique. We have a whole bunch of different brain retraining techniques that come together to train the brain that we are safe.

That we aren't in the presence of the original trigger and the army and Navy can stand down. So that's the core of what we do in this second R of our programme.

The third R is re-engaging with joy. Now what that means is, and I'm sure you see this in clinical practice, we may do some amazing work to get people back to health, but the moment they have chronic stress in their lives or something happens, symptoms come back and they might come in a different way or a difference illness.

And then we have to start the protocols again and try and weave our way back into health. Re-engaging with Joy is this idea that we become more aware of our stress patterns, the parts of personality that regularly are responding to threats.

And with that self-awareness, make sure that stay as regulated as possible because that means that, we get well, but we stay well. And connected to that, we do a lot of parts coaching, a little awareness of self, almost spiritual self-awareness so that we can understand our connection to life and self coming up with a philosophy.

You know, if we don't have a philosopher of why bad stuff happens. we're constantly going to feel stressed and feel anxious about the world. But we help people really self-regulate and connect to the inner joy.

So the idea of re-engaging with joy is, as you connect with the joy, you're less attached and stressed about your world around you. And that, our patients find really powerful.

Absolutely. We have published studies now showing that markers of inflammation decrease in a state of gratitude. Exactly. And people who are mourning loved ones who've passed over, they have higher levels of CRP and ESR and all the different inflammation markers that we have too.

So grief produces inflammation and gratitude helps solve that problem, it looks like. Absolutely. We encourage people what we call the attitude of gratitude, which is every day, three things that you're grateful for.

Family, friends, sharing it with that and making it a regular practice, especially before you go to sleep. So little things like that can shift your brain from I'm under threat, the life's terrible, my situation is awful to what can I be grateful to help then regulate?

That's really important. That has also helped change my life when I was in a bad state as well. Because just like you, I've been in nervous system dysregulation with all my lab work, blood work in the red and, you know, 30 extra pounds on me and full of histamine I'm sure too.

So I understand why you made this your mission and why want to help people with it. I guess to those practitioners out there, because I'm a medical doctor, and a lot of medical doctors can be naysayers about the functional world and even nervous system things.

We really under-represent stress in conventional medicine, unfortunately. So to these nay-sayers who don't understand the importance or say you don' have alphabet soup behind your name, what would you say to them?

I would say, respectfully to them, that medicine over the last two to three hundred years has made, of course, incredible breakthroughs. But we have to look at the source of where medicine came from.

So now a bit of a journey into history. It was the age of enlightenment, the 17th and 18th century in Europe, when before that Religion was the main basis of how we conducted our lives.

Anything to do with religion, the mind, spirituality, that was a gamut of religion. As science came along through the

Age of Enlightenment, anything to with the physical body, what could be measured, then became the domain of medicine and science.

We got this bifurcation that actually, if we can measure it and we detect it, that is true science and medicine. If we cannot, then that's the realm of religion and spirituality and all of this vague stuff over here.

So that means that that has got carried forward into modern science as a bias. Whereas in Eastern philosophies, consciousness, the mind was an integral part of science.

It wasn't separate. And we're already beginning to see now consciousness becoming a now integral of part science and quantum physics and the connection between those aspects.

So what I would say is that science is brilliant at dealing with the hardware, solving hardware problems. But when it comes to software problems, it's not built in that way.

And that's where these new techniques, these neuroplasticity is so powerful. But like, you know, moving or having a ship change direction, it takes a long time for these discoveries and these ways of working to infiltrate a medical system.

Hope, Research, and How to Get Started

And what I would encourage doctors to do is come and look at our research. Come and our patient populations, come look the amazing recoveries that they're having.

We generally find that 10 years ago, 15 years we were the outliers, but now a lot of medical doctors are embracing what we're talking about because they've been looking at these patients for 10 years, 15 years.

They haven't been able to help them. You know, if a patient comes with long COVID or fibromyalgia or pain, depression, they see that, yes, we're just numbing the symptoms, but we are not really getting to the root cause.

And so they're more open now to idea that we can rewire the brain. We can solve a lot of these chronic illnesses that cause a huge amount of suffering.

So I'm seeing a real opening up of mainstream medicine to these ideas. And as we do the larger scale studies, as I said, we have the dream that neuroplasticity is actually incorporated into primary care because the evidence base is so overwhelming for it.

I think we will get there. The issue is the bias in funding. So funding goes towards biomedical agents because that's how the system is set up. And if just some of that funding came towards neuroplasticity, we would show that we can get incredible results, much better than pharmaceuticals for these types of chronic illnesses for which the medical profession doesn't really have many answers.

Not at all. In fact, with a mental health crisis, especially after COVID, this could really be used worldwide to help a lot of people, I think. For people listening out there who feel like they're going to be ill forever, they've been ill their whole life, or there's something wrong with them, their broken, would you like to provide them any hope at off?

Yeah, I can totally understand. And that's how I felt when I was unwell. You know, i've tried everything. I've been to every doctor. There's no hope for me.

The hope that I want to give to people is that no matter how long you've had the illness, no mater how complex your case feels, the reason you may not have got the recovery that you deserve is because we just haven't found the right key to the lock yet.

Yeah. A lock will always feel stubborn and why can't I open? Why can I get through this door? You just got to find the right key to unlock it. And therefore we see these miracle stories every day of people healing.

So we would encourage people, whether it's our program or other things, just to embrace this idea of brain retraining that if we can get to the brain, if you can retrain the mind, the amygdala and insula parts of the body, we get health and wellness.

Whatever journey you've been on, If you haven't tried this yet, this could be the key We already see in the science that things from anywhere from ulcerative colitis to neurodegenerative conditions to major depression is due to vagal nerve disorders, which is the nervous system.

Exactly. Thank you for doing your work. For everyone out there listening, if they're like chomping at the bit to hear more, then they are really intrigued.

This sounds like them. There's a resonance with this. How can they follow up with you? Where can I find your program? So we'd love for people to come to our website, which is GuptaProgramme.com.

And on our web site there, there's lots of free videos. There's about 300 or 400 testimonials, so you can watch inspiring videos from ex-patients and read things.

We've got lots and lots free of videos on what we've talked about today. So what causes this nervous system and immune system dysregulation? The theory behind it, and they can see if it resonates with them.

So there's lots of free resources and they can also go to App Store or Play Store. So if they want to use the app instead, just search Gupta program and you can download it for free.

And there is a 28 day free trial. You can go in, try things, see if this is right for you. Until we get the large scale phase three trials with thousands of patients, we give a one year money back guarantee on our program so people can use it up to a year.

If you've got no improvement after six months, you can return it, get your money back, no questions asked because we want people to really feel this is risk free for them to do this and that's why we're convinced of its efficacy.

There's no risk involved then. It's a money-back guarantee. That's amazing. So thank you so much, Shaq, for coming on and educating me and the audience on everything.

I loved it, so I appreciate all your knowledge. Yeah, thank and download the Wellness Care Plan I've made for you for free on my site WellnessPlus.com.