Why You’re Still Sick: TED Talk on Mold, Inflammation, and the Future of Medicine Transcript

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A Mysterious Illness After Mold Exposure

He was in pretty average health, right up until the time he took a job sweeping out a moldy wine cellar. Within 24 hours, he couldn't use a broom. 48 hours couldn' t climb a flight of stairs.

And within four days, was unable to feed or dress himself without assistance. He was terrified when he walked in the first of what would be a dozen or so different doctor's offices, cardiologists, endocrinologists rheumatologists neurologists.

Doctor after doctor looked at him through the very narrow prism of their specialty and unable to focus on the diagnosis, passed him off to the next doctor.

Six months later, He walks in, doesn't walk in. He gets pushed into my office in a wheelchair with a stack of paperwork, biopsies, labs, scans. No diagnosis, no treatment, but he did have a prescription for antidepressant because they figured if they didn't know what was wrong with him, there must be something wrong him.

How Modern Medicine Misses the Root Cause

Did they do anything wrong? No, they did exactly what they were trained to do. Exactly what we've been training doctors to since the early 1900s. We standardized medical school curriculum back then.

And when that happened, germs were the big problem. Infectious diseases were what was killing us, and people do, what do we do about the microbes? And medicine said, we're going to give you antibiotics.

And by God, those antibiotics worked. And they worked so well that we took that same model and started to apply it to every other way that were breaking.

We came up with antihypertensives and antihistamines and antiinflammatories. Our curiosity became a singular obsession with finding the next magic bullet.

There's an issue with magic bullets. You gotta have a clear target to shoot them at. and my patient was not offering them anything like a clear target because he was breaking in the same ways that we are breaking the early 1900s.

Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, we're breaking and far new and more innovative ways. The Industrial revolution changed the basic fabric of our society as we went from applying primarily farming and handicraft society to one of assembly lines and factories.

And when we did so we had fewer farmers to grow more food. We went from small, family-oriented, secure communities into these huge cities full of strangers and dangers.

Industrialization, Diet, Stress, and Pollution

And the Industrial Revolution brought us a new thing called environmental pollution. So when we looked at the reasons that my patient might have been breaking, what did we discover?

Well, we discovered that he was suffering from likely what many of you in the audience are suffering. What is jokingly been referred to as the standard American diet.

This processed package and preserved foods are rich in calories and poor in nutrients. That is the very definition of

an empty calorie. You know what our body does with empty calories?

It turns them into fat. And fat becomes obesity, and obesity becomes diabetes. And diabetes has a way of shortening our lives in painful ways and often deadly.

But then we had to look at the next thing. What else was going on with him? Well, stress. We are all stressed in this world. Stress causes us to pull the fire alarm in our brains.

When we pull a fire in their brains, we cannot rest and repair. If we can not rest in repair, We end up taking vibrant young people and turning them into tired old ones in a very short period of time.

My patient was stressed. He was a president of the United States, but he was the one sitting in a wheelchair with no hope of getting out, no treatment, not diagnosis, unable to support himself, much less his family, and he couldn't even apply for disability because he had no medically definable illness.

he didn't have MS, he did have ALS, He didn have a broken spine. I don't know what's wrong. You take two antidepressants and call me in the morning. What do you do?

But most importantly, he was suffering from what we're all exposed to on a daily basis. And those are the changes in pollution.

Recovery by Addressing the Underlying Causes

The pesticides, herbicides and fungicides were spraying on our food to increase production. Heavy metals, lead, mercury and cadmium that are spewing from our tailpipes and our factory smoke stacks.

Not to mention plastics, microplastics and air pollution which irritates our lungs and inflames our bodies. All these were happening to him as well. Plus, for a bonus round, he got the mold exposure from the wine cellar.

So when we looked at the reasons he was raking and started addressing them, an amazing thing happened. Within four weeks, He was feeding and dressing himself.

In six weeks he walking with crutches, swimming in a pool and riding a stationary bike. and by 12 weeks he was getting in his car driving to a new job that was not in a wine cellar.

You see, he wasn't suffering from something that a magic bullet could fix. I'm not saying magic bullets aren't any good. Sometimes you need the big boy medicine.

Practical Steps for Better Health

But if we don't start addressing the reasons that we are sick as assiduously and as curiously as we try to attack the way that are we sick, we're going to end up chasing our tails.

So what do you need to do to not have a mystery illness? You're all gonna become curious. And the first thing you're gonna be curious about is the food you are eating.

You are gonna ditch the process preserved and packaged foods and go for whole locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, grass fed beef and wild caught fish.

Why? Because they are nutrient dense as well as chlorically dense. They are the perfect food that you will need the heal. If you can bio-organically, so much the better, because then you're not gonna have the pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides we so liberally spray on everything that we put in our mouths.

The second thing you gonna become curious about, stress. We're all gonna get stressed, but how we deal with stress is the difference. When we pull the fire alarm in the brain, we usually precipitate things like anger, fear,

frustration, or resentment.

When you feel yourself going down that path, take a breath. In fact, Take four breaths. Four seconds, inhale, hold for four, exhale for 4, Hold for Four.

You do that a total of four times. Then that 64 seconds your hand will come off the fire alarm in the brain and you'll be able to face whatever difficulty it is with a clear and rational mind.

Other people take up things like yoga, tai chi, meditation, prayer. They're all good. But what I really like is nature. Nature is a great healer. Take a hike in the woods.

Go swimming in ocean. Some people play golf. I personally think the best use of a golf club is as a fishing pole. That's me. You do you. But the next thing on your list is clean air.

Indoor air pollution is far worse than outdoor air pollution. Why? Because we build our houses for energy efficiency and that traps the toxins and the allergens inside and they hitch rides on the little Uber cars called dust particles in the house.

And they go from where they live into their new workplace in our bodies. Get a pleated air filter for your HVAC system or a couple of bucks. If you can afford it, get a HEPA filter from your bedroom.

if you cant do that, at least open a window once in a while. Just don't do it during pollen season. Become curious consumers. Use that internet search engine to look up things like the Clean 15 or the Dirty Dozen.

This will help you make better food choices. Download an app for your cell phone where you can scan the barcodes on products you're about to buy and find out if they're toxic for you or not.

It's an easy thing to quit buying products that are killing you. It just needs a little curiosity. But if you've done all that and you're still like, is there something else I can do?

Then yeah, nothing beats heat. The study of 2,500 Finnish men conducted over a period of 20 years showed that those that did a sauna three times a week had a 40% reduction in all-cause mortality.

Environmental Medicine and the Power of Curiosity

They died 40 percent less of the time than the people that didn't do the sauna. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out. You don't have to boil yourself like a lobster either.

110 to 125 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes, you're in good shape. Take a towel in with you, wipe the sweat off, take a cool shower when you are done so you wash off all these toxins that you've been so carefully trying to get yourself rid of.

If you still not doing well, use that same search engine and look up environmental doctor near me. Environmental medicine is a new branch of medicine.

It's a post residency program that spikes the interest and the curiosity of doctors who want to know the reasons that we're being ill and not just what we need to do about it.

We exist. Lastly, none of us is getting out of here alive. I know you've heard that before. But too many of us are leaving this earth with broken bodies, crushed spirits, and enfeebled minds.

Your curiosity will allow you to leave this Earth with a functional body, a clear mind, an a grateful spirit. Curiosity never killed a single living animal.

It did, however, give the cat its nine lives. Thank you.