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Not your toes speak Chinese, your fingers speak Creole, and your mind speaks Spanish. universal language of wellness and health. And so when we start talking about nutrition, we're not speaking a foreign language.

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to help us, you know, fix our dialect and our vocabulary in our bloodline and in, in in genes. And we actually are able to, help someone function to their optimal wellness that I feel like that's what's happening now.

We realized that there's a lock and key and nutrition can unlock amazing things in your body so it can heal and function well. Welcome to Take Back My Brain with Lori Hammer, where real healing starts in the brain.

I'm Lori, a functional nutritionist and mom who's walked the path from anxiety and burnout to clarity and calm. Each week, we're going to dive into brain-based tools like amino acid therapy, gut health, fasting and faith to help you reclaim your energy, emotions and sense of self.

Hello, everyone. Welcome back. I am so excited about this conversation. Today I have Dr. Marceline Gurley with me and we are going to dive into nutritional psychiatry today.

So this is my jam. We were just talking before we got on and when I said, finally, you know, she's like, it's finally psychiatr, nutritional psychiatrist coming to the forefront.

And I'm like yeah, I've been doing this for years just like you. Finally, people are talking about it. I've just been doing amino acid therapy with myself and clients since, you know, 96. So, it's been a bit and everybody tells me, I can't, i don't know anything about amino-acid therapy.

Why aren't you talking, about this form? Like, i've been trying. So, I am excited to dive into this topic. Marceline, thank you for being with us today. I'm excited to be here.

Let's go. Why do you think it's taken so long to catch on in the psychiatric world? I think it's taken long because we just haven't paid attention to our needs, right?

We don't pay attention through the whole body care. We've decided to split the body into multi-systems and forget that our bodies communicate as a whole, one whole language, not your toes speak Chinese, your fingers speak Creole, and your mind speaks Spanish.

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now. We realize that there's a lock and key and nutrition can unlock amazing things in your body so it can heal and function well.

I 100% agree with that. So my next question is, you didn't start out in this psychiatric nutrition world. You told me you like fought it tooth and nail.

Yes. Tell us how you got here. Well, I am dual certified as a family and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner. So the family nurse practitioners part was your primary care provider taking care of the whole person, more disease management and helping others live well in their disease processes or wellness.

And so here I'm practicing and I was working in pediatrics at the time and would have a lot of kids coming in with stomach issues, throwing up in the morning and having to avoid school.

A lot that was happening and We would refer them out to see GI specialists, refer the mouth to all these people, and we'd come back with inconclusive diagnoses.

We just didn't know what it was. And I realized, no, there's something else going on here. Come on, let's talk about what's happening in their mentation.

What are they thinking about? What's happened in the classroom? So I felt like an investigator. I would sit there, you know, like with my little microscope, just investigating their little minds and their lives.

And I realized that baby is having some anxiety. That baby's having avoidant behavior. Something is happening. Maybe something that they're responding to and they just don't have the language.

Right? So that interest was peaked, right? And I decided to go back to school and become certified in psychiatric mental health as a nurse practitioner.

So I can take care of the whole person, the WHOLE person. And here comes nutrition, because nutrition is key to everything. Once I started realizing that we have foods that can make us anxious.

There are foods that can give us excitement, especially when I was working with my patients who have ADHD. You know, we talk about, you know some die avoidance.

We talk some diet changes with them. And so I really started paying attention. So my patience kind of became my first little project and introduction.

to nutritional psychiatry. And as I adjusted their diets and as spoke to the parents and how we cook and prepare foods, there it was for me, it clicked.

I'm like, this is what it is. You know, and it got me to start thinking about epigenetics. It got start me thinking so many things and realizing that this whole person approach is more necessary than we are actually giving it credit.

So here I am and I have been loving it since 2012. That is fantastic. Were you kind of in that nutrition world prior to making this discovery? Like, was your lifestyle healthy or is this sort of your journey too?

This is definitely my journey, too. Believe it or not, yes, but 100% my joining. But believe it not I actually went on a health, a whole health mission on shifting my health.

I suffered from PCOS, right? I suffer from this hyperglycemia. had other symptoms that we could not find the root cause. So being a healthcare provider and I can't find a root cost of my own problem, that was a frustrating factor.

I went down this rabbit trail. which is a discovery. Yes, it was a recovery for me. I said I have nothing to lose, I'm going to try this. And I went on that and weight dropped, hormones regulated, and I was able to finally workout and enjoy my workout without my joints aching and having inflammation and headaches and fatigue.

I took this on for myself. So as I walked through this process, I invited my patients that I was caring for to join me in the process. And I also realized in that very process how much I did not eat vegetables, right?

It's wild. You probably have like three or four vegetables that are your key, you know, go-tos, especially in the Caribbean household. I'm from the Carribean.

My family is of Haitian descent. So, it's very limited. And so, as I am going through this process of eating for my blood type, I look at this list, and I don't eat that.

Don't I eat this? And I tried cooking it, didn't taste well. Didn't do a great job. Pinterest wasn't helping. I saw my old juice where somebody gave me a juice years ago sitting on my counter.

And I was like, I wonder if I juice some of these how it would be, how would it work, right? And so I went through an entire time of juicing things that weren't so tasty, but then realized how to make them taste better.

I studied the foods together in combination in juice and even birthed out of that season of my life. a book called There's a Juice for That and it helps people understand healing your gut, healing, your body through juicing, not necessarily replacing your diet whatsoever, but also in allowing you a bioavailable nutritional punch or juice that you can enjoy throughout your day, throughout the week.

that sustains nutritional supplementation in one way or another. So I teach in that book because I watch my whole body just morph as I gave it what it needed.

I mean, it made it more sense to even shift into this nutritional psychiatry into my practice and integrate it in all that I do. That is fantastic, because when we give the body what it needs, the buddy knows what to do.

That's the way we're created. Yes, it responds well. It does respond well, so in the nutritional psychiatry, you mentioned ADD, what else are you seeing that shifts for these psychiatric patients?

You got ADB, is it depression, anxiety? What might it be? It all. Everything changes when we start to address our nutrition because we don't realize our everyday American diet, right?

This very sad diet. The standard American Diet is sad for a reason because it's lacking so many things that could cause us to have a better mood, can cause to be happy.

I would love to hear us change it to the happy diet or a glad diet You know, that'd be great, but we lack so many key nutritional components in our diet because we're going for what's convenient, right?

We're goin' for whats fast. And fast food doesn't always have to be bad food, But most of the times it is bad what we grab, so now our diets are lacking our basic things like fiber.

Our diets are lacking that, and we wonder why our guts are sluggish. And we are having more higher sugar content than we should have in our super-sized sodas and juices and lemonades.

So we're spiking our blood sugar, And of course, what goes up must come down. We're crashing. When we crash, we get anxious, sad, tired, have no energy, can't sustain our attention, brain fog.

All of this makes complete sense. So when we talk about nutritional involvement in our everyday life, it's important for us to understand that when don't feed the body what it needs is deficient.

Whatever is deficiency dies. Yeah. And it could die pretty much early. Right? So. Yeah, and it shrinks. You know, we're talking about amino acid therapy all the time because that's my first line of defense is feeding the neurotransmitters because they'll shrink.

They'll just decide they're tired, they don't want to work anymore. Then we decide we are going to medicate it

instead of give it the nutrition that it needs.

A medicated body doesn't fix a nutrient deficiency. No, it does not. because you're gonna need more and more medication. And then next thing you know, you gonna think the medication's failing you.

No, I often encourage my patients, of course, to move their body. I said, if you have a muscle in the body that you don't work, it shrinks. So it cannot carry weight.

You want all the muscles to work so you can carry the weight of your body. So you don't have knee pain. If you do not strengthen the the muscle around or the ligaments around your knees, you're going to have constant knee, ankle pain, elbow pain because we don t have the muscular sufficient to carry that weight at the body It's the same thing with our nutrition.

We have to support it or it shrinks. our gut strength, our brain strength. And then we're like, well, what can I do with all these supplements and all this medication?

I'm going everywhere trying to get it, but you could solve or even assist in solving or healing by just eating well. Yeah. And it's not that difficult.

Yeah. It's really not. I mean, I understand food deserts. You know, socioeconomic systems. And I know that everyone can go to Trader Joe's or Whole Foods or Sprouts and spend massive amounts of money.

But there are other options that we can still make those choices to support our nutrition without going to a deficient diet. Exactly, exactly. Yeah, it doesn't have to be organic or grass-fed.

I mean, you can… You can still have hamburgers and potatoes and green beans or a really good salad and use really oil still. It's very, very doable.

Very doable on really any kind of budget. You just have to know what to do. And so I'm glad that you're working in this area. you specialize in trauma, correct?

Well, in psychiatry altogether, but I see trauma patients all the time. Yeah, so I would love to dive into digestion and trauma and what are you seeing and how does that all connect it?

I love it. Let's go. So when I think about trauma, and I like talking about this because it's such a trending word right now. We're using it so much, but we're really not focusing on what it actually causes in the body.

So, when was invited to come and talk about it, I got excited. I was like, oh man, we get to talk all the things that I'm seeing right. Now, so I am ready for your questions.

Fantastic. Can you first of all, before we dive into what trauma causes, can you define trauma? Yes, of course. Trauma is an impact. An impact that dysregulates your nervous system.

Just think about it as you see it on the street. You're driving down a road and a car hits you. That's trauma, right? It changes the normal function of the vehicle, so everything abruptly stops.

There's a dysfunction, there's stop, and there is a place of damage, right? And we all remember the scene of the accident. And it kind of follows us throughout our lives in one way or another, either in a memory or in scar.

So trauma is an impact, a piece of change, And you can mark it with time and face and dates. You can give it a beginning or a start. It happened somewhere along the way in your life.

Okay, that makes complete sense. And so how does trauma manifest itself physically in our body? Well, it can manifest yourself in any kind of way. You can start by having just blatant headaches for no reason.

We can have where we have tension in out necks and our backs, we can aches and pains in fingers, or people have had patients tell me, They feel like this tingling sensation coming down their fingers suddenly when they have a memory.

They have difficulty sleeping. Maybe they even have flashbacks on the event. The can't forget it. It's always on their mind, it's ruminating. they become anxious when the see a door open.

you know, or a door closed or maybe a bing on the phone. Those things can show up in our everyday and we don't realize those are traumatic responses in the body.

I've had patients who say they have frequent urination when a certain song comes on. Oh, interesting. That's a traumatic response. Yes. The body keeps score.

It remembers and it will always connect itself to whatever was in the space or a time. And that's the traumatic and you can, it can show up that way in your life, either anxious, depressed, or something physical.

Wow. And so how are we, if we're thinking of the nutrition piece of it, of course there's, you know, working through all of that with some talk therapy and stuff too, but what about the nutritional piece?

How does that help unwind the trauma? What have you seen, maybe even the gut to brain access or other things going on? Oh, of course. So the gut-brain access is a two-way communication system.

And I like to make sure people understand that your brain talks to your belly and your body talks your to brain. It's a B and B. Always happening between the two.

The brain and the digestive tract are constantly in conversation. They communicate through the nervous system or the vagus nerve or hormones, your immune signals, right?

It also helps what's called the gut microbiome, which is in community all by itself, a whole village all itself that's happening constantly as we're speaking right now in your gut.

For trauma survivors or trauma patients, this matters because trauma can keep the body in a heightened state of threat. and even if there aren't any danger around or if the danger is over.

So the brain sometimes forget that that trauma happens and you're safe now, but the nervous system still is responding as if it's actively happening or something bad is about to happen.

And the gut, it's sensitive to this, is sensitive that stress and it is a stress response. That's why anxiety can cause you to feel nauseous. It can caused you have diarrhea or even stomach cramping.

Sometimes it can causes you lose your appetite or feel like there's a pit in your stomach. I hear patients tell me that, I have like a fit in my stomach and that's the trauma signal.

It's a trauma response. So trauma is not just emotional. I want people to know that. It is a physiological response, it's very physical and it affects your entire body all at one time, especially the digestive tract, the system.

We're having this trauma responses showing up that way. How do you unwind that? Hey friend, just a quick break to remind you if calming your brain is the missing piece in your practice or in you're home, my Mind Thrive certification course teaches you exactly how to do that with targeted amino acid therapy.

So it's real science, real results, no band-aids. Enrollment is now open. Link is in the show notes. Back to the Show. Well, you unwind that by, number one, realizing that you're not in a threatened place.

You're safe. you also have to be pretty present and aware of time. I always tell people it's a time response thing right now. We're in different time We're in present, I'm here, safe, everything is good.

That did happen to me. I don't want you to try to forget that that happened or ignore that was something that occurred, but we're good right now. So what can I connect my safety to?

I can connect safety this chair that I am sitting in. You know, it's not going to drop me, and I could connect to the ground that i'm feeling. And I have my feet on the floor and connect the safety of having a conversation with someone.

You know, so it's really, really checking the atmosphere, checking what's going on, and knowing that that happened, I acknowledge it, but what I'm going to do right now is acknowledge that I am safe.

I hope that makes sense. Well, that make total sense, have you seen nutrition play a role in people being able to tap into that safety feeling where they weren't able before they changed their nutritional status?

I've seen it. I like to discuss it this way because I don't want people to think like, oh, nutrition is going to solve all my problems. No, it's not. It's a behavior shift, right?

So I have seen that I started being more aware of my diet. I'm feeding the body what it needs. I am not feeding my body things that are going to heighten my anxiety or things are that going lower my mood.

So, hence, I can actually adopt the coping mechanisms necessary to progress in my healing journey. Okay? So my bodies not deficient. It is actually optimally well, whole and fed well.

And now I can move forward towards adopting these behaviors of mindfulness, of being aware and all the things that they discuss in cognitive behavioral therapy.

Now I love it. I'm more motivated to do that. Yeah, that's what I talk about a lot, too, because when you're fixing those deficiencies, your brain can think more clearly.

It has the ability to process things in a way that you would like to respond. And then you can go, oh, this is OK now. Even though this happened, I'm OK here and right now, where before, if their brain wasn't nutritionally sound, it's just constantly in this overdrive all the time, and you feel like you are on this hamper wheel.

It's like drinking six cups of coffee, right? And now I'm shaking everywhere, I can't think clearly, all of that. Okay, so you were just saying that nutrition is just one piece of the puzzle when somebody's overcoming trauma and to heal that gut-to-brain axis.

What else have you seen works really well to restore the body to where it needs to be? I love when my patients are in therapy. I always tell them, I'm like, hey, this is not just take this medication and go on your merry way.

I am not that provider. I want you to sit with someone who is going to help guide you and someone's who's going help you adopt a new thought pattern, right?

So those new thoughts patterns allows for you have new behaviors. and your new behaviors allows for you to make better choices. Those new choices allow you live a better life and eventually be whole and healed.

So CBT, EMDR, cognitive processing therapy, prolonged exposure therapy for those who are having some sort of traumatic response to an environment of food or an event.

I absolutely push for therapy. When it comes to nutrition, I want them doing the gut-directed hypnotherapy if it is available to them because they have good evidence to support trauma response and healing and all of that.

I'm one of those people who some people may call a little crunchy and I love it. That's okay, I am crunchy. I love crunchiness. I'm like, crunchy is great because going back to, you know, back in the day, we walked outside with no shoes on.

We connected with the ground, right? There was nothing in between us and the groundbreaking so we can actually feel and use all of our senses. And so grounding, mindfulness, diaphragmatic breathing, we don't realize that we take deep enough breaths these days.

We're only using 40% of our lung capacity, if that, when we're taking a jog. So it's important that were breathing so we can bring oxygen into the body, process into to the brain, allowing our bloodstreams to carry a heightened level of oxygen so it can distribute the micronutrients that need to function and think clearly.

You know, I also encourage strength training, moving the body, like I said earlier, taking a walk. But one of my favorite topics that is often kind of minimized is sleep.

We forget about it, you know? Yes. Why is that so important? Go to bed. Get your hours of sleep. Research is pushing so much for proper sleep hygiene because we understand the body recovers as we rest, right?

And our digestive system recoves as So we can break down our food to the bioavailability that's necessary to heal. And we forget that. All of this helps with stress regulation.

But stress regulations doesn't mean you're not going to be stressed. It just means that we now have a system in place to use in order for us to take our bodies out of this frequent stress, high danger, fight or flight system into a place of rest in or for it to do what it needs to to restore.

It makes us more resilient. Yes. Resilience is so key to get out that fight of flight. What is your recommendation for sleep hygiene? Get in bed. First thing, I hear people tell me all the time, like, what's my sleep hygiene?

Get him bed, you know, just please get in bad. But like of course, start with, your evening shower. Start with your evening cleansing. I'm going to sound funny, but I tell my patients, do you have a skin routine?

I start there. Do you a have skin routines? They're like, just wash my face. And I want you to slow this routine down. Don't rush it in the evening. We run in heels all day and come home and try to get in bed with heels on.

No, let's start with the skin routine. Get in your shower, cleanse your skin, do your face routine, put on your neck cream, putting lotions and oils all over your body.

And when I'm walking them through that process, they're thinking that, oh, she cares about my skin. Yes and no. I actually wanted you to touch your nerves on you body that has not been touched all day.

It has not been touched, it's been clothed and on the move, but as you touch your body in lotion, you're long stroking. So you releasing relaxation hormones, right?

You're releasing all of that. And I tell them like, why as your rub your hands together, your hand get happy. They're like wow, that's relaxing. When we go to the spa, we want somebody to rub our backs and our shoulders and it causes us to relax.

This is your way of causing your to body to relaxed. so you can de-stimulate from the day's pressures and stresses, right? Then turn the lights off. I have too many patients sleeping with a TV on and the blue light from their phone.

Turn it off, there is enough research out there proving that a dark room improves our sleep. Decrease the temperature to a comfortable, I don't tell people to put it cold below 60. I think that's nuts for them, especially I'm from the Caribbean, so I want comfort by all means.

But I make it as comfortable in that temperature of that room for you. Make it dark and lay down. Sometimes I'm asked, can I use music? Sure, if it doesn't stimulate you.

Can I read a book? I discourage that because it's activating the brain. But put everything on slow motion. That room is for sleep. So we have to train the brains that when I come into my bedroom, it is bedtime.

And then the natural melatonins in your body start to increase and that's how you sleep, We need that. Melatonin is a hormone. It's not a pill that we pick up on, you know, over the counter at CVS.

it is naturally created in our bodies, in out bellies for our brains to use so we can rest. And that's my sleep hygiene for myself and I also implement it with my patients.

I love it. Yeah, because you can't heal if you don't sleep. No, and I always tell people, no phone in the room, put it outside your room. I have a little battery-operated clock.

If I need an alarm, I set the battery operated clock, it doesn't have to be in there. Anything that plugs in, a ceiling fan, other than that, there's nothing that plug in in my room so when I'm in and ready to go to bed, the lights are off and that's it.

That's all we get. Because your bedroom is for rest. Yes, and it's so yummy. Get your favorite sheets. I love organic cotton or linen, but just get some sheets you feel yummy in, a good pillow, just go to sleep.

Go to bed. Don't skip it. A question I do get is how many hours of sleep should I get? And what we normally tell patients, eight to 10 hours, right? We're now realizing that, yes, there are some people who can run on a little bit less sleep, and there people need a bit more sleep.

So, not really trying to force yourself to be in a bed for 12 hours. I'm not telling you that. And I am not tell you to get in the bed and just be there for six.

But let's just pay attention, track the body's needs. and be aware of what my body needs in order for me to function at my best. So, I don't feel like it's a cookie cutter response for people.

It's just totally dependent on your genetic makeup and what you need. Right. But don' t sell yourself short and tell yourself you'll need less than what actually do.

Correct. We try to cheat the system. Very much. We don't want you cheating the system. When people learn how to pay attention to their own body, do their nightly routine pay, attention, to the digestion, changing their habits?

Do you find that their mental health quickly follows or do you feel like that's still a delayed and they still need medication and those kind of things?

So that's a difficult question to fully answer, but what I will say is they both go hand in hand, right? I feel like there are some patients, you change your diet, It may change as far as their anxiety may decrease, their depression may increase, and that will sustain them for a little while.

But then something else may happen and trigger their anxieties or depression again. And they may need a prescription. That's where I say it goes hand in hand.

It goes hand in hand. First, let's clean up how you're eating. Sure, that's cleaning up. Let's see it. But in the interim, I can still prescribe something super low dose to help support you while you are still trying to clean-up your eating Right?

Because you may need a little bit more serotonin than you expected. Maybe we don't have enough seratonin in the gut or circulating in your body. Because whatever you've been eating yesterday, weeks before, you're totally depleted.

So it's not going to automatically overnight get to be at 100%. So I have to write you something to support you. Does that mean you have be on this medication long term?

No, maybe not. These are questions that we evaluate over time. It's all dependent. And I'm asked these questions so often, like, how long am I gonna be on this, Dr.

Mercy? Like, is this for the rest of my life? I mean, well, let's correct some things and then wean you off and let us reevaluate. it's okay to start on something to support you as you correct everything else.

and when you often see where your baseline is, Right. So everything should be temporary. Your diet that helps you function in like long-term, that's the permanent baseline area.

When we take care of that baseline, your diet, then we can build on or we could take off. Right? But I can't say change your, diet your whole life is going to change.

Because there are people who genetically don't produce enough serotonin, dont produce in a dopamine, they don´t produced enough norepinephrine to support them in life.

So they have to have some sort of prescription. And I like to say that very clearly to de-stigmatize the need to not prescribe or the needs to over prescribe all the things because people are fearful to take a medication because they're thinking, I'm going to be on this forever.

I'm never going to get off of it or I don't need it at all because I changed the way I eat. And that's not necessarily the truth for everyone. Right. Yeah.

Everybody's, you know, their own individual and there's so many So many reasons why people are where they are. But I would say, you know, doing this for so long.

I mean, I see a lot of clients that unfortunately have been on those meds for 20, 30 years, now since they really first came out in the early 90s. And these people haven't had a life without medication.

When they discover that it's a possibility and we can work on their nutrition, their amino acid status so that we help their body produce their own serotonin and stuff, it is life changing for them.

I love your philosophy. Sometimes there is a time and a place for a short term with these medications, but long term we really want the body to be able to maintain itself the way that God designed us to.

I love your philosophy. It's amazing and I know you're doing amazing work. If there's one thing you want to leave the audience with, what would it be?

I would say that There's always hope. There is always a hope for change. You can change, things can changes, all of it can changed. What we find in science is that the brain can be changed through neuroplasticity.

The microbiome, they are a dynamic community within our gut. It can change if you give it the right things. Your sleep can improve, your nutrition can as you make the proper choices to feed your body optimally well.

Therapy can help reshape the patterns and support your lifestyle. your nervous system can become more flexible. It can change. Your supportive relationships can help the body relearn safety and regulate.

Because what we've also learned is we co-regulate with others around us, right? So as a family and psychiatric nurse practitioner, I believe that this is why whole person care matters so much.

because we need so much to take care of this body. And we cannot just treat the gut and ignore the brain. We can't treat anxiety and depression and ignored sleep, nutrition or inflammation, what causes inflammation in our body, and we can not treat trauma as if it only exists from our neck up.

because our bodies respond to trauma as well. So healing happens when we begin to treat the person as one interconnected system rather than an individualized system.

It is literally interdependent, not independent. That's what I would leave with the audience is there's hope that things can change. I love it. There's always hope.

You and I were just talking. God always provides streams in those deserts. Yes, He does. He's so good at it, so faithful all the time. Where can people find you?

You can find me on MarcelineGirly.com. I'm on social media at Dr. Marcelin Girly YouTube as well. Dr Marcelina Girley. All my platforms are pretty much the same.

But yes, I'd love to connect with people. So feel free to Awesome. And all that'll be in the show notes too. So make sure all of you check down below in those shownotes.

Well, Marceline, thank you so much. It's been an amazing conversation. I appreciate you much and I know my audience will too, so thank for being here.

Thank you for having me. Yeah. And thank you everyone for listening. I love what I do and I loved the fact that you're tuning in. So make sure you are sharing this episode.

Thanks for listening to Take Back My Brain. If today's episode helped you connect with hope or direction, I want you to follow the show, leave us a review, and share it with someone who needs it.

And if you're ready to start your own healing journey, explore our courses and our coaching programs at lorihammer.com backslash store. So until next time, remember, you cannot medicate away a nutrient deficiency, you