



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

Qigong and the power of energy healing

Guest: Dr Pedram Shojai

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[00:00:10] Alex Howard

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with Dr Pedram Shojai. Firstly, Pedram, welcome, and thank you for joining me.

Dr Pedram Shojai

Good to be here.

Alex Howard

So in this interview, we're going to be exploring anxiety through the lens of energy medicine and Qigong, and also looking at some of the emotional release techniques that we can use.

Just to give people a bit of Pedram's background. Dr Pedram Shojai is a man with many titles. He's the founder of theurbanmonk.com, co-founder of whole.tv, the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Urban Monk*, *Rise and Shine*, *The Art of Stopping Time* and *Inner Alchemy*.

He is the producer and director of the movie's *Vitality*, *Origins* and *Prosperity*. He's also produced several documentary series like *Interconnected*, *Gateway to Health* and the upcoming *Exhausted* series.

In his spare time, he's also a Taoist Abbot, a doctor of Oriental medicine, a Kung Fu world traveler, and a fierce global green warrior, an avid backpacker and a devout alchemist, a Qigong master and an old school Jedi biohacker working to preserve our natural world and wake us up to our full potential.

So, Pedram, I think maybe just a good starting point is to set some broad frames here. There's going to be folks that we're talking to that are less familiar, perhaps with concepts like energy medicine and Qigong. So when we're talking of energy medicine, what are we actually talking about?

Dr Pedram Shojai

It's a good question. The nature of our existence in these material bodies that we have, we have a lot of concrete things we can measure. We can measure blood levels of certain chemicals, we can measure how far it takes for you to touch your toes. Certain objective measures that we've gotten really comfortable with.

For thousands of years, Ayurveda, the Chinese medicine, talks about this, but in the last 15/20 years, we've really turned the corner in understanding that energy gradients, energy potentials, action

potentials, the flow of ions really drives the process. Obviously, the brain runs on electrical conductivity, runs down your spine, runs to the tips of your fingers and all that stuff.

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And so that's been compartmentalized going, okay, well, that's energy but what else? And now we're starting to understand that there is electrical signaling at the cell membrane level that will very specifically respond to shifts in energy currents that will very specifically respond to emotional upheavals that drive energetic currents.

And so it's gotten really interesting. I mean, the ancient stuff still applies, and it always has, but somehow we have to feel like science has to also sanction something. And so we've done a lot of work in the last 20 years trying to find scientific explanations for what the ancients have been talking about.

And we're at a point now where there are revolutionary light based techniques that are happening in clinics all over the world. And there are revolutionary treatments for, say, trauma in particular that have a lot to do with energy and emotional release with energetic currents.

So I've been at this for a very long time. We used to do all sorts of energy techniques for trauma before any of this stuff got popularized. It was one of the original interviews for my first film. I interviewed Callahan, who's the founder of Thought Field Therapy, and have been watching this stuff on its ascent. And so I've seen the good, the bad, the ugly, and I know what has continued to work, and I see all the flash in the pan stuff come and go.

Alex Howard

Part of what's fascinating is anyone that has done any work with trauma and emotions that have been repressed in the body for a long time, is how we cannot think about something literally for decades, and then there's suddenly, as we start the process and we start to metabolize, all of this memory and all of this information and all of this energy starts to come up.

And I think often people can think about their emotional body or their energetic body as being just something that's broken, that needs to be fixed, as opposed to the deeply wise and informed information body that it is. Maybe say a little bit about just how much potential, in a sense, there is within that.

Dr Pedram Shojai

Let's talk about human nature. I guess animal nature is, we have a very strong, hardwired aversion to pain. And if something hurts you, you run away from it, if something makes you feel uncomfortable, you shy away from it. And so that has become our ammo. Whether it's Tylenol, alcohol, CBD or Quaaludes, I don't know what the hell people are taking, but it is the avoidance of the pain that drives us to a culture of self medication. And whether you're trying to tap or talk or whatever, you're trying to make the pain go away, you're trying to not feel that bad thing.

And the essence of this gestalt for energy medicine is to really turn that light around and say, hey, what is this? I feel uncomfortable, what is this that I'm feeling? Okay, I feel anxious. I feel really anxious right now. I can't figure out why. It might be Betty said something and triggered me, but I'm in the state and I can't even think clearly. And so at that point, we try to go take a walk, we go smoke a cigarette, we do all these things to just make it a little better.

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And the premise of these energy medicine modalities is to turn around, anchor the breath, and start to say, okay, where am I feeling this in my body? What does it feel like? Is it heavy? Is it hot? Is it sharp? What's the quality? Where does it move? Is it fixed? Is it deep in my body? Is it on the surface?

And then what we start to do is we start to breathe to the area and acknowledge the energy that's there, acknowledge the feeling that's there. And as we do so, there is a correction that happens.

I spoke about this at length in my first book years ago and it's become something that's come full circle for me in my career and teaching is that, if I have an energy that I run away from, what I do is, this isn't quality, but it's just an example is, let's just say there's an energy that's negative, and so I want to move away, I want to move to the opposite polarity, which is an energy that's positive.

The more that energy remains and the more I create the polar opposite energy to run away from it, what I've done is I've created a dynamo, I've created a battery. You have a negative charge and a positive charge, now what you've done is you've actually breathed life into this thing. And so you're creating the polarized energy to what it is that you are averting. And in doing so, you're breathing more and more energy into it. You're creating a monster.

And so this is the ancient Taoist methodology of clearing internal demons, is to understand that it's our own energy creating batteries or dynamos and feeding power to these things. If I were to acknowledge this thing that I'm calling a negative energy, not create a polarized opposite and go to it, acknowledge it and just see what it is, and let it express and dissipate through my mind body energy field, it goes away.

It's that simple, but it's that hard. And it'll take the rest of the hour to extract how to go about doing this, but it goes away. And the more we learn to maintain equanimity and acknowledge and just see things for what they are, the less energy we pump into it, which means more of our energy comes back into the fold of the useful stuff, not the traumatic stuff.

Alex Howard

And how would you frame anxiety in this context? Because often, I guess there are different types of anxiety, but particularly what comes to mind here is often anxiety as a state of disconnection or reaction against some of those experiences that we're having. Is that how you express it, or would you put it differently to that?

Dr Pedram Shojai

When you think about anxiety, obviously it comes with a lot of flavors, as you mentioned, but the diss-ease that comes with a childhood trauma, that comes with social anxiety, whatever it is. Once you feel that diss-ease, the moment that you do, the come to yourself moment there is to acknowledge the feeling. Acknowledge that it is a feeling. It's not you. It's not going to last forever. It's not the rest of your life.

Because when you feel these things, you think this goes on, instead of really understanding that most of these transient, fleeting emotions come and go and probably dissipate in 90 seconds. So why would it last longer?

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Because now you've dug your heels in and you're playing that game, you're creating the dynamo. And now instead of allowing this thing to come up, acknowledge, bless, forgive, whatever it is, there's a lot of modalities or methodologies we can talk about there, and just letting it pass, we get in, we lock horns, and we start wrestling, saying, no, not you, no, not you. And the more we avert, the more we empower.

And so what would have come and gone and passed in 90 seconds has now turned into rapid breathing and a panic attack and excusing yourself from dinner where it's just unfortunately something we just never were taught as children. We were never taught how to adequately engage with a feeling and an emotion in an equanimitous way to just let it pass. And so we spend all of our energy fighting and averting.

Alex Howard

It's a very interesting point because, of course, part of what one learns in practices such as meditation, and I want to talk about Qigong in a moment, is a certain steadfastness, almost regardless of what's happening in one's experience. And that's not always an easy thing to learn initially, because our instinct is often to go with the thought train of all of those anxiety thoughts. But that learning to stay present and to stay steady despite that activation can be very helpful.

Dr Pedram Shojai

And I think, honestly, it's the first thing I taught my children, is how to do that. Because we learn a lot of things, we learn arithmetic, we learn how to communicate and learn how to spell. By the way, if you have young kids, it's amazing to me how hard English is. Some of the words like, could how would you spell that? Cood.

Alex Howard

I've got two out of three kids that are seriously dyslexic. Trust me, I understand what you're talking about.

Dr Pedram Shojai

And so we beat them over the head to learn these, memorize these sight words to be able to communicate in this language, but we haven't even taught them how to communicate with their own interstate. And those kids are now in their 40s, 50s and 60s. And literally people are throwing Paxil at it, they're listening to a podcast or they're going to conferences and thinking they're going to do 15 Sun Salutations to make it go away. It's still the wrong operating system. Yoga is not a Quaalude.

Alex Howard

That's a good quote, that.

Dr Pedram Shojai

There's always one.

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But the frame of reference is just wrong. It's skewed. And so the more we can learn to look at life as a meditator in a way where things come and go, things pass and we acknowledge. In the Vipassanā tradition it's anicca, anicca, anicca. The mantra is all things change, all things change so this too shall pass.

And that's the mental meditation framework that is the basis. If you don't get that, then all the energy stuff doesn't make sense because then you're not really in the game.

And that's the problem, too, is a lot of people come to me asking for modalities. "Hey, what Qigong do you have to help my liver?". I'm like, okay, well, that's interesting, but the better question is, what thoughts do you have that are driving your liver to be hot or driving behavior to have you poison your liver. And so let's dig a little deeper and then the Qigong can be contextualized in a way that will actually be useful.

Alex Howard

You mentioned Qigong, let's just open that piece up a little bit. So maybe say a little bit about what it is and also, particularly in this context of energy medicine, how it's helping work with our energy system.

Dr Pedram Shojai

So the literal translation of Qigong is energy work, so there's many forms of Qigong. I know several dozen Qigongs for martial arts, punch, hit, kick all that stuff comes from your lower dimension. You move it. There's healing arts Qigong for internal external application. There's all sorts of practices that help move the bioelectric energy that is within the human body to not just nourish the organs, but to replenish the meridians and the flow of the meridians.

One of the metaphors that I think is always useful is, you think of a creek that is running well, there's water flowing, there's life, there's butterflies, everything is happy. It hasn't rained in a bit, or a rock falls and blocks the flow, now all of a sudden you've got moss, you've got mildew, you've got mosquitoes. That's the metaphor for how disease manifests in the Chinese medical model.

And so where is that in your body? And so when we do these practices, we move the Qi, we allow the flow of this bioelectric energy to be more conducted. We allow the cadence to go and we remove what would be called impedance in electrician terms. And that's why the metaphors are always turning lead to gold. Why gold is a perfect conductor of energy.

So when you turn your body to gold, you are able to conduct energy freely, which means it's not about more energy, it's about access to energy. It's about the flow of energy. And so Qigong is used as a health practice, it's used as a consciousness practice and all these things.

And I think separately from what we're going to talk about here, it's part of a daily energetic hygiene that I think every single human should be doing. We've got lights and monitors and 5G waves and whatever's going on. Methane from the cow farting. Everything is toxic. Everything in the world is requiring us to build up our resilience and get a little bit more robust.

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So that's the baseline is, I don't like Qigong as a Quaalude either, I like Qigong as like, why do you floss? It's to get that stuff out from between your teeth. Qigong's a way to create a habit of energy hygiene, to keep the energy of your body flowing with proper cadence.

Now, that said, there are techniques that we've used for decades in my own practice to help people isolate, identify and move psycho-emotional distress, whether it's anxiety, trauma, memories that are lodged, that we can perceive, geolocate somewhere in the body and then use breath and movement to allow them to rattle out, vibrate out and dissipate.

And I've seen some pretty extraordinary results. And we met through the context of trauma, and I did a 10-part series on trauma. I've been around this block. I've seen a lot of things. I've seen what works, and I've seen almost everything that doesn't work. And there's a lot of things that you spend years talking about your stuff and still feel it and still have it. So how do we get deeper? How do we get in there?

And so these gestalt therapeutics have been godsend, frankly, because if someone is suffering from severe anxiety, it just derails their life.

Alex Howard

Can you say a little bit about the importance of the attention one brings to the practice of Qigong?

I remember when I was first taught Qigong, I guess it's 25 years ago now, I was in my late teens, and I really didn't get the whole piece around energy at that time. So I was just like, why is moving my arms in this way going to do anything for the chronic fatigue that I'm experiencing at the time?

And of course, over the years, as I understood about attention and mindfulness and meditation, it brought a whole different quality to the practice. But I think sometimes people can get overly fixated on physical movement and not understand the importance of the place that movement is coming from.

Dr Pedram Shojai

Well, you're circling the drain on the crisis that we all face now is, the currency of consciousness is attention. And so if we are unhappy, if we're in a state of mental dis-ease, the question is, where is our attention? Is it fixated on averting our problems? Is it fixated on the event that's triggering us right now?

And so the ability to sit in that driver seat and have the nexus of control and have the agency to be aware of what you're observing and aware that what you're observing isn't you, is the only given town, frankly. That's what meditation is predicated on.

And then that right there gets extended into everything you do. Are you driving mindlessly? Did you just run over a duck? Are you on a phone call and thinking about your problems and just completely didn't hear the last two minutes of conversation? Or are you flopping your arms up and down, going, what the hell is this all about instead of focusing on the miracle that is your ability to take this 50lb piece of flesh and raise it in a three dimensional reality and grasp things and move things and just be aware of what this body is and what moves it?

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And so we've become so disassociated from the pure majesty of what just raising an arm means, that our consciousness is like, okay, well, listen man, I came over here for chronic fatigue, and this guy's telling me to wave my arms around. I feel like I'm wasting my time. Can we get on with it? And that's the doer mind that is also stuck in the white water. You're putting your finger right in sore there, which is attention has to be on everything.

And just to refine that, in Qigong we talk about the three treasures. There's Jing, Qi and Shen. Jing is your vital essence. It's what is anchored in your kidneys based on the genetic jujū that you brought in from your mom and dad. Some of us have more. Some of us have less. Some of us are well endowed with good bone structure and good health and all that kind of stuff. And some of us aren't. And if the metaphor was a candle, that's the wax.

The fire of the candle would be the Qi, the metabolic activity that's burning the wax and creating this process called life. It's the moving energy. It's the moving gradients. There's all sorts of qualities and subtleties to the energies that are moving our body.

But then the glow around that candle, the end result, the halo around that thing is the Shen, or the mind spirit as it's translated.

And in Qigong, in Chinese medicine, same systems, the Qi will follow the Shen. So where your attention goes, your energy flows. And if you can keep your focus on something long enough, the energy will continually feed to it until the material world starts to assemble around that image of that vision, that dream, that whatever, that goal.

And so with Qigong, I'm constantly watching the movements of my hands because my eyes are integrated deeply with the movement. And I used to have brain labs and stuff, so we do qEEG studies, we would look at the brain map functionality of people doing this stuff. And there's something very powerful that happens along the sensory motor strip when you're doing Qigong correctly, integrating the hemispheres of the brain.

And that is also a profound piece of the puzzle for the anxiety calamity that we face, because there are parts of the brain that are getting triggered, maybe the amygdala in particular, that are now driving us to be in this, get me out of here, I don't feel safe, fight or flight type of reactivity. But that's also part of the brain that has energy and innovation that is overstimulated.

Alex Howard

I also want to point out here, because I think in what you're describing, I think it will bring this point to life as well, that often people with anxiety will really struggle with typical meditation of just sitting there and trying to be still, because by definition of anxiety, there's a lot of mental activity that often makes it difficult.

And what strikes me is that often those people will find a practice such as Qigong easier because of that movement and that giving attention to that movement allows them to have a more embodied experience of what they're doing. Is that something that you also observe?

[00:23:39] Dr Pedram Shojai

100%. I think we live in a culture of doers. We are doers. And doing meditation is hard. So doing some body movements and then assigning meditation-like conscious awareness to it tends to be an easier path in for a lot of people that tend to skew on the anxious side of the spectrum, 100%.

And I just find it to be very grounding. And I also find it to double down on physical movement, limbs, drainage, and all the other things that we should be doing anyways but we don't move enough. So if you can tie your consciousness into conscious movement, you will feel for the first time, if you haven't already, what meditation can feel like. And then you can use that as the tip of the spear to then drive yourself into more stillness.

Stillness is very hard if you're spinning. And I think a lot of people have also misread scripture, if you will. What happened in the 60s, in particular, 60s and 70s is a lot of these classic texts came over, and the guys that were interpreting these scrolls were going for the roller coaster ride, fireworks type of like, Holy crap, look at this. This is extraordinary.

And so the stories of Nirvana and these ultimate bliss moments and all these exalted states of consciousness coming out of India and China and all that, became the narrative that we got sold on. Again, Quaaludes, acid, pick what you want. Those are extraordinary states that happen once or twice in someone's experience, and they're talking about it. That's not your everyday meditation.

And so I think there's also a lot of expectations on awareness and consciousness that have been usurped by a narrative that's just false. It's just a false read of what this stuff is supposed to be. If I can feel myself getting anxious, observe it, catch myself, breathe, acknowledge it, and let it pass and go along my day, I'm a lot further along than the guy who's trying to click his heels and go to Nirvana for 30 years and be disappointed he didn't get there.

Alex Howard

Of course, if meditation practice was as quick and as easy as popping Quaaludes, then meditation would be a little bit more integrated in society than it is at this point in time.

I want to talk a little bit about emotional and energetic release. We talked a bit at the start about how energetically a lot of trauma and history is held in the physical body and the energetic body. And what in your observation particularly helps people in the release and the processing and metabolizing of that energy?

Dr Pedram Shojai

First, I would say just some fundamental energy awareness. A lot of people are just completely, like you when you had chronic fatigue, you're like, what is this? And so your mind wasn't tied with your body in a way where you were perceiving the subtle flow of energy as you were moving your arms up and down. You're just like flapping your arms going, I don't get it.

And most people come in with a lack of sensitivity to that because it's slower. Human resonance and the frequency of the oceans is around 7-7.23. Most of us are living in high beta 22.4 to 30Hz. So we're just fast and we can't perceive the slow and it seems like a bog. It seems like there's nothing there.

But once you start to play with lower frequencies in your consciousness, then you have the perception to feel the depth of the ocean at some of the lower frequencies, like Delta 2Hz is delicious.

Most people will just conk out because they are only associating with that slow frequency with sleep. It just comes with training.

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To answer your question, I would say the more you step in and start becoming a little aware of your energy, the more you can also become aware of your anxiety and then geolocate it within your energy field. Maybe it's here, maybe it's here, maybe it's deep in your body, maybe it's in your gut. If you're having gut issues, follow the energy in, feel where the emotions might be trapped there.

And then if we have time to go over a couple of techniques on how to get in on that, feel it, acknowledge it, and allow for it to express and dissipate in a way that is respectful of the trauma, respectful of all of the mechanisms that swept in at the time to protect you and your delicate little ego or whenever it happened as a corrective protective mechanism within the body.

And so I think a lot of us have come to hate our calamity, but we have to love our way out of this. We don't run, we turn, we observe, we bless, we forgive. And again, I wasn't taught that in middle school. So where are you going to pick that up?

Alex Howard

Hopefully in conversations like this. And it's an important piece.

You mentioned techniques. We certainly have a little bit of time. I think it'd be nice to bring into some practical pieces that people can work with.

Dr Pedram Shojai

At the end of the day, talk is cheap. Let's get into it.

So I think a good way to do this, and this is something that I just want to preface by saying, don't go standing in the middle of the mall and do this practice. Go find somewhere that's safe and where you can allow yourself to vault.

Alex Howard

Not whilst driving as well then.

Dr Pedram Shojai

Definitely not whilst driving.

You already don't feel safe, so for you to expose your naked underbelly in front of people that might judge you is probably not the best way to go about it either. You develop resilience.

But what I would do is find a comfortable place, obviously. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, bend your knees slightly and just have your hands dangled by the sides. And this medium doesn't quite allow for the full visual of this.

But then start breathing down to your lower abdomen, about three fingers below your navel, as if you have an imaginary balloon down there. Inflate that balloon on the inhale and deflate it on the exhale.

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And so typically I like to spend at least a few minutes, say like 10 breaths, just anchoring the breath before getting into this practice. And then as you get into the practice, the challenge is going to be to keep the breath anchored because the breath wants to rise when you start to feel discomfort.

And then what I would do, and there's a couple of ways to do it. One is to keep the hands off to the side. The other is to hold like a tree. Notice I'll bring it up a little bit, my elbows are a little down. So, holding an imaginary tree in front of you is called tai chi post stance.

And then what I would do is just keep that breathing going, but then allow your body to just start moving and gyrating in however motion frequency that it deems fit. The more you try to think about it and override it, the more clunky it looks. But you just let it go.

And you start letting it go while breathing down to your lower abdomen. And you just feel, right now I've had a torn labrum since I was 15 in my hip. And so I feel my hip wanting to release. I just want to do this thing. I'm just going to move it around, doing my thing. And then as you feel things, you just let them go.

And a lot of times, most of the time you'll see people get into this vibratory state. And as you start to go, and I'll just obviously accelerate it for pedantic reasons, but as you start to go and you start to move around, you're like, oh man, I'm just really holding in my neck. And so just let go of your neck. And you just let the energy just flow up and through you.

I've had moments where my arm is just jerking like this, or your whole body is going through these convulsions, if you will. You just keep breathing and settling. And you get to the point where either you're done or you're exhausted or whatever, but you stay then and you slow your breathing and you allow it to integrate.

10 minutes a day is more than enough for now to just start dripping it out before the floodgates start to open. But then this becomes an incredibly powerful energy hygiene practice that allows you to shake out whatever it is that your body is lodging and hanging on to, in a way that is respectful and acknowledges it for what it is.

Keeping the breath anchored is really important. And becoming aware of where in your body you're stuck and what doesn't want to move. And just allowing your attention and your consciousness to go there, becomes part of the game.

You'll encounter things that make you want to throw up. You'll encounter things that make you really anxious. And the real trick there is to be like, okay, yeah, this is uncomfortable. Let's just breathe through it and acknowledge it and see what it wants to do.

And again, we've been breathing energy into the opposite polarity of our "internal demons" since we started to speak, frankly. And so some of these things are old, and some of these things have a lot of history.

And so there's a practice we used clinically called Timeline Therapy, which is we would also go back in our consciousness, and say you feel the polarity flip at a certain event, and you go and just heal that polarity on the timeline with your consciousness and bring it back into love. And then go back and back and back and see if there's other instances where that was there.

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And you know how trauma works, as they tend to flock together. And so the flavor of an abuse will then lead to other abuses that lead to a cluster of the same type of psycho-emotional reactions.

And so going back in the timeline and feeling and releasing, once you've gotten better and proficient at this energy technique, it's a rabbit hole, but it's your rabbit hole. You've got to go and you've got to go do it because no one's going to do it for you, and there's no quarantine that fixes it. I'm not saying this is the only way, but I'm saying it's a very practical, low cost and effective way of getting in on some of these things that have been haunting us for a very long time.

Alex Howard

It's also particularly interesting, Pedram, in the way that you were demonstrating the process, is that it was very much a collaborative process between you and your body. It wasn't, I'm going to do this movement. It was a relationship between, what does my body want to express and move, and allowing that to happen, but also staying present to it.

And that's quite a different way to how people often work with movement based practices or indeed, psychotherapeutic techniques where they're trying to make something happen rather than opening to what wants to happen.

Dr Pedram Shojai

It's funny you say that. I listen to a lot of audiobooks, and I was listening to an audiobook on rest and the value of sleep. And while I'm didactically being taught why sleep is important, I'm fighting to keep my eyes open because I was tired. And I just started laughing. My body is already telling me. I get it. Okay, so let's rest.

Alex Howard

It's like shouting at your kids because you're trying to listen to a book on parenting.

Dr Pedram Shojai

That's it. Exactly. Damn it.

And this is a very yin based approach. So a lot of my martial arts training, a lot of very specific angles and things that you're breathing up and down, that is the structure that comes with left brain methodology. This is a very yin methodology, to your point, is listening, allowing, expressing and harmonizing the mind, body, and spirit with the breath.

And there's something really magical that happens there. And I've been at this for a very long time. I've been a clinician for a long time before I became this media guy. But you'd have a certain subset of patients that would come in and you'd work them up, do labs, you do all this stuff and be like, aha, I found it. All you've got to do is this and we're going to solve your problems. And they don't. They just can't comply with the basic recommendations. They don't take the drugs, the supplements or whatever, and they sabotage, and they complain about their lives and all that.

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And so that became a very big part of my study. It's like, why are people sabotaging themselves when we went through so much effort, and they spent thousands of dollars to engage my counsel, and I feel like I gave them good counsel and they just don't care.

It's not that they don't care. They just have so much of this energetic noise between them and their agency, their ability to make better decisions for themselves, that this type of practice started to become front and center where I'm like, hey, you know what? Yeah, you've got some gluten stuff, you got some lipid stuff, whatever. Let's start working on bringing you back into your body.

And I would start to work with them and give them exercises to go do at home. And the ones that did it, they just would punch right through, then all the other life stuff started to work because they were back on the perch of their own consciousness and their own agency.

And so it became very profound for me, and it got me to stop lecturing so much and start just rolling up my sleeves and jumping in with my patients and being like, hey man, you're here, you don't have time. I don't have time. And you don't want to be spending money on this. You'd rather be spending it on Maui, so what are we going to do to fix this and how are we going to work together?

And it was always these emotional trip ups, these balls of energy stuck within their bioelectric field that were just baggage that they were unwilling to look at, that got in the way.

Alex Howard

And of course, people can pay a lot of lip service to wanting things to change, but when it actually comes down, what I think you're also partly speaking to is the importance of those daily habits and those daily practices, which is often very unexciting and undramatic, but it takes a real discipline to do it.

Dr Pedram Shojai

We live in the flash pan of reality. We have been distracted by the attention economy into thinking there's always got to be something exciting or dramatic or filled with dopamine to keep us engaged. And that dopaminergic drive has driven us off a cliff, frankly. People are just walking out of work and all sorts of problems we're seeing on a societal level.

Why is that? It's because there's no contentment, there's no satisfaction. And that satisfaction doesn't come from outside of you. It comes from inside. And so if inside feels too yucky to want to feel, that's the first place to start. Start with the yuck. Embrace it, love it, breathe through it, allow it to express through your body, and then it just gets easier and easier. And then no matter where you are or what you're doing, you're content. And then do whatever you want to do.

Alex Howard

What would you say to someone that's watching this, they hear that message, what's their next step? You've got lots of different, you've got books, docuseries, for someone that's inspired by this interview, where should they go?

[00:40:44] Dr Pedram Shojai

I literally would start with what we did 3 minutes ago, with that standing posture and just do it every day for 10 minutes. Set a timer, because you're going to be like, how long is this? 10 minutes seems like an eternity when you first start on anything. And 10 minutes is nothing. It's less than the amount of commercial interruptions in one TV show.

Alex Howard

Particularly in your country.

Dr Pedram Shojai

Exactly. How many drug ads fill up 10 minutes? It's obnoxious what we think we can afford in terms of time to do things for ourselves. Whereas our time is being usurped by media messaging every minute.

So, just stand shoulder width apart, arms up like this, breathing down to your lower abdomen. Keep your knees slightly bent, keep your spine straight. Breathe to your lower abdomen and allow your body to move. And start there.

I've written eight books and made a gajillion films and all that, that's not going to help you nearly as much as actually doing a practice. And that's the irony of this whole profession, is we talk and we talk and we try to help, but at the end of the day I can only lead a horse to water. But I literally just showed you the water. So are you going to drink it or are you going to consume 10,000 more hours of information and not do anything?

And that's the challenge we face in our industry. At the end of the day, it's your mind, it's your body, it's your anxiety. Where are you at this party?

Alex Howard

It's not what you know, it's what you do of what you know.

Pedram, for people that want to find out more about your work, where's the best place to go to find that?

Dr Pedram Shojai

So most of my stuff is at theurbanmonk.com and then we just rebranded whole.tv to be-possible.com. We opened it up. Just thousands of hours of yoga, fitness, films and everything free to the public at be-possible.com. So we're here to help.

Alex Howard

Pedram, it's always a pleasure. Thank you so much.

Dr Pedram Shojai

Great to see you. Thank you.