



How emotional stress affects your body

Guest: Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Disclaimer: The contents of this interview are for informational purposes only and are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This interview does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Alex Howard - [00:00:15]

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking to Dr. Ameet Aggarwal. Firstly, Ameet, welcome. Thank you so much for joining me.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Thanks, Alex. It's going to be exciting today.

Alex Howard

So Dr. Ameet has been voted one of the top 43 naturopathic doctors worldwide and has helped thousands of people around the world heal from trauma, anxiety, depression and chronic disease by combining naturopathic and functional medicine, Gestalt psychotherapy, family constellations therapy, EMDR and homeopathy.

His best selling book, *Heal Your Body, Cure Your Mind*, online therapy sessions, and online courses have helped thousands of people heal their mind and body together, with emotional release techniques and holistic medicine.

Dr. Ameet also treats poor communities and children living with disabilities in Kenya through his charitable work and sales of his book and online course.

So, Dr. Ameet, there's a lot of places we could go here. And I think you and I have got quite some shared interests and sort of areas that fascinate us. I think that a good starting point would just be to open up the frame a little bit, of this relationship between emotional stress and fatigue. And I think often, when people are suffering from a very physical experience like fatigue, they can be quite resistant sometimes to the idea that what's happening for them emotionally is affecting their physical energy.

So I think let's just start with perhaps, talking a bit about how that relationship works.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Great, thanks, Alex. So on the basic level, when you're stressed, you go through a fight or flight response and the fight or flight response means making adrenaline and cortisol, and that's made by your adrenal glands. The thing is, when you're traumatized, you have an unconscious stress always playing in your system, compounded with modern day stress, present day life stress; financial bills, divorces, deadlines, not sleeping well at night, etc.

Your body then goes into adrenal burnout, so your adrenal glands just get wiped out. And that leads to a lot of chronic fatigue and an imbalance of neurotransmitters. So a decrease in serotonin, dopamine, melatonin, GABA.

And when your neurotransmitters are low, even though you might have the energy, your mood is so low and your mindset is shifted into depression, negative thoughts, etc, you won't feel that motivation, especially when dopamine is low. You won't feel that motivation to do things.

So you might experience fatigue, or lack of initiative, or procrastination, despite having lots of energy supplements all the time. Or having coffee. Or you might need too much coffee or adrenal herbs like rhodiola or ashwagandha or ginseng to push yourself.

And until you heal the trauma, the mindset, that then breaks free from the adrenal... Until you heal the trauma and negative mindset, then that releases the adrenal stress response. Until that happens, you're in this chronic inner conflict that keeps you stuck in negative thoughts and fatigue.

Alex Howard - [00:03:42]

And often, I think the challenge that people have is, we sort of gradually normalize to being in a certain state. And so I think sometimes people can listen to or watch interviews like this. And we're talking about, for example, emotional stress. And they might say, well, you know, I had events in the past, but I'm so fatigued now, I don't do much anyway. How can I possibly have emotional stress? But of course, often we normalize to the level of stress that we're at, right?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Yeah. So your body shuts down, sometimes you don't think you're allowed to be as excited as before, because in a way, you're subconsciously guarding yourself from danger or disappointment or being rejected. So you stay in this very subdued way. You stay chronically fatigued. And if you're traumatized or stressed, also your mitochondria shut down. So there's less energy production going on in your cells. And when you say "normalize", it's also true that people forget how energetic they were before, they think they just aged and they just give up on themselves.

But the funny thing Alex, is that when you heal that emotional trauma, you come to terms with the disappointment, you come to terms with your vulnerability, that soft part in you that felt hurt, that felt unsupported. And when you can heal those parts, or bring in some self love and support to those parts of you, suddenly your energy will pick up. Suddenly you look for things that make you feel better. You'll want to go for that bike ride or you'll want to eat that healthy food.

And that has the positive cycle where you'll get more energy and feel yourself better and then feel more motivated over time.

Alex Howard

There's something I think really important about that place of someone coming to the acceptance of what's happening, because I think often what also happens is that there's an element of, as you said, people think, well, maybe this is just how it always was. People can start to sort of resist and sort of go into that shutdown state. And there's something about accepting and surrendering to, and actually investigating what's actually going on.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Yeah, you see, sometimes we don't have the tools to support those vulnerable emotions we might feel when we're let down or hurt or rejected. You see, anger is very suppressed in our society. And so when something happens to us, we almost have to swallow it and keep our mouth shut. When you have the right type of therapy, the right kind of support, to really express anger, express disappointment, express rage and grief and say, hey, this is not OK, my boundaries are being crossed, I don't feel supported, I need more out of life.

When you're given those communication skills and what I call healthy support, then just that act of emoting, of expression, prevents you from collapsing into freeze mode. This fight, flight or freeze mode, it prevents you from collapsing into freeze mode, because freeze mode is an inability to cope.

So we just shut down.

But the beauty of language, so you don't have to punch somebody or kill somebody to feel that you've won a battle. The power of language can also transform your experience of an event, a traumatizing event, to leave you more empowered. Just by saying words like, "hey, I'm different than you" or "I don't allow that" or just "stop", anything that gives you a feeling that you did something, even though you might not have won the argument, but the fact that you were actively still engaged and exercising either emotional muscle, linguistic muscle or physical muscle, that will prevent you from shutting down into the freeze response and therefore you'll have less trauma stored into your nervous system, which then means that you will drive your adrenal glands less into burn out. And you'll recover faster in life.

Alex Howard - [00:07:28]

What I'm hearing you say is that, in a sense, there are... Some of the language, how I talk about it is, there's the vicious circles where things, events create negative experiences that feed more negative. But there's also virtuous circles where we start to talk differently about what's happening. Perhaps we get more support. Perhaps we find a program that starts to help us. So we start to, sort of, change the direction of what's happening. Sometimes that is not a massively complicated thing, but it's a shift that starts to change how we're progressing and how we're moving.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Absolutely. Absolutely. And it changes the narrative in our minds about our life, the way we relate to ourselves and the more positive it gets, that actually reduces the stress response in your body as well, because you're less under attack. And when you feel more supported, then you come out of fight or flight faster. Cortisol levels normalize, adrenal gland fatigue reduces because you're pumping it less with danger signals.

And then all the other herbs and therapies you might be using... I use homeopathy and certain herbs called adaptogens for your adrenal glands, they work better then, to pull somebody out of chronic fatigue, once you reduce that fight or flight response.

Alex Howard

So one of the things I really like about your work is that you're integrating these different pieces. Because I think what can happen is people can see one piece of the jigsaw and sort of see everything through the lens of that piece. And we've been talking about some of the psycho emotional pieces and I'm sure we'll come back to that. But I just wanted to touch a bit more on some of the physical impacts of how emotional stress is affecting fatigue. So one area of that is, for example, the relationship between our mind and our emotions and our liver. So could you say a bit about how that relationship works?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Yeah, so the liver is my favorite organ. It's the seed of the health. It's called the master organ in Chinese medicine. It controls everything from vitamin storage, blood sugar regulation, alongside with the pancreas, cholesterol metabolism, you name it.

Now, in holistic medicine, there's this big thing called leaky gut syndrome. Where basically, your intestines have a nice lining. It's a tube with the lining kept healthy by good bacteria and good food. Over time, with antibiotic use, poor diet, etc, the good bacteria get killed off, this lining gets damaged, we get holes in the intestine. With that, toxins leak into the bloodstream, causing inflammation everywhere in the body. Leading cause of asthma, eczema, arthritis, a lot of problems. Now this chronic inflammation, it stresses your adrenal glands to produce more cortisol to manage inflammation. So your adrenal glands get tired from chronic inflammation, alongside with daily stress, that contributes to fatigue.

The cortisol imbalance, I'm going to get to the liver just now. The cortisol imbalance then causes a neurotransmitter decrease. Serotonin, dopamine, melatonin, GABA, all start to drop, leaving you more prone to anxiety and depression. Now, all this inflammation from the gut and from the system, that creates more toxins in your body and that goes to the liver and your liver also gets inflamed from chronic inflammation and your liver is inundated with toxins from fumes that we breathe in, from pesticides in our foods, from the drugs and medications we're taking, excessive alcohol, etc.

The liver is pounded on a daily basis. So when the liver gets stagnant, what in Chinese medicine we call "liver stagnation", then what happens is, bile production reduces. So there's less bile being produced. When you have less bile being produced, you get more gas, bloating, indigestion, etc. And a worsening of leaky gut, so a worsening of chronic inflammation and then a worsening of all the organ functions, leading to fatigue, brain fog, etc..

Also, what happens is, when the liver is imbalanced or stagnant, we get a hormonal imbalance. Typically it's progesterone deficiency and estrogen excess. With a hormonal imbalance, you're getting more PMS symptoms, more anxiety, depression, sadness. For some people, it's insomnia, painful breasts, cramping, and that lethargy.

And then, of course, the liver's important for releasing B vitamins, metabolising B vitamins, and B vitamins are important for energy and neurotransmitter production. So with a stagnant liver, you're not releasing the right kind of B vitamins into your body anymore.

Alex Howard - [00:11:57]

And I think what's really important about what you're saying is that, I think, again, most people can get caught in these ideas that, I'm having mood issues or I'm having anxiety, therefore the resolution to that must be working on my mind and emotions. And it may be, that may be part of it. But part of what I'm hearing you say, which I think is really important, is these various lows and impacts we have affect our physical body - for example, they affect our liver - but then that affects our mind and emotions and we get in this sort of loop between those two places.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Absolutely. Absolutely. It's super important to integrate these therapies. Changing your diet, healing inflammation, healing your gut, detoxifying your liver, so all your organs feel better. Because remember, also your thyroid is super important for mental wellness and energy levels. And about 70 percent of inactive thyroid hormone is activated in your liver. And thyroid hormone is important for creating serotonin in the brain and for almost every other function in the body, right?

So imagine with a stagnant liver, you're going to have what we call subclinical hypothyroidism. Basically, your thyroid levels might look right, but the conversion is not happening. So you're going to have chronic fatigue and chronic mood issues and hormonal imbalances.

Alex Howard

Which is a good example of why an integrative approach is so important, because the tendency then might just be to supplement with thyroid hormones as opposed to going deeper and looking at, well, actually, how do we address what's actually happening in the liver, which I think is a good place to explore a bit.

So if someone's hearing this and they're going, wow, those symptoms really resonate for me. I can see that, you know, Ameet's favorite organ is the liver, I can see if it's relevant for me. What are some of the ways that we might address that? So what are some of the different pathways to optimizing and rebalancing liver function?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

OK, so remember, the first problem in the body is inflammation, chronic inflammation. And that's

coming from leaky gut, which is also the inflammation smashing the liver.

Alex Howard - [00:14:07]

Well, let's let's back up, because that's a good point. Before we come to the resolution, let's just explain a bit more. You touched on leaky gut, but let's just explain perhaps some of the variables and some of the factors that can cause that inflammation and cause leaky gut in the first place.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Fantastic. So all the pesticides we're eating, all the excessive antibiotics you're taking, chemicals in the foods, etc, that destroys this lining in the gut and kills the good bacteria that is keeping your gut lining healthy. And when that happens, we get these holes and then toxins leak everywhere. That causes chronic inflammation. So we've got to change our diet and eat healthier foods. And avoid eating inflammatory foods. So a lot of people are sensitive to gluten or dairy. So removing inflammatory foods is the first step I do with my clients.

And then we heal the gut with probiotics and other supplements I mention on my online course and in my book, such as Vitamin D and Glutamine. Although with Glutamine you have to be careful if you have bipolar, schizophrenia or even cancer, then don't touch glutamine.

Anyway, these are all gut healing supplements. Once you've done that and you've changed your diet, then you need to heal your liver as well. A lot of people focus on their gut but they ignore the liver. And so healing the liver is super easy. First of all, eating bitter foods, bitter foods actually stimulate bile production and liver detox. It's very important to have a lot of antioxidants because your liver is detoxifying all day. So it's exposed to oxidative damage. So you want the antioxidants, which is the vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, alpha lipoic acid, and other antioxidants which I cover in the course.

And then, there's certain foods that are also liver friendly, broccoli, brussel sprouts. "Sulforaphanes" they're called because sulfur is an important component for liver detox. Phase two, I believe.

And then what else do we have? I use a lot of homoeopathy, homoeopathy is like energetic medicine that heals the liver at a very deep cellular level, very deep. So those are all the liver healing protocols I use. There's lots of others, of course.

But first of all, keeping inflammation down, then having the bitter foods, then there's certain herbs like milk thistle and dandelion. And, of course, check with your herbalist or naturopathic doctor which are the best herbs for you. These all, number one, stimulate bile production because you want to stimulate bile to release toxins from the liver and you need herbs that actually heal the liver cells because they're under constant pressure, constant onslaught of pro oxidants or oxidative damage. So you need to heal those liver cells on a daily basis.

Alex Howard

For there to be, and obviously this is going to depend massively patient to patient, but for the liver to start to shift and change, what are the timelines that you expect people to see with that?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Depends on the damage. So some people have fatty liver disease, it takes about three months if it's extensive. Some people just have mild liver qi [tchi] stagnation, what we call "Qi energy stagnation" in Chinese medicine. Within two weeks, you can see some changes. And then, of course, continuous support then brings you back to almost optimal health. With daily toxins and daily stresses, unless you're living in an ashram and doing a lot of deep breathing exercises, it might be almost impossible to get to optimum health.

Breathing is super important as well. When you deep breath, your diaphragm moves up and down and that massages the liver and the lymphatic system around the liver. So you detoxify better. So people who are stressed, when they breathe shallow, they are only using the upper muscles, so they

get tight shoulders and they go into liver stagnation. Hence the heartburn and indigestion you get when you're stressed, because of the liver stagnation. So deep breathing, mindfulness, releasing trauma.

So when you have a lot of resentment and anger, in Chinese medicine, that goes straight to the liver. So learning how to express anger. And then I practice family constellations a lot and I've noticed that people who have deep seated issues with resentment as well, but also with their father strangely enough - you see the father is on the right side, male is right and female is left. Often I see a tendency towards liver stagnation there as well. Bizarrely.

So definitely healing trauma and healing family entanglements lets go of or lessens the burden, the energetic burden on the liver, so that when you do take the herbs and supplements, they work much better because they're fighting less against the energetic influences from your ancestors and from your life.

Alex Howard - [00:18:55]

I want to back up on that piece in a minute. But just before we do, I think just to summarize a bit of what you've been saying so far: so we need to address the physical impacts of what's been happening with emotional stress. And you're particularly talking about the liver, talking about leaky gut, and how that's then impacting the other areas of what's going on. And, of course, part of this is bringing down the inflammation. But what you just kind of came into there, is what we've been talking also about, about releasing the trauma and healing some of the impacts. And you mentioned family constellations. For people that are not familiar with Hellinger's work and that sort of mode, perhaps you could just explore and say a bit more about that.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

So family constellations were developed by Bert Hellinger. It's based on what we call "orders of love" or a system of balance in a family system. What does that mean? So there's multiple examples, but I'll just give a few signs of imbalance or how we easily get out of balance. One is by ignoring everyone involved in your system. So I have a lot of clients who don't realize that there was a miscarried or aborted child before them and they assume they're the first child in the system and they have this chronic anxiety, chronic sense of like responsibility or purpose, and they're not settled inside.

And then when I ask them to find all the people in their system, aborted, miscarried children, or even people who were ignored or abandoned by their other family members. And when we put these pieces together and then my client finds their correct position in the family, meaning they're not the first child in the system, maybe they're the second or third child, then ah, they get a sense of relief. They're like, gosh, I understand my place now. And that happens at an energetic level and it's super powerful. It almost heals the root cause of their anxiety, it even works better than homoeopathy sometimes.

Then in family constellations, we also look at making sure you stay in balance within your family system. So a lot of times we take on the caretaking or parent role, to our parents, out of loyalty. So maybe dad was absent and mum was abandoned. So suddenly I become like my mum's partner or caregiver. And so, I'm so preoccupied and loyal to my mum's suffering, that energetically, I'm not a full, available boy to another partner. I'm kind of blocked.

So in family constellations therapy, we do healing sentences such as, "Dear Mum, I'm still your son, even though I give back all this pain and responsibility, back to you. I'm only your son. You belong with another man" or "You are the big one, I'm the little one". And then you get a true sense of who you are in relation to your mum or your dad.

Alex Howard

Which can reduce, of course, huge emotional burdens and responsibility that people are carrying.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal - [00:21:46]

Huge, huge. And that has a physiological effect as well. It releases the burden on our physiology, the liver, the adrenal system and the gut and cortisol levels, etc.

Alex Howard

How do you make therapeutic choices in terms of, because there's obviously lots of pieces of a jigsaw that we're talking about here, and each has its own kind of protocols and its own sort of pathways. And, you know, just doing a piece of work with family constellations can be quite an intense process for someone to go down. How do you figure out the sequencing of where someone starts and which pieces to prioritize and focus on in which order?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Awesome question, Alex. So, first of all, I do an intake with my clients. I understand the emotional history of what they've been through. By understanding that... I also look at their physical symptoms, by the way, whether they have gas, bloating, dark circles under their eyes, smelly breath, whatever it may be. I understand that likely they went through burnout, a lot of stress in their life. So I know the adrenal glands need support.

So I'll give them some adaptogens or some B vitamins. And at the same time, I understand their emotional history, I know which points they need to release stress and pain from. So we'll do some Gestalt psychotherapy, some EMDR, and I'll notice - I'm very sensitive that way, intuitively - so I'll notice there's an entanglement with an uncle or a grandparent and I'll say, OK, this is family constellation work. Let's first stabilize the client in the first session. Let's heal some trauma.

But, during the intake, if the energy is strong enough, about an entanglement, I'll go straight into family constellations right there. We'll do the work, release them emotionally. And at the end of the visit, I'll still prescribe the supplements that'll support their physiology and their detox pathways. And also heal their gut to reduce inflammation. Because remember, if you only do therapy without stopping inflammation, you're going to go in loops and loops and loops of therapy and you're never going to feel fully healthy until the inflammation stops.

So at the end of the visit, or in the next visit, I'll support them with supplements. And then, when I understand them deeper, I'll know, OK, this homeopathic is for this trauma, this homeopathic is for this kind of character in the person. So let's introduce homeopathy, maybe three visits down. And how much further does a person heal with homeopathy as well. So it's a very integrative approach, very supportive approach, so that there's always progress happening for the client.

Alex Howard

One of the things you mentioned at the start, is that when there's these impacts, that things like dopamine and mood and motivation can be low. And I'm wondering how you navigate that piece, with people needing to be - how I talk about it is being captain of the ship of their own recovery, like people taking responsibility for that healing process. And I'm wondering how you find yourself navigating that place of motivating and empowering your clients, knowing that sometimes, the time almost in life they need to be the most committed to something is a time they feel the least resourceful to do so.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

I think it first begins in the session where they feel that emotional support when they're feeling vulnerable. So we go to a place of vulnerability pretty fast. And when they feel seen and acknowledged, there's a trust that builds up between us. And then I always explain to them the impact of the gut, the liver and adrenal system on their mind and their health. So, knowledge is power. So by understanding that the foods they're eating are actually making them feel worse, they're more motivated to make small changes. A lot of people will not let go of their gluten or their dairy or their cheese, etc. But once they understand things they will, you know, they'll feel the subtle differences.

And then when they walk out of the session, most of the time they're given a prescription of supplements, which gets them to feel better already.

And like you were saying, the positive cycle, the reward cycle. The moment you start feeling better, you feel a bit more motivated to stick with the protocol.

Alex Howard - [00:25:54]

Yeah, sometimes it's almost getting enough early wins that it sort of builds that trust and builds that commitment for the client, right?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Exactly. And that first early win happens when they feel acknowledged in the session. And there's like a sense of support in their vulnerability, or the place that they kept tucked away or hidden from society or from other people in their life.

Alex Howard

If someone's watching this and they feel inspired by all the things that you're talking about, but they feel also sort of overwhelmed, like, well, where would I even start? And, you know, I think perhaps also with things like your book and your online course, what are some of the starting fundamentals that people can do, that they can do for themselves? Like, to at least, it may not be enough to get them the whole way, but in terms of getting foundation pieces in place, what would you suggest?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

OK, so first of all, there's free videos on my website. They'll walk you through the basics of healing your gut, your liver and your adrenal glands. So you're welcome to watch those. So the first thing is, removing inflammatory foods. The typical ones are wheat and dairy and too much sugar. Start with that and see how you feel. And then consider more greens in your diet. As you do the physical side of things, so healing the liver and the gut, always work on emotional release.

I recommend alternate nostril breathing. That's easy to find online. That resets the nervous system, that reduces the fight or flight response and then not being afraid of your own emotions. There's a lot of shame and guilt around being angry, or feeling sexual with someone, or resentful. Like, we judge these things. So one of my free videos on the course is actually allowing you to release emotional blocks around the emotions you might be feeling.

The exercise goes something like this. You close your eyes and you put one hand on your forehead, one hand behind your head. And as you connect with your feelings, I ask you to say, "it's safe for me to feel stressed once in a while". And I use the words "once in a while" very deliberately, because if you don't use "once in a while", the person feels pressure to think positively. There's too much positivity and people get a resistance to that. "Once in a while" gives you permission to feel the stress and the lack of stress.

Then, "it's safe for me to relax from time to time". And "it's safe for me to be afraid of this kind of person once in a while". So giving yourself permission to actually acknowledge the feelings you're having gives you back your identity. You start collecting those pieces of you that got dissociated in the trauma and we start reintegrating all parts of you. Your energy comes back, your self-confidence starts to come back. You have less blame going on or self-criticism going on in your mind about these emotions you're feeling, because suddenly you're doing exercises that actually make it OK.

I know I've oversimplified it, but when you do the exercise, you'll see...

Alex Howard

I understand. I had a few questions. One, I noticed you putting your hands [in this position], what's the

significance and the support of that?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal - [00:29:02]

OK, this is, I learned this from a technique called [inaudible] and also acupuncture and other hands on healing techniques, where when you connect the front of your head and the back of your head - body talk also does some of this - there's a connection between the brain hemispheres in your body, in your brain. And that helps you process emotions a bit more deeper and takes you out of... How do I say it?

So sometimes people are in their head, they're too theoretical. And when you do this, you're more grounded in the feelings and emotions you're having, in the moment. So when you're more grounded in emotions, you can process them a bit more completely. Because if you're just doing theoretical healing in a way, your body doesn't really transform. So you don't get the release of emotions. So you're stuck in your mind, but your body is still unwell or unhealthy.

Alex Howard

And of course, acceptance is not just a mental event, right? Someone can do all kinds of thinking about something. But unless the body, as you say, is connected to that, there isn't really that healing that's happening.

I think, often, one of the most helpful strategies or tools, for want of a better word, is coming to that place of acceptance, coming to that place of, whatever's going on for me right now, it's okay that I'm having that experience. It's okay that I'm feeling that. And often there's so much judgment and shame and inner critic, all those kind of elements that are constantly having us reject or judge or try and get rid of our experience. How important do you see that place of acceptance in the work that you're doing?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

I think it can be the crux of some of somebody's healing. So there's a difference though, [between] accepting the situation or accepting your emotions in response and desires around the situation. So by saying acceptance, I don't mean, oh it's OK that this person bullied me and I've just got to put up with it. Because behind that, there's a lot of pain, there's a lot of rage, a lot of pissed-off-ness, and we're not willing to look at that. That's the lack of acceptance people are actually suffering with chronically, leading to chronic depression.

That lack of acceptance of your rage or desire for change or desire for empowerment, that's what shuts you down into the freeze response. Leading to fatigue, depression, etc. So really accepting those shameful desires of yours, I want to kill this guy. I'm not asking you to go and kill people, but accepting those places, I want to push him away or I want space from this person or I want somebody to hold me, or my dad or my mom to protect me whilst this bully is around me.

Rather than, a lot of men will say, I've got to just "man up". And they've manned up, they're aggressive or they're stiff, but their joints are stiff, they're not happy. And sometimes they're even abusive to their own family then. The vicious cycle continues. So going to that vulnerability, encouraging vulnerability, which as you're saying is going into acceptance, which I think can be the crux of people's healing.

Alex Howard

And I guess a big part of that is, ultimately, healing the relationship that one has with their body. And I'm just thinking about it, partly from a Gestalt point of view, a psychotherapeutic point of view, that there's a sort of objet-relation. There's a relationship that we have with our symptoms, with our body, with our history. And often, particularly if there's been trauma, often that history and that relationship is troubled. Working on that, just the relationship we have with our body, can be really important.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal - [00:32:49]

It's our interpretation of what happened. And whether we're shaming our body, blaming ourselves, thinking we're not good enough. And those thoughts, that narrative, begins after a traumatic event. It's a way of coping and trying to regain balance. And changing that narrative and getting somebody else's feedback and getting a different experience of, oh, hang on a sec, maybe my body feels very skinny or weak and you might think, well, actually, it's delicate enough... I mean, I'm oversimplifying it, but you might feel it's delicate enough to make sweet, sweet love with someone instead. Right? So you get more of a positive relationship with that delicacy of yours.

I mean, I'm oversimplifying, that's not really Gestalt therapy, but the paradigm shift is important for changing the way you relate and narrate about yourself and your body for sure.

Alex Howard

And going back a little bit to where we started, we were talking about inflammation. And I find myself wondering how much of that inflammation can also be healed by healing these... you know, our relationship with ourselves, our trauma, our history...

In a sense, are there stories where people don't do any supplements but they do the emotional work and the inflammation goes away?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Absolutely. Yeah. I'm getting tingles right now when you're asking me that question, because definitely the stress response makes everything bad worse in your body.

We have this huge nerve called the vagus nerve, which releases cytokines and different chemicals into your gut. And the vagus nerve, it responds to the levels of stress and the way you're breathing as well. So when you're breathing calmly and you're less stressed, the vagus nerve releases different cytokines into your gut, and then that changes the way your bacteria are acting, and therefore the health of your lining, and therefore leaky gut and inflammation.

When you relax and you release trauma, your liver works better, you release more bile. So of course, your digestion is going to improve, inflammation will reduce. I've had a patient where her tumor markers have reduced because we worked on deep seated trauma with her father and her parents and her family system. And she did, of course, her own meditation stuff and her own spiritual journey as well. And literally the other day she says her tumor reduced based on the work we started.

I'm not promising to cure cancer or anything like that, but I definitely see a change in people's physiology when they do release the emotions. Because also, remember, when you are stressed, your levels of stress are higher if you have adverse childhood experiences, a lot of childhood traumas. Yeah? Your experience of stress is heightened. When it's heightened, you have a stronger adrenal response. So you have high levels of cortisol being produced and you reach burnout faster. So you get a cortisol imbalance faster. When you have a cortisol imbalance faster or cortisol imbalance basically, your thyroid conversion changes. When you don't have enough T3 or healthy thyroid hormones, the cells in your intestines don't stick together really well. The health of your gut is compromised. And when that's compromised, of course, you'll have more toxins triggering your immune response, triggering more inflammation.

So chronic stress makes people's inflammation worse, and you can see that with eczema and arthritis flaring up. And by releasing stress, by healing old trauma, childhood trauma, the stress response reduces, the cortisol levels are more in balance, the gut lining is stronger, thyroid levels are more in balance, the liver is flowing better, and physiologically you start to heal as well.

Alex Howard

Beautiful. That's beautiful. I'm mindful of time, but just a couple more questions. I'm curious, as someone who has studied many different areas of medicine and healing work, what's your, kind of,

edge of curiosity at the moment? What is cooking in you in terms of your own research and discovery?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal - [00:36:57]

So I think the mind is a powerful thing and I feel the mind can heal the body. For me, I'm on a journey of looking for the emotional causes of almost every single disease. And using language to heal. So just healing sentences, naming things so that the stress response changes in our body. Or we heal the family imbalance through family constellations therapy, and emerge out of disease.

So I have a sentence in my email signature. I think it's, "healing is an aspect of letting go of perceived self, so that the free self can express itself", or something like that. Because all these perceptions we create upon ourselves, the self doubt, the self-criticism, the way we relate to our traumatizing mother or our aggressive father affects our physiology, affects our digestion. And this creates skin symptoms, digestive issues, chronic headaches and things. So that's on my mind. And I'm also reading a course in miracles, very, very powerful piece of work. So hopefully I'm going to integrate that with healing sentences and possibly some homoeopathy to heal the trauma, so that just using the energetic work in self-empowerment, we can come out of chronic suffering and disease.

Alex Howard

Fascinating. So, Dr. Ameet, for people that want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best way for them to do that?

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

The best way is my website. DrAmeet.com There's some free videos there, there's the book as well. Then there's the full video course which goes into more specific protocols from the book. And all this helps me with my community projects in Kenya. So please support.

Alex Howard

Yeah that was in your bio, tell us a bit about those. I'm curious.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

So I came back to Kenya, I was born in Kenya and I came back to Kenya to do mobile clinics for poor communities. I was driving a jeep and would sit under a tree and treat people with homoeopathy. Of course, I have to fund myself and stuff so I started a private practice. And right now what I'm doing is, I'm treating some kids with disabilities. They've been abandoned by their communities because the communities think they're a "curse" to the family. And so I'm seeing if homoeopathy can help them with a bit of cerebral palsy, a bit of autism, more mobility, because some of these kids were just abandoned in a corner, so their joints are not working too well. So, yeah, just trying all these different things where I can.

Alex Howard

That's really cool. Dr Ameet Aggarwal, thank you so much for your time and for this interview, I really appreciate it. And I encourage people to go and check out your work, but also support the charitable work that you're doing, which sounds amazing. Thank you so much.

Dr. Ameet Aggarwal

Thank you. Lots of love.