



Navigating the journey to better sleep

Guest: Misty Williams

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Alex Howard - [00:00:15]

Welcome everyone to this conversation, where I'm really happy to be talking with Misty Williams. Firstly, Misty, welcome and thank you for joining me.

Misty Williams

I'm so excited. Thank you for having me.

Alex Howard

It's a pleasure. We always have fun. And in this conversation, we're going to be talking about sleep, why it's so important and some of the key strategies people can use to address sleep challenges they're having. But we'll start in a minute.

Misty, I'd love to do a bit with your story because I think that really gives some foundation. Just to give people a bit of Misty's background, Misty Williams spent years struggling to reclaim her health and vitality after surgery to remove an ovarian cyst. Life threatening complications and an endometriosis diagnosis sent her into a brain fog and fatigue tailspin. A doctor told her that the only remedies for her issues were drugs and surgeries, that her labs were normal - I think a lot of people are going to resonate with that very frustrating experience - and she could Google to learn more about what was happening to her body.

At 35 years old, Misty embarked on the fight for her quality of life, enduring many more challenges on her road to healing, including an unexplained forty five pound weight gain, debilitating brain fog, fatigue, hypothyroidism and premature ovarian failure.

She founded "Healing Rosie" to provide high performing women with the resources and community to successfully confront the unexpected chronic health issues that women often experience as they age. Misty's also the host of "Your Best Sleep Ever Online Summit", which is having a replay around now as we're broadcasting this event. And I was very happy to be one of the speakers on that event.

So welcome again, Misty. And as I said, I'd love to talk a little bit about, to start with, your own story. As I mentioned in the introduction, you've had a really challenging time with your own health, of which fatigue has been a key part of that. So just tell us a bit about how that journey unfolded.

Misty Williams

Yeah, well, my journey started a decade ago. I was 35. I still think I'm 35. I went in for a routine physical and asked them to check my fertility. My clock was ticking like Big Ben and I wanted to see how everything was going, if being a mother was still an option for me. And that's really what kind of set everything off. I wasn't experiencing any symptoms or pain. I actually was, but I thought it was normal. And I just wanted to do a check in with my body. They found a cyst on my left ovary and told me I needed to have surgery for it.

So I went in, it was an outpatient surgery. They removed the cyst along with my left ovary. While they were in there, they found out that I had endometriosis. And so they spent an extra two hours removing scar tissue from my abdomen. I had three polyps in my uterus. So this 20 minute surgery turned into a two and a half hour surgery and then they sent me home.

It was an outpatient procedure. I was going to check in with my doctor on the following Monday. This was a Thursday. And after about 18 hours of being home, I started vomiting, which wasn't on the list. I had a list of, here's the things that might happen and here's what you do. And if these things happen, go to the emergency room.

Alex Howard - [00:03:36]

They do that really well in the States, you get a book of all the stuff that might go wrong! Doesn't really consider the effect of placebo. But it wasn't on the list, so...

Misty Williams

It wasn't on the list. So we didn't know what to do. My roommate at the time was a nurse and so she was kind of looking out for me and we just buckled down through the weekend. I just kept throwing up. I could not keep down a drop of water. I would take little micro sips, because I was so thirsty, as you can imagine. Couldn't keep it down. I would throw everything up. And it was utterly exhausting, throwing up like that. And Monday came, we did try to call, by the way, the doctor and couldn't get anybody for a few days. Finally someone called who had no idea about my case and said, well, take her to the emergency room if she gets dehydrated. Otherwise you'll talk to the doctor on Monday. Which, what does it look like to get dehydrated? I had no idea, I probably was totally dehydrated, looking back, you know, but I just powered through until Monday, and my four o'clock appointment came and went. I didn't hear from the doctor, found out she went home sick that day and no one called me.

And, you know, we'd left all these messages. The appointment didn't happen. Like, I started just really freaking out. And so the next morning, I walked in at 9am when the doors opened and told the receptionist that I was here to see the doctor and I wasn't going to leave until I saw her. And she was like, well, why don't you come back, she's going to be here about 12:30. And I was like, nope, I will wait and sat in the waiting room.

And about an hour later, the doctor called and she was like, Misty, I want you to go to Baptist, to the emergency room, I'm calling ahead. Which kind of freaked me out a little, you know. She was telling it, like we didn't have a conversation, she just was like, Misty's on the line, go to the hospital. So they did an MRI and discovered that she had stitched up part of my small intestine. And that is why I wasn't keeping down food or water.

So, I was admitted to the hospital for a few days. And after the hospital stay, I was sent home and I didn't sleep for 144 hours. It was over six days. It was the most bizarre, up to that point in my life, I had never had issues with not being able to sleep, like that. I did come to find out I have a really crappy sleeping pattern, which I'm sure we'll end up talking about in this interview. But, for that six day stretch, I would go to bed, and I'm exhausted after everything I've been through, and I would lay there and it was hours of total consciousness, slow, slow time passing by. And I'm just begging God for sleep. And it happens the next day, and the next day, and the next day. And I'm like starting to freak out. It's like been four days and then five days and then six days. And finally, I spoke with a friend of mine who is a pretty awesome bio hacker, and he gave me some exercises to do with deep breathing, really meditative things, that finally kicked my parasympathetic into gear enough that I started getting drowsy.

And I remember it was the middle of the day, I remember sitting on the floor in my bedroom doing these breathing exercises and feeling that sleeping coming on, you know. And I crawled into bed and finally was able to sleep.

Alex Howard - [00:07:09]

And how long did you sleep for? After not having slept for 6 days.

Misty Williams

I don't even remember that part. It was probably a lot, you know, probably as much as my body could. But looking back, what happened was just, the cortisol in my system from that kind of stress, for such a long period of time.

Ironically, while I was in the hospital, after the surgery to fix it, it was a quick ten minute surgery. She went in, went boop, stitched me back up and was done! She actually sent Ambien. I remember the nurse coming in, giving me Ambien. And I'm like, I don't need help, I can sleep fine. She's like, well, the doctor just wanted to make sure that you'd be able to sleep. So she had to have known at some level, right, that all this cortisol and stress might keep this patient from being able to sleep and she needs to sleep. What was crazy, though, is there was no conversation about it. She didn't tell me that sleeplessness might be an issue. It wasn't, here's a prescription for Ambien, Misty, in case you need it to help you sleep. There was no conversation. I mean, across the board, the patient care was pretty abysmal.

Alex Howard

Yeah, it doesn't sound like you were well taken care of. So, what was the effect? So you've been through this double surgery, you've not slept, you've had the shock of the trauma of this situation coming out of nowhere. What happened in the coming weeks and months after that?

Misty Williams

Fatigue. Brain fog and fatigue. It was crazy. I remember, because, first of all, I ended up taking two weeks off of work unplanned. I'd been an entrepreneur since I was 26 years old. So I had clients, and everything had to, like, come to a halt. And I'm trying to re-engage, thinking, I have to be working, I've got to get back in the game. And I had crazy brain fog. I remember feeling like, just trying to think, my computer would be in front of me and I'm trying to think, and it's like there's cotton balls all crammed into my head and my thoughts can't get through. Like, I could literally feel them trying to come through. It was awful, crazy brain fog, bananas fatigued. Like, I just felt exhausted all the time. I would go to sleep and wake up, throughout the whole day, feeling just utterly exhausted. And this went on for six months.

I finally reached out to a chiropractor friend of mine, well, first I went back to my doctor, six months later, to my primary care doctor who had referred me to this woman that did the surgery. And I told her, these are the things I'm experiencing: crazy brain fog, fatigue. It's been six months, I'm really worried. I was describing a lot of what my days were like. And, she basically said, well, Misty, your labs look normal, everything's fine. And I started pushing.

Alex Howard

And I think that's a hard experience, right? When you know that something's not right and your whole life is just, kind of impacted by the fact that you're so exhausted. And then you get told, hey, there's nothing wrong with you. That's a really difficult experience.

Misty Williams

They're like, you're fine, you're totally fine. And I'm like, I'm not fine. I think we need to run more labs, maybe you didn't run the right labs to see what's really going on in my body, but this is crazy. This is not me, I'm not like this, I did not have this experience before this surgery, you know. And she just, she started getting really irritated with me. Like, Misty, everything is fine. You went through something hard, it'll be fine. You've just got to give it time.

And I'm pushing. It's been six months by this point. I'm pushing and finally she said, Misty, even if we did run your labs, I wouldn't know what it meant. And I had this moment of, like, what? I could not believe that she actually said that to me. Like, this is your job. You go to medical school for 12 years, right? Your job is to help me figure out what's going on in my body. I'm telling you these things are wrong. And she was so exasperated with me, finally, she just referred me to an endocrinologist that was in her clinic, who fit me in that day. Because normally, this is the system so it's like, you make an appointment, you can't get in for two months. You know, and all this time keeps going by.

So I went in to see the endocrinologist and she was very nice. She was like, Misty, I'll run some more labs, but your labs do look fine, but we'll run a few more. And I was telling her about my experience and she comes over and she starts feeling on my neck. And finally she goes, I think you might have nodules on your thyroid. Let's go back for an ultrasound. Sure enough, thyroid nodules, and they're large. What causes thyroid nodules? We don't know what causes them.

Well, two weeks after my surgery, I had gone in to see my doctor and asked her, you know, you've diagnosed with the disease endometriosis, what causes endometriosis? What do I need to do to take care of myself? Like, at that point, I was willing to do anything. You tell me diet change, I've always tried to eat consciously. At that point it was like, no processed foods. Now I'm at the next level from that. But she told me, Misty, we don't know what causes endometriosis. You can Google it.

And now here I am, thyroid nodules, we don't know what causes thyroid nodules, but she can refer me to a surgeon. Well, this is familiar territory right?

Alex Howard - [00:12:33]

You're not feeling so enthusiastic about surgery at this point.

Misty Williams

No, no, no. Thank God I still have my thyroid and I still have thyroid nodules, actually. But she basically ran labs, told me everything was fine. And I just knew, I have to start looking in other places for this. So I reached out to a friend of mine who lives in upstate New York, who is a chiropractor.

And I feel like that's when my real journey started because he started asking me a ton of lifestyle questions. And one of the questions that he asked me, that profoundly affected me and actually change the trajectory of my entire life, it massively affected my healing journey. I didn't realize it at the time, like, looking back, you know, I can see a lot of things.

But he said, Misty, how's your sleep? Now it's been six months since the surgery, right? So I'm back into my old sleep rhythm. And I told him, I said, my sleep is fine. I go to bed at about 2:00 a.m. and I sleep for about seven or eight hours. And he's like, well, how do you feel when you wake up? Like I've been hit by a Mack truck. And he's like, well, describe that for me. I'm like, I'm in this deep stupor of sleep. And like, I'm waking up... My whole life, this is how sleep had felt. As a teenager, I remember the alarm going off and just the exhaustion that I would feel.

So, my whole life I have awakened, basically feeling like death. And that was normal for me. I had no idea that that that's not how you should feel. This idea that you wake up and like the birds are chirping and you feel this energy and zest for life was like, I hate those people. It was definitely not a reality that I even aspired to for myself.

So we had a come to Jesus, and he told me, Misty you've got to start sleeping. You need to be in bed by nine thirty, ten o'clock at night, which to me was like, that's when I just get my second wind and have five more hours of productivity, you know!

Alex Howard

Which is in and of itself, of course, a sign of your system being out of balance.

Misty Williams - [00:14:43]

Totally! Yes. I mean, have we learned a lot over the years! But this was really normal for me. Like, I would get this second wind at 9:00 p.m. And I would go until 2:00 a.m. And I loved it, I loved the energetic cycles. You know, I'm a very energetic person, naturally. And I just thought, that's my body and that's me and that's how I am.

So I was going to do anything he said. And he told me to start going to bed at 9:30 p.m. so I did. Which was excruciating, you imagine, in a work week, taking 25 hours of productivity out of your week, which, I mean I was obviously working way too much. And I would go to bed and I would sleep for ten or twelve hours and I would still wake up feeling utterly exhausted.

Alex Howard

But it sounds like you were starting to at least get the amount of sleep that you needed.

Misty Williams

Yeah, well, I've learned a lot about the whole sleep thing, you know, and for women especially, we make our hormones, like our body replenishes hormonal source, including cortisol, between about 11:00 p.m. and 1 a.m. - 2 a.m.

I don't go to bed until two a.m. So you can imagine, it's not hard to connect the dots here, on why I had endometriosis, all these hormonal issues, there's a lot of downstream things from that. Eventually thyroid issues and everything else. Like, I just was absolutely wrecking my body and I had no idea. This is years and years and years of these habits of just being such a night owl, like literally never going to bed before 2:00 a.m. and sometimes I would push it to 4:00 a.m.

Alex Howard

And I think the trouble is, just because you've normalized to something, it doesn't mean that it's normal. It doesn't mean that it's healthy, right? And you got into a habit of living a certain way. But in some ways, it sounds like what you'd done is you'd adapted to things that were out of balance and then designed your life in a way that was out of balance.

Misty Williams

Mm hmm. Totally. It was a total adaptation. And, you know, I had some friends who were like me, too. So we commiserated together about what it was like and how terrible mornings are!

It took six months. It took six months of going to bed and literally sleeping 12 hours a night, for six months, before I finally had the experience of waking up and not feeling like death.

Alex Howard

Do you think that part of what that was, is you were clearing a massive sleep deficit, it was like years of not getting enough sleep and your body was just like, I need to catch up to sleep?

Misty Williams

Yeah. And the week that I started having this experience of waking up and not just being in this terrible stupor, was two weeks after I started doing cold baths. So I'm a big fan of cold therapy, there's a lot in our space about it now if people are really interested in learning more. I tried cold showers, they were not for me. A three minute cold shower is way worse than forty five minutes in a cold bath!

Alex Howard

Really? That's interesting. Why?

Misty Williams - [00:17:48]

Your body acclimates. It's just like, you know, when you jump in a pool and it's cold for the first couple of minutes and then you're fine. It's the same thing.

Alex Howard

That's really interesting, because I've always really struggled with cold showers. Maybe I'll try cold baths.

Misty Williams

Cold baths are so much better. Cold showers are just like torturous death. You're not immersed. So you can't acclimate.

Alex Howard

That's really interesting.

Misty Williams

But I will tell you that when you're in a cold bath, and laying there, you do not want to move. Because any movement, you actually feel the cold. But if you're still, you know...

Alex Howard

That's interesting.

Misty Williams

But cold really did it for me. It kind of kicked me over the edge after six months of sleeping so many hours. And, you know, since then, there's been a lot of struggles that I've had with fatigue. I wanted to figure out what was up with these nodules. And so I started doing lots of research and just looking at studies. And I started coming across information on Epstein Barr and how chronic Epstein Barr infections could result in your body attacking your thyroid, the antibodies attacking your thyroid.

So I remember going to one of the doctors I was seeing - I went through so many doctors during those first few years - and I asked him to check me for Epstein Barr. I have these thyroid nodules, here's the study that I found. He ran two tests and the two tests that he ran are actually for showing a previous infection. So when my tests came back, and my numbers were super high by the way, he said, oh, that just shows you had a previous infection. I'm like, well, how do we know if I have an infection now? He completely blew me off. But that's really what he should have done.

I've since found out that I have chronically recurring flares of Epstein Barr. Now, one of the things that Epstein Barr will have you feel, and in my flares since, is this just utter exhaustion in the morning. You sleep all night, and you wake up, and you just... It would take me sometimes hours. It wouldn't be till noon that I would start to feel like I could function. You know, just deep, utter exhaustion. And that's a classic Epstein Barr symptom. But no doctors ever asked or checked or, you know, really helped me to uncover that.

So much of what I've gone through in my journey, it's just my hunger for like, what's happening?

Alex Howard

That's one of the things that strikes me. One of the reasons why I think people hearing people tell their stories in some depth like this is important is because often it's the attitude and the approach that we take to the healing, which is what allows us to find the answers. And when the answer doesn't kind of intuitively feel right, or doesn't resonate, rather than going, oh well, there's no answer. Going, well, someone somewhere must have the answer to this question. And it's having the drive and the

curiosity and the patience to continue on that journey.

And what I'm also hearing from your story, is that there have been different turning points along the way. There wasn't one thing that you did. But just by recognizing, I need to go to bed earlier and I need to let my body have 12 hours of sleep a night. Doing that for six months, and then something shifted, something was improving. And then going, but why am I still waking up feeling the way that I'm feeling? Going deeper into that, hang on, there's some sort of underlying viral element which is being activated, which needs to be addressed.

And I'm curious, as you've discovered that, what have you been... Because also I know you mentioned to me previously that you did a whole chunk of work on your digestive system. So, yeah, how have you been working with addressing those factors?

Misty Williams - [00:21:30]

So there's one other little piece to my story that I want to mention, because I can connect the dots on my unraveling and I think this will be really helpful to people. My surgery happened in 2011. In 2013, I had mercury fillings removed, thinking I'm doing something good, right, I'm gonna get the mercury out of my mouth. I went to a dentist, unbeknownst to me, who did not use proper safety protocols to remove the mercury. He just drilled them out. So no protection for him, no protection for his dental assistant. They drilled, mercury dust everywhere.

I started gaining weight after that. And in about three or four months, I'd gained 45 pounds. I'm 5ft2. Freak a person out to put on that kind of weight so fast. Now at this point in my journey, I'd already done all of the sleep stuff. I'd since discovered Dave Asprey's, bulletproof. It was actually the early days of bulletproof and there was a lot of great teaching and training around the amber glasses and circadian biology and these rhythms that really affect our body's ability to heal at the cellular level.

And so I'd been wearing the amber glasses. Since 2012 I've worn the amber glasses. So as soon as the sun goes down, I have amber bulbs. I mean, I've just done like all the things, cleaning out the house. So to suddenly, paleo diet, to suddenly gain 45 pounds is very confronting when you've gone through this list. But there was no answers. It was completely mysterious. And I finally found a gynecologist who practiced in an anti-ageing kind of way. And she checked my hormones and I had premature ovarian failure. I was 38 years old and it looked like I was in full menopause by my hormone panel.

So she put me on hormone therapy. But the question in my mind still is like, what caused this? Why is it happening? It literally took me until 2018 to start really getting some answers. And while I was able to reclaim a lot of my quality of life through lifestyle changes, and being on hormone therapy certainly dammed the waters for me, it was after I moved to Austin, there's an amazing holistic health community here in Austin, Texas, and I started getting connected to people who were pretty savvy bio hackers.

And I also did my very first summit called "Fix For Female Hormones" and some awesome interviews in that summit taught me so much. And I was interviewing Dr. Christopher Shade about a heavy metal toxicity, and he talked about the whole mercury filling thing. And I had this, my fillings were not properly removed from my teeth, so I went back and looked at my records. When did I have those fillings extracted? And it was right before that weight gain.

So on top of everything else, like I have a pile of problems, right, and then I get heavy metal poisoning on top of that. Which creates so much dysregulation, hormonally, in our bodies. And for me, it completely just crashed everything. And I look like I'm a postmenopausal woman without hormone therapy, and it also induces a lot of fatigue. So even after I kind of pulled out of that six month cycle, I'm waking up, it's not been as bad as it was. But I would go through times where I'm feeling good and then times that I'm just really tired again. And times that I'm feeling good. And then times that I'm tired again.

And I would say the last two or three years of my life, outside of two known Epstein Barr flares that I had, and that was really in 2018 and early 2019, I feel good all the time. And I wake up great in the

morning. I mean, like everything feels really dialed in. But I had to do a lot of heavy metal detoxing. And in the Healing Rosie community, I see this a ton in our women, you know, toxicity in general, environmental toxins, metals, mold. I mean, it just wreaks havoc on our systems. And a very predictable symptom is fatigue.

Alex Howard - [00:25:33]

Right. Fatigue is often the consequence of these many other things being out of balance, right?

Misty Williams

Oh, sure. I mean, it piles on, really. I mean, we have these really bad lifestyles. We're exposed to all this toxicity in our environment. There's a lot about viruses that aren't well studied, as we're seeing right now, you know, in experiencing this pandemic. And, you know, there's this belief around Epstein Barr, that you just get it once and then you never get it again; and you have antibodies now, to the virus, but you can't get another infection. Which is just like, I have actual labs showing, oh she's infected, oh she's infected. That's that's not supposed to be a thing. That's not supposed to be a thing in conventional medicine.

So, you know, there's a lot of things that I've had to confront, of beliefs that we have, about how the body works. That you have to kind of like, set it all aside. It feels at some point like mankind has been ripped through the looking glass. You know, this parallel universe where, these are the rules that they tell you, like, this is how it's all supposed to go, per your doctors. But then you have these experiences of how it's really going, and it doesn't fit. And that can really kind of wreak havoc on your own mental state. You know, your sense of feeling safe in the world, because it's like what's happening in my body?

Alex Howard

And I think that also takes a certain level of courage and a certain willingness to challenge the status quo, when you're told that thing that you know is happening in your body, it can't happen, or is not meant to happen. And I can think of things in my own body, and also patients I have worked with over the years, where it's like, but then the science is wrong. Because in this instance, this thing is happening and it's real.

And I think people have to learn, sometimes, to really have the courage of their conviction, that just because someone in a white coat or with a bunch of letters after their name tells you something, it doesn't trump your own lived experience of what your body is telling you.

Misty Williams

Yeah, that's totally a big part of what my messages to the women in the Healing Rosie community is. You have to get back in tune with your own intuition. We are told so many times that, no, this is what reality is, that we learn as children to override our own intuition. We have to do what everybody else says. And at some point we get really disconnected from ourselves. And that's a big reason why I think it was really hard for me early in my journey. I see now, like, oh, these are the steps that worked. But even though I had courage back then, I mean, it was like the next level of courage of things that I had to confront. But I think if we all want to get well and we want to get our lives back, the first thing that we have to do is get back in touch with ourselves.

And, you know, Alex, I think about you and your work a lot, because what comes up for a lot of these women in my community, is over time, having this health experience of these challenges and people telling you basically that what you're experiencing isn't real, provokes tons and tons of anxiety. And it gets to the point where having to live with these health experiences creates its own additional set of health challenges. And people start feeling just this, I'm not safe, and what else am I missing? And they say it's supposed to be like this, but it's not for me. And it can really wreak havoc on your mental health.

Alex Howard - [00:29:07]

I think that's right, and I think that in a sense, the more people can build community, like you were describing being in Austin and being around a community of other people that are on a similar informed, proactive health journey. And sometimes that isn't possible for people in physical location, but in terms of online communities, things like this online conference, your summit, your community, and I think that becomes really important because then people can start to build that sense of confidence and courage, in the validity of their own lived experience.

But I also, I want to just back this up to sleep a little bit as well, because as much as there are so many areas we can go into here, through producing your summit, having interviewed with so many experts around sleep, I'm curious as to, and you've touched on some really helpful things already, but for someone that's watching this or listening to this, which is suffering from fatigue and is just not sleeping, and they're starting to really see the connection between those two things, where should they start? What are some of the foundational pieces that they can start to do to address that?

Misty Williams

So I'm going to speak from the perspective of a woman, because I am one, and I'm sure there's tons of women watching. You probably would even lean female, I would guess, watching your summit. And there's truths in here that can also be applied to men, but I want to speak from the perspective of a woman because there's a few things that I think women need to do, if you're really challenged around your sleep.

We're going to talk about some lifestyle stuff and I can certainly share a whole lot more tips on things that you can do, just in your environment and with your lifestyle, to help you sleep better.

But you also need to check for underlying causes, because you can change a lot of things in your environment but if your body isn't able to get into deep sleep because there's other stressors that you haven't identified, then it's going to be very challenging for you to heal. And that's ultimately the goal of sleep. We sleep so that we can heal. That's when we heal. Like, you don't heal during the day. You heal at night, when you're sleeping. So Epstein Barr, it's epidemic. I can't tell you the number of women in the Healing Rosie community who, after hearing my story, went out and got tested for Epstein Barr and found out they have a chronic recurring Epstein Barr infection. So knowing that is really empowering.

Alex Howard

And one could also put that in the same category, I think, as things like mold, lyme, co-infections, any viral loads that the body is dealing with, which are draining energy and dysregulating one's nervous system.

Misty Williams

That's absolutely right, yep. Checking for Epstein Barr, there's four different tests that you need to run. I have a free lab tracker if people want to download, to know what are the optimizing labs, and all the labs are listed there at HealingRosie.com/labtracker. But there's four tests for Epstein Barr. You should definitely check for Epstein Barr infection because it's just so common. And the other thing to check for is your hormones and your thyroid.

If you have low thyroid, you could get all the sleep in the world and still just deal with lots of fatigue during the day because you don't have enough thyroid hormone, which is what gives you energy and powers your metabolism. So that's a very common thing that affects that feeling of fatigue throughout the day, and our hormones too. What I've learned for me, the thing that really works the most for me, is making sure my hormone levels are really good.

So I have to take them all. I have to take every hormone because of what I've been through, but progesterone and estrogen. And I've found that I'm super sensitive to low estrogen. For me, it has a massive effect on my sleep. Now, that's not all women. We're all like little snowflakes, you have to test

and you have to see what's going to work for you. But I really need a lot of estrogen. And in fact, in December, I doubled my estrogen patch for a week and lo and behold, on accident, I discovered that when I double my estrogen patch, I triple my deep sleep. I go from about 1 hour - 1.5 hours, to 4.5 hours of deep sleep. That's how significant hormones are for women.

So when people say these things like - and I've heard this from doctors - oh, your hormones are supposed to... At 38, I had a doctor tell me, your hormones are supposed to go down as you get older. And I just was incredulous. I'm like, I'm not 55, I'm 38 years old.

We really need hormones for good sleep and our hormones bottom out a lot more, as women, than they did for our grandmothers because of the toxicity in our environment. So you need to look at your thyroid and your hormones. And if they're low, you need to do gut work and you need to do deep detoxification. And for some women, what Alex just said, you need to go even deeper and you need to start looking for mold, you need to look at lyme and there's co-infections. You really need to see what's happening in your body that's keeping you from being able to get into deep, restful sleep.

Alex Howard - [00:34:27]

I think that's so important. And I'd love to just pick up a detail there, because you said something that I think is really important, that would be just helpful to explain that correlation. You said, to deal with hormone issues, you need to do gut work. Why is that important? What's that relationship between what's happening with digestion and one's hormone levels?

Misty Williams

Well, a lot of your hormones are produced in your gut. And, what I found for me is, you know, everything is just this axis in the body, in the brain gut connection. And what's happening in your gut is affecting your brain and your brain is where all the signalling happens for hormone production. I mean, our bodies are just like these amazingly intricate, complicated things. What I found, where gut work really was valuable for me...

For a lot of women, by the way, there's a connection between things like SIBO and chronic gut infections and low hormones too. And when they just support hormones with something like bio-identical hormone therapy, this chronic SIBO - and I have one woman in the community who has recently been like blowing up my inbox because she's just over the moon. Finally, like I have known her for probably five years, and she has these SIBO infections that she gets over and over and over again. And finally, she gets on hormone therapy and like mysteriously, her gut's just perfectly fine. And she's figured out how to manage the SIBO and like what she has to do and even doing some prescription things. But for her, hormones fixed it, having good hormone levels.

So hormones really affect a lot of our feelings of well-being. And it's the reason why they're tied to youthfulness, right? And without hormones, all the ageing stuff happens. So, I also discovered that when I did gut work, my Epstein Barr quit reflareing.

So I learned a lot of other strategies for managing my Epstein Barr that really worked well for me. One of my favorites is Quicksilver's Cat's Claw. It's like a serum that you pump and it has monolaurin and a few other things in it. But it's an amazing elixir and it would nip it really quickly if I got a flare, but I want to stop getting flares. You know what I mean?

Alex Howard

Yeah, you want to ultimately deal with those underlying factors. And one of the things I really want to highlight, Misty, in what you're saying because I think it's really important, we said earlier, about the importance of being curious and being proactive and taking responsibility. There's another piece though, that I think is tied to this, which is that it's not necessarily as simple as, you have this issue therefore you resolve it by fixing this issue.

I think that this multi-systems approach is really important, that actually, hormones are out of balance.

OK, you might support that with bio-identical hormones or other more herbal based or glandular based kind of approaches. But why? Why are those out of balance? Well, actually, maybe that resolution's in the gut. And again, why is it that someone's immune system is struggling to deal with Epstein Barr or mold or whatever it may be. Maybe because there's issues going on in the gut which mean that a large part of our immunity is either overloaded, or it's just not being created, because that immunity is being built by the effectiveness of our digestion.

Misty Williams - [00:37:52]

Yeah, your immune system lives in your gut. I mean, that's kind of its home base. So, you know, all of these issues that we experience, with things like chronic cortisol levels being high all the time, and we have these chronic infections. I also discovered that I had a parasite infection, in addition to some of the other things. I went on hormone therapy and in 2017, my thyroid bottomed out. So it's like, the hormone therapy dams the water but if you don't go after what's underlying, and I wish I would have known because of course I would have done it right? If you don't go after what's underlying, you're still going to see this over time, everything keeps plummeting.

And so, for me, I dealt with the weight thing again, in another way in 2017, started gaining weight and was like, why is this happening? And it was because my thyroid, I was finally clinically hypothyroid and not just subclinically, which I had been with doctors being like, the numbers are fine! But when you know what optimal looks like, you know that it's actually not fine and there's things that you could do to be supporting it. So, I experienced, even after starting hormone therapy, the continual degradation of that whole system. Because I didn't handle what was underneath it.

So, doing heavy metal detoxification was game changing for me. It started feeling like all the other therapies that I was doing were working better. I was getting more predictable results after detoxing. Gut work, really, really important. So I think the bio hacks for damming the waters are hugely, hugely important, especially hormones, because if you're not sleeping, you're not healing. So you've got to give your body what it needs to be able to sleep well. And for a lot of women it's hormones and it's also, you know, all the sleep hormones, melatonin and all of that stuff, too. You need to be able to sleep.

But if you're not going after what's deeper, and this is where I think lab testing is just so valuable. And I've struggled, just like everyone does, of how do you afford all of this? And for me, it's just setting your intentions. And, you know, as I created more abundance in my life, it went to taking care of my health. And certainly, there's also lots of things that I've done that haven't been so expensive, that have been big needle movers.

But this is challenging. I mean, we have to confront the fact that we live in a very toxic world, that creates these issues in our bodies, and the choices we made, you know, to eat the crap food and not go to sleep at night and just all the other things, just take their toll over time.

And I'm into a phase now where, obviously, prioritizing my health is the most important thing. And it's wonderful to be able to wake up every single day, ready for the day and in a good mood. And it's great to have energy throughout the day. And I mean, ten o'clock comes and it's just like, I'm ready for bed. We go to bed and it's easy. So we can create this for ourselves with some education and just learning.

Alex Howard

That's awesome. And I also want to highlight something else you just said, which is the importance of sequencing. That sometimes, you can't go after, and this is something that we've found to be very important in the Optimum Health Clinic, that people can come in and go, I want to deal with this lyme issue or this mold issue and I want to do the detox. But every time they try and detox, they crash because their system's not resilient enough to do it. And actually, working on building up their overall level of capacity, be that working on adrenals and you know, the different ways we might do that, be that working on some of their digestive issues, that they start to get more energy into the mitochondria, to then be able to do those protocols.

That it sounds like one of the things that you figured out along the way is the different sequencing, the different ordering of, I need to do this piece and now I'm a bit stronger. For example, just initially going to bed at nine thirty, it cost you nothing but that extra two and a half, three hours sleep a night, suddenly got you to the place that you could go the next stage in the process. And I think that, again, it goes back to what we talked about earlier, that curiosity and that willingness to try different things, allows us to find that next step along the path which is going to help us go that next step in our healing.

Misty Williams - [00:42:15]

I think what you said earlier about all of this, it can't be overstated, and that is the power of community and getting connected to people who are on the path with you, or who are a little ahead of you on the path, to really help you know what those things are.

I have great doctors now, but I play a pretty big driving force role in my own care. Going after Epstein Barr, for example, that was that was all me. I asked for the test. Once we got the test, I started looking myself like, what do we need to do to take care of it? You know, you can't expect any one doctor to know all the things. So depending on how complicated your situation is, you know, you might be going a few different places.

But it's really my curiosity and learning from people who are like me, that were just further along the path than I am, that helped me see some patterns, that helped me know what to do, and what do I need to look for next? And I don't think that can be overstated either.

I mean, the idea that, I wish I could say, you just find a functional medicine doctor or naturopath and then they're going to lead you and guide you and you'll be well. I mean, sometimes that happens for people but a lot of times that doesn't happen quite that linearly and simply. And I think what's really helpful is the community piece.

Alex Howard

I mean, one of the things that we always say to patients at the Optimum Health Clinic is that, we can guide you, we can support you, but ultimately, you have to be the captain of the ship of your own recovery. And you're the one that's there on the ship day in, day out, that notices, oh, when the storms come in, it seems to take on water. If nothing else, you have to be responsible for giving that information. But often, people have to find different pieces of that jigsaw.

I'm mindful of time, we've talked a bit about community, and I'd love you to say a bit more about how people can access you and what you're up to in your work.

Misty Williams

Yeah, well, if you want to learn more about me or the Healing Rosie community, you can just go to HealingRosie.com

There's links there to our Facebook group, to lots of free downloads that are meant to help people who are navigating this journey with, what do you do for second, third and fourth and all of those great things. So, yeah, HealingRosie.com

Alex Howard

That's awesome. Misty, thank you so much for your time today. I appreciate it. It's always a pleasure.

Misty Williams

I loved it. Thank you so much, Alex.